

CHAMBERS, S. D.

INTERVIEW

#9100

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INTERVIEW
BIOGRAPHY FORM

Form A-(S-149)

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

9100

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Field Worker's name Robert W. Small

This report made on (date) October 25, 1937

1. Name S. D. Chambers

2. Post Office Address Tonkawa, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 1200 E. North St.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 24 Year 1867

5. Place of birth Owen County, Indiana.

6. Name of Father Timothy Chambers Place of birth Maryland

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Sarah Eoret Chambers, Place of birth Ohio

Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____.

Robert W. Small
Interviewer
October 25, 1937

Interview with
S. D. Chambers
Tonkawa, Oklahoma.

On July 24, 1867, S. D. Chambers was born in Owen County, Indiana. With his parents, he came to Sumner County, Kansas, in 1866. From his home in Kansas he made many trips down into the Oklahoma country several years prior to the opening of the lands of Oklahoma.

In 1886, Mr. Chambers made a trip, with four other men, down into the blackjack timber country south of the Cobb and Hutton Ranch, near the Cimarron River. They were on a hunting trip and traveled in two wagons.

Leaving Caldwell, Kansas, they traveled a slightly southwest course on a trail that took them to a crossing of the Salt Fork River, near the present site of Pond Creek. From there they pursued a more southerly course for some distance, then slightly east through a part of the Cobb and Hutton ranch and onto the Dean and Broderick Ranch, and for five weeks they hunted in this section of Oklahoma lands and farther south near the Cimarron River and its tributaries.

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During their stay in this country they killed nine deer, eleven turkeys, two sacks full of quail and many prairie chickens.

The country had no farms nor farm houses, just a wild open country as nature made it with the exception of cattle that grazed over the lands and here and there at distant points a little ranch house and a few cowboys. Occasionally some soldiers would be seen riding across the country. It was a paradise for hunters until the game was killed.

On their return home the soldiers stopped them near Pond Creek and searched their wagons and then turned them loose to proceed homeward. The soldiers thought they might be trying to settle in some part of the country but after questioning them and seeing the game they were hauling home they became convinced they were only hunters. The soldiers who stopped them were known as the White Horse Company; they all rode snow white horses and attracted much attention and comment by people who saw their beautiful horses. There were 101 of the sol-

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diers in this company, all of whom rode white horses.

In 1887, Mr. Chambers states his father sold corn to the Foss and Wilson Ranch, delivering the corn to the ranch property from his place in Kansas for seventeen cents per bushel.

Mr. Chambers says that the ranch owners over the country seemed to get along with each other very agreeably but that they had lots of trouble with men who were known as cattle rustlers. These cattle rustlers were continually looking over the herds of cattle for strays or unbranded cattle and when they found one that had no brand on it they would claim it and drive it away and kill it for beef or place their own brand on it.

Mr. Chambers says that he made trips down into the Oklahoma country quite often on hunting, fishing or sight seeing expeditions. The Chikaskia River was a favorite fishing stream during the spring months when the urge to fish was most appealing. Occasionally during summer months when, because of continued

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dry, hot weather, the river would not have sufficient water to flow all along its course but would stand in pools here and there in some places, the fish would be compelled to congregate in these pools, which made it easy for fishermen to catch them with seines or nets.

In the early part of 1889, some old friends came down from Indiana to Mr. Chambers' father's place in Kansas, near the Oklahoma line, and they were very eager to see some Indians and some of the Oklahoma country.

In company with these Indiana folks he made a trip down into the Indians' country. They visited the site of the Tonkawa Indian Agency on the Chikaskia River where a Mr. Brewer was the Indian Agent and they drove about over the country with keen-eyed interest.

The Indians had some small patches of land near their house or tepees which they cultivated, usually growing corn and garden vegetables.

A few farms of considerable acreage were also found here and there, which were usually planted in

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wheat - sometimes by the Indians but more often by whites who leased the larger tracts for farming purposes from the Indian Agent.

Mr. Chambers states that on one occasion when he was working for a stockman and farmer of Kansas he was sent down into the Oklahoma country on a round-up to get seventy head of steers. One night when he was staying at the Hovington ranch house, about dark the ranch boss and some boys went out and killed a beef.

The Indians knew about the beef being killed and after the ranch boss had left with the dressed beef, the Indians took the entrails and some other parts that had been left. They carried them to their living quarters not far distant and made a large pot of soup and danced around all night making a noise that the boys could hear who were in the ranch house trying to sleep.

Mr. Chambers says so many cowboys were there that they had to sleep on the floor, which was almost

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completely covered with blankets and bedding. They ate baking powder biscuits, bacon, coffee and other foods for breakfast and they usually had plenty to eat at all times; a cook was usually kept at all ranch houses to prepare meals for the cowboys who worked on the ranches. Sometimes the cook would be away and in such cases any one visiting the camp at meal time would be at liberty to go in and cook his own meal. No charges for meals or lodging at camp houses on ranches were made. Strangers were always welcome to every accommodation of the ranch free of any cost whatever.

On the cattle ranches of Oklahoma in the early days, Mr. Chambers says that the cowboys did their own laundry work, patched, mended and darned their own wearing apparel.

The owners of the cattle ranches lived in the larger towns and cities of the states; they had a foreman on their ranch to whom they trusted the care, custody and preservation of their stock and to whom

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they looked for the proper management of the ranch in every way. The owners of the ranches occasionally made visits to the ranches to inspect the stock and their property interests in general.

When the Cherokee Outlet was opened to settlement, September 16, 1893, Mr. Chambers made the race from the line, three miles east of Caldwell, Kansas. He and four others of his acquaintance made the run on horseback. As they raced across the broad prairie, they observed skillists, frying pans, buckets, and many other articles that had been lost from the host of flying vehicles that were in the lead at the beginning but were checked sooner or later by accidents or rough places and finally were passed by those on horseback.

Mr. Chambers says that when they reached the Chikaskia River a number of men on horseback were looking for places to cross and that one man, riding a fine horse, attempted to go down a steep bank and his horse fell. The rider sustained a broken arm and was taken back to Kansas by some of his friends.

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to receive medical aid.

After crossing the river they passed a man and his family camped on the prairie and, from observation, it looked as though they had been camped there for some few days or a week.

They passed most every one in the race and Mr. Chambers staked a claim three miles west and one mile north of the present site of Blackwell. He slept on the claim that night, using his saddle for a pillow. The next day he went to Perry to file on the claim and had to get in line and await his turn. When he got to the filing desk he found out that some man had filed on his claim and he entered a contest; he learned later that the man who filed on his claim had paid another man \$35.00 for his position in the filing line, which was in advance of Mr. Chambers. He returned to his claim and the contest hearing was postponed by the other man from time to time. Mr. Chambers was not able to spend much money in a contest as he was hard up financially and the other fellow offered him \$375.00

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to drop the contest. He finally agreed to accept it rather than to undertake to stem the hardships and difficulties that faced him in continuing the contest. He then bought out a claimant three miles west of Blackwell. He moved a granary house, 14 x 16, from Kansas down on the place and built a barn and made other improvements. He paid \$1000.00 for the claim.

In 1896, he harvested a crop of wheat that made from 20 to 21 bushels per acre. The following year he planted corn - his first corn crop, that made from 25 to 30 bushels per acre and kaffir made a similar yield. In 1899, he proved up on the claim and sold it.