

CHAPPELL, G. A.

INTERVIEW

~~10526~~

226

BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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INTERVIEW.

10526.

Field Worker's name Robert W. Small.

This report made on (date) April 11, 1938. 1938

1. Name G. A. Chappell.

2. Post Office Address Newkirk, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Same.

4. DATE OF BIRTH; Month February Day 2 Year 1878.

5. Place of birth Missouri.

6. Name of Father Rufus Chappell. Place of birth Missouri.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Lobelia Johnstown Chappell. Place of birth Missouri.

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 _____.

CHAPPELL, G. A.

INTERVIEW.

10526.

Robert W. Small,
Investigator,
April 11, 1938.

Interview With G. A. Chappell,
Newkirk, Oklahoma.

I was born in the state of Missouri, February 2, 1878. My father, Elisha Chappell, when five years of age in 1824, was moved to Missouri by his father from North Carolina.

On April 27th, 1893, my father and I set out from Missouri in a prairie schooner, drawn by a span of large black stallion horses, headed for the Oklahoma country.

We entered the Oklahoma line south of Caldwell, Kansas, on May 26th, 1893, following a trail to the south and also slightly west to Darlington and Fort Reno then to Oklahoma City and north to Guthrie, the Capital of Oklahoma Territory, thence east to Stillwater where we visited with relatives for two weeks. Then we turned southward again and visited the Sac and Fox country and hunted some on the Cimarron River. An old Indian went hunting with me and I killed a wild duck and the Indian said he wanted to see it. I handed him the duck and he gave me 25 cents and kept the duck, not offering to give it back to me.

CHAPPELL, G. A.

INTERVIEW.

10526.

-2-

When we came back to Stillwater, and got caught in a very bad storm that threatened to blow us away. We then followed the Santa Fe Railroad up north through the Ponca Indian reservation and on to Arkansas City, Kansas, A few miles north of the Ponca Agency we saw a big bunch of Indians coming toward us and we thought that meant trouble so we got our guns ready for defense and as they came near we discovered it was a bunch of Indian students from the Chilocco Indian school.

We came to a place, now the present site of Kildare, Oklahoma where the Government had surveyors at work surveying and platting a county seat site for the future county of Kay. Chief Bushyhead of the Cherokee Nation had filed or allotted land to the amount 160 acres adjoining the townsite being surveyed and the Government objected to his taking an allotment adjoining the townsite and tried to persuade him to release it but he refused and the Government moved the townsite a few miles north to the present site of Newkirk and surveyed and platted that site for the county seat of Kay County.

CHAPPELL, G. A.

INTERVIEW.

10526.

-3-

From the 8th to 16th of September, 1893, we stayed at Arkansas City, where a number of people, estimated at 75,000 in and around Arkansas City, had established themselves, awaiting the opening of the Cherokee Strip. When my father went to register for the run he had to stay in line for three days. He was Captain of a company that was one of many formed for the purpose of securing their proper places in registering.

On the day of the opening my father wanted to make the run to the townsite that is now Newkirk, and he made the run on one of the five trains which the Santa Fe Railroad Company ran from Arkansas City that day. The trains were not allowed to travel at a greater rate of speed than those on horseback could make, or those using the common modes of transportation.

My father had me to drive our wagon and team of black stallions down to the townsite and I started for the old Chilocco reservation in time to reach its south line by time the opening gun was fired, so I was a few miles ahead of those who ran from the line or those who came on the train from Arkansas City. A short distance before I had

CHAPPELL, G. A.

INTERVIEW.

10526.

-4-

reached the townsite the train passed me on which my father was riding and he saw and recognized those two large black stallions hitched to the old prairie schooner and he knew it was I so he stuck his head out the car window and he whistled through his hands to me and I heard and recognized the whistle and when I reached Newkirk townsite I found two lots that were not occupied so I settled on them, although I was not old enough to homestead myself, and soon afterward my father located me by the team. He had secured one lot himself and when he found that he could hold more than one lot he took claim on the two I had settled on and he got a patent from the Government later to all three of the lots.

On Sunday morning, after the opening on Saturday, a ~~preacher among the multitude assembled on the new townsite,~~ climbed upon a dry goods box and preached the first sermon in the new town.

The townsite covered a half section of land and every lot was taken and then there were not nearly enough to go around.

CHAPPELL, G. A.

INTERVIEW.

10526.

-5-

There was a stock loading switch on the Santa Fe Railroad about two miles north of the new town and the Railroad Company stopped their trains at the switch but refused to stop at the new townsite until the town was about six months old at which time they built a depot and had all trains to stop there.

Houses sprang up all over the new townsite and it soon took on the appearance of the metropolis of the Cherokee Strip.

The first school taught was a subscription school and was taught by a Mr. Roberts. A school board was soon appointed and they rented houses over the town to hold schools in for the first year or more.

The first courthouse was built in 1894 but was destroyed by fire in 1897, and another was built, both being frame buildings. The present courthouse was built from a tax fund voted in 1922, for that purpose and in October, 1926, the dedication of new courthouse was held. The building and its furnishings had cost \$300,000.00 and when completed and paid for there was some money left in the treasury unexpended.

CHAPPELL, G. A.

INTERVIEW.

10526.

-6-

The First Methodist Church was organized October, 1893, in a room 18 x 32 feet, with boxes, nail kegs and similar articles used for seats. The preacher used to use the top of an old stove as an altar. Later, a hall was rented where several different church organizations held services and where a union Sunday School was conducted. In 1895 a frame church building was built and in 1902 a stone building was erected by the Methodists. Other denominations built church buildings about the same time.

In 1902, I was admitted to the bar, after having graduated in law at Michigan State University, and hung out my shingle in the same office I am occupying today.

I was elected Mayor of the city in 1903, and was City Attorney from 1905 to 1909.

~~In 1923 I was elected as a member of the state legislature and served for three terms of two years each or till 1931.~~

The United States Cavalry were the law enforcement officials of the town for four or five days after the opening of the townsite and until the newly appointed officers could take charge.

CHAPPELL, G. A.

INTERVIEW.

10526.

-7-

Mr. Chappell, has been very successful as an attorney in northern Oklahoma. He has invested in good lands of the country to the extent of 800 acres, and in addition to his other properties he is said to own the most valuable residence in Newkirk at the present time.

Mr. Chappell has kept a diary from 1893 to late years and in addition to that he has written a concise history of the M. E. Church organization in Newkirk from its first meeting; also he has written lengthy articles covering other moral and civic enterprises of his town.

ROBERT W. SMALL, INVESTIGATOR.