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

Field Worker's name Virgil CourseyThis report made on (date) June 10 19371. Name John Matthew Conner2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) 409 East Broadway4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 28 Year 18695. Place of birth Sabine County, Texas6. Name of Father Lawrence H. Conner Place of birth South Carolina

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Lansy Smith Place of birth Sabine County, Texas

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

CONNER, JOHN MATTHEW. INTERVIEW.

Virgil Coursey, Field Worker  
Indian-Pioneer History  
June 10, 1937

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An interview with John Matthew Conner,  
409 East Broadway, Altus, Oklahoma.

"Opportunity"—that word might express more clearly than any other single word the desire that urged me to seek other fields of endeavor. I wanted to own something of my own—to accumulate a reserve, to realize something in exchange for my efforts.

In Johnson County, Texas, I had bought a piece of land, but found it difficult to make much headway towards a final ownership. Land cost too much in proportion to the return from the yield of the land. In other words after a year's hard work, the proceeds of a crop were so small that not much could be applied to the principal of a loan.

I saw opportunity in Oklahoma. Land could be bought at a very reasonable price and there was the possibility and the likelihood that value would advance as the country became more thickly populated.

Following this process of reasoning, I sold my farm and made arrangements to come to Oklahoma.

I was married, and had my own household goods and farming implements. Our mode of travel was the same as that used by most other people at that time-- wagon and team. I was thirty-one years of age; my

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younger brother who was twenty-two and was single, also made the trip. My father came the following spring.

I found a place near the old town of Navajo which I liked. Navajo was a small trading post which was abandoned with the advent of the railroad. The little town of Headrick now receives the trade that formerly went to Navajo.

This place on which I settled was a quarter section, and there were seventy acres broken out. I bought this place with improvement for \$1320.00.

For some four or five years after the year 1900, many settlers became discouraged and relinquished their claims. In many cases a little more perseverance would have spelled the difference between success and failure. Many of the settlers who persevered, who were undaunted by failure, are today our most prosperous citizens, self-supporting in their old years, free from the worries that beset so many of the aged people who have no homes and to whom the future looks dark and uncertain.

We ate wild plums, **poke** salad, rabbits, and fish. Some few supplies could be secured from the

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Navajo store, but as a rule we made regular trips to Vernon and bought food and clothing in fairly large quantities.

I made good crops almost every year for quite a long time. My principal crops were cotton, maize, corn and oats.

After a few years, I secured some three hundred and twenty acres more of land. I bought and sold land and made quite a bit of money that way.