

MOON, J. W.

INTERVIEW.

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Field Worker, John F. Daugherty,
July 13, 1937.

Interview with J. W. Moon,
Sulphur, Oklahoma.

Born July 4, 1873, Ky.

Parents John Moon . Tennessee.
Louisa Warner Moon, Ky.

LIFE OF A PIONEER MAN.

My father was John Moon, born in 1853 in Tennessee. He was a farmer.

My mother was Louisa Warner Moon, born in 1855 in Kentucky.

There were five boys in our family. I was born on the Cumberland River in Kentucky, July 4, 1873. I came to the Indian Territory, November 15, 1892, and settled between Rush Springs and Marlow on Barnhardt's cattle ranch. I came from Kentucky to Gainesville, Texas, on the train and rode horseback to the Ranch, crossing Red River at Spanish Ford crossing (no longer in existence).

The houses on this ranch were made of cottonwood lumber, and the sheds and wind brakes were of hay. These were built of posts. Two posts were set side by side in a row as long as they wanted the walls. Then hay was

tramped tightly between these. Poles were laid across the top and hay put on top of these for the roof. I was hired to ride lines, but at harvest time there were other things to do. They sent me to Rush Springs with a load of sheaf oats for a livery stable there. My wagon was piled high, and I was driving four small jack mules. Rush Springs was a camping and watering place. All the freighting to Ft. Sill was done by ox teams, and when these freighters drove into Rush Springs they lifted the yokes from their oxen and turned them loose to water and graze.

This particular day the whole prairie was covered with oxen. The mud around these springs was waist deep but there was no way to get past except to go through it. So I drove my team in and there we stuck. Those little mules couldn't get out of that mud hole with this load of oats at all. I was wondering what to do, when I beheld oxen coming from every direction toward my wagon. They began pulling the sheaves from the wagon and it wasn't long until the wagon was unloaded. I drove out with my empty wagon and went to the

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livery stable, telling the man my tale of woe. He very kindly wrote a note to Mr. Barnhardt telling him what had happened. However, Mr. Barnhardt decided he didn't need my services any longer and I was discharged because I had lost a load of oats. I really was rather glad to get away from there for we had nothing to eat all summer but roasting ears, watermelons and an occasional mess of dough bread. We did have coffee for breakfast. We drank gyp water from Roaring Creek and slept on bear hides in the hay sheds. The foreman had a bed but the hands slept on the ground. I then stayed on Mr. Clemon's place while he and his wife went back to Tennessee on a visit. This was a pleasant place to be after bearing the hardships of ranch life for several months.

When the Cherokee Strip opened September 16, 1893, I made the Run from Orlando. The registration period lasted for ten days prior to the opening. I had a fine little cow-pony, and on the appointed day I drove him up to the line. There were soldiers stationed a quarter of a mile apart all along the line which was a hundred miles long on each side. The strip was fifty-two miles wide. At

exactly twelve o'clock these soldiers fired a shot and the race was on. Such a race I have never seen. People were there in carts, covered wagons, buggies, surreys, horseback, driving mules, oxen and horses, and many were walking. I ran for twenty-six miles straight north. I noticed in particular a man and woman dressed in riding uniforms on beautiful race horses. They passed me and disappeared on the prairie. At the end of ten miles I passed them. One of their horses had fallen and broken a leg and they were both on one horse, just creeping along at a snail's pace. I staked a claim near the present site of Three Sands. When I arrived at my claim there was only one man in sight. He rode up on a sorrel pony and staked his claim a half mile east of me. It was thirty minutes or more before people began to appear from both sides. Fire was raging everywhere, and antelope, wolves, and deer were running in every direction trying to escape the terrible commotion which was taking place in their home. I staked my pony and when night came I put my blanket down for a bed, using my saddle for a pillow. I had to move several times during the night to escape the fire. The next morning when I awoke two

antelope were standing near gazing at me with horrified eyes. When I moved they flew like the wind across the prairies. I decided I didn't like this location as it was too close to Kansas. I wanted to make a run in the Comanche and Kiowa Country, and I knew if I exercised my homestead right here I couldn't get a place later. A man came along and offered me twenty dollars for my claim. I told him he could have it at that, and when he went to pay me he just had five dollars. We agreed that he could pay the fifteen dollars later and I rode away leaving the claim for him. I never heard of him again, and the claim was his for five dollars.

In 1895 when the Comanche and Kiowa country was opened for settlement it was a draw instead of a run. There were claims for only twenty-five thousand, and the numbers higher than that didn't get a claim. I went to Old Ft. Sill to register. There were thousands of people there. Many people turned their cattle and mules loose to graze. Here is where the saying "Oh Joe, here's your mules" originated. That could be heard for miles, one after the other taking

it up and carrying it along. When any one was looking for his mules this was sung for and near. I didn't receive a claim here. My number was above twenty-five thousand.

I have gone to the Red Store at Ft. Sill many times, for supplies, while Geronimo and his band were held captives there. The Comanches were stationed there also. They lived in teepees made of weeds, and some had canvas but most of them were of weeds with a piece of canvas around the top to turn the water. They put weeds on the floor and covered them with blankets for their beds. They stayed in groups of fifty or seventy-five and were governed by a local chief who was governed by a High Chief, Quannah Parker. When these camps became dirty they moved rather than clean up. They usually moved about every two or three months. The Government issued food and cattle to them about every fifteen days. The beef was cut into small chunks, dried and carried away in small sacks. Their blankets were issued by the Government, also. When an Indian decided he wanted some money or whiskey these blankets could be bought from them for fifty cents.

Their saddles were made of two forked sticks with boards fastened to each side to which the stirrups were fastened.

It was against the law to hunt on this Indian reservation. Anybody caught with a gun was arrested. One day I was going on a freight wagon to Ft. Bill and when the wagon stopped for the night on Beaver Creek, I saw a bunch of cattle milling as if a wolf were among them. I took my gun and slipped along to the edge of the creek to see what the trouble was. I crawled along the bank and about the time I got near enough to see among the cattle I heard a clatter and bang and looking up I saw a bunch of these Comanche Indians coming toward me. Their canteens were rattling as they galloped. I fell down in the timber and hid. They passed by without seeing me. When they were out of sight, I decided I'd better get back to the wagon. As I approached I saw this bunch of Indians sitting in a circle around our camp waiting to have coffee served to them. Freighters always gave them what they asked for so they wouldn't steal their oxen nor harm them as they

drove through their reservation. Each night when they camped they would turn the oxen loose to graze. There was always a pony tied to the chuck wagon which they used to round up the cattle the next morning when they got ready to travel on. There was often a train of wagons consisting of two freight wagons and the chuck wagon all fastened together and pulled by eight yoke of oxen. Ten miles a day was about as far as they could travel.

I well remember the Chisholm trail. It was as plain as the highways are today. It was about one hundred yards wide and the cattle trails were cut into ditches. It crossed Red River east of Ryan at Ringgold, Texas. It followed what is now Highway 81 and the Rock Island Railroad, east of Marlow and Duncan east of Chickasha, going on north without a turn, running west of Perry and straight into Kansas. This was the only cattle trail across Oklahoma from Texas into Kansas at that time. It was laid out by Mr. Chisholm, a Texas cowman.

I married Mittie Monroe in Texas in 1898, and we have four children. We returned to Madill in a covered

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wagon, and we lived there until four years ago when we moved to Sulphur. I engaged in the stone business, both monuments and building stones.

I was appointed by Governor Haskell as a member of the election board to hold the county election in Bryan County. When Durant was made the county seat, Blue, Durant, and Bennington were the contestants.