

CRIST, ANDREW OILER

INTERVIEW

#8024

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INTERVIEW

Form A-(S-149)

8024

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

Field Worker's name Elizabeth L. DuncanThis report made on (date) July 14 1937

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1. Name Andrew Oiler Crist
 2. Post Office Address Pond Creek, Oklahoma.
 3. Residence address (or location) 2 Blk. S. Main Street.
 4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 18 Year 1871
 5. Place of birth Rock Island, Illinois
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6. Name of Father William Crist Place of birth Indianapolis,
Other information about father Farmer Indiana.
 7. Name of Mother Cathrine Hunsaker Place of birth Illinois
Other information about mother Housewife.
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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 Five typed sheets.

Elizabeth L. Duncan
Interviewer
July 14, 1937.

Interview with
Andrew Oiler Crist
Pond Creek, Oklahoma.

Mr. Crist and five others learned that the Cherokee Strip was to be opened for homesteading, so a week before it was to open, all six started for Caldwell, Kansas, to register, but Mr. Crist can remember only two of the parties besides himself that made the run, and they were Wm. McKinley and his brother, D. H. Crist.

Mr. Crist and the other parties stood in line for three days, but during the first day, while in line there were so many men and women who bought a place in the line and crowded others back from the registration booth that the men and women formed companies and hired guards to keep the people from buying in the line. That way they got to the registration booth sooner than if

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they had just stood in line waiting. The three days Mr. Crist and his friends were there, they had to eat and sleep in line so they would not lose their places. After Mr. Crist had registered, he returned to camp where the other boys were and all they^{do} could was to wait until Saturday, at 12:00 noon. In the meantime Mr. Crist was on the outlook for a pony to ride and on Friday, the 15th, he bought one, then on Saturday morning, when the people were preparing to make the Run, Mr. Crist saw so many better horses, that before noon he had sold his horse. Looking either way, on all sides, just as far as they could see, the people looked like a mass of milling ants. It was a sight that those witnessing it had never witnessed before. The people were in all kinds of things; some were homemade vehicles made up of the front running gears of a wagon with a box nailed on it, some on horseback, some on foot. There were fast and slow horses, but so many of the people had not the least bit of sense in running their horses, and many good horses were killed outright from running them so fast

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at the first.

The Government had burnt off the grass so they could rout the cattlemen out, as they resented very much having to give up the land. There was a double furrow plowed all along the line which went as far as the Strip extended.

After selling his horse, Mr. Crist loaded what few things he could carry with him in a coal car; there were one hundred men to the car. Mr. Crist was in car # 12 and this train pulled forty cars. At 12 noon, on September 16, 1893, the guns fired, and what rush there was everywhere! One could not hear the other speak, and the ground fairly shook from the running horses and wagons. It was like a thundering storm. When the train started out in the Cherokee Strip, the men began to crawl over the sides of the car, dropping off to make a run for their homestead.

Mr. Crist was heading for Pond Creek because they figured that would be the county seat. When he arrived, he jumped off at Pond Creek, right in the middle of the

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down by the depot. Then he started out (the street they had marked off was planned out to be the Main Street, but was changed later) and staked his lots three blocks east and one south of the railroad tracks. After he staked his lots, he left a neighbor to watch his lots while he borrowed a horse from this man and started back to see if he could see the wagon he had loaded with groceries and a tent and other belongings. He found the man by the state line coming toward Pond Creek. When they got back to Pond Creek, they put up the tent that night and started up in business the next day running a grocery store. They named the store Crist & McKinley. They used the tent also as their living quarters. At night when they would close, they would put down their beds where the people would file in and out of the tent. They lived in this tent for about fourteen days, then they started to build a store in October, and finished it in December. While they were building, it got pretty cold for them to

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live in the tent. In December, they moved into their store building. Then they sent to Kansas City to the Long Brothers Wholesale House to stock up on goods to run them for a while.

During this time, the railroad wanted to establish the county seat at Jefferson, so they gave the Indians allotments so they could have it there, but Secretary Hoke Smith took hand and moved the county seat to Pond Creek. When he did this, the railroad company said, "We will not stop at this place," and they went on through, would not even slow up. So the people began to get desperate for things. Some were leaving by this time, Mr. Crist's stock had began to run low and no way to get any more, so Mr. McKinley told Mr. Crist to order from the Wichita Wholesale House and he would go to Caldwell and get the shipment until the train would stop. That was the one way they had of getting their groceries.

Out of sheer desperation, the people about Pond Creek formed a band and started to tear up the track and wreck the trains. The Railroad Company began to

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put on guards so as to keep the people from trying to stop the train. This was kept up for about six months. One day, a load of cattle from the north was to be shipped south, so the people got together and sent men ahead to warn the trainmen to stop the train, that men were working on the rail. They tried to flag the train down, but they would not stop, so the train was derailed and the cars were turned over, killing some of the cattle. The Railroad Company sent men and guards to rebuild the tracks. The town's people would go steal the ties and rail in order to keep the work from progressing. Finally the track was finished and the cars and engine put back on the track. The company doubled its guards. The people laid off for about a month, then the company withdrew the guards. The people learned there was a trainload of longhorn steers to be shipped north, so the band of people gathered again, sent a group ahead to flag the train, but the advance were met by armed guards, and the train was running over the limit while passing through the town. When the people saw that the train was not going to stop, they began to tear up the rail. When they did,

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the rail curled over and over for about a mile, having the appearance of a large serpent. As soon as the spikes were pulled, the track would curl. The train was wrecked, but the fireman and the crew were not hurt, only twelve cattle out of 2500 head were killed, but it was a mad rush and scramble, and the awful squealing and bellowing was nearly unbearable. Upon this instance, the men of the train were arrested for not stopping and breaking the speed limit. The Railroad Company learned of this, and one of the head men of the Rock Island Company came to Pond Creek and asked what it was all about. After the situation was explained to him, that if they would give Pond Creek service, the people would quit troubling them, the Company compromised, agreeing to stop at Pond Creek twice a day, if they would quit wrecking the trains. This agreement was made and carried out.

When the Railroad Company began to stop their trains at Pond Creek, the people began to ship things and the town began to grow.

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Mr. Crist saved money by being able to ship his store stock direct to Pond Creek and his trade grew by leaps and bounds. Mr. Crist would take eggs and many other things such as chickens, hogs, cattle and produce for grocery bills that people owed him on bills created while the Railroad Company was fighting, but he came out ahead.

In 1895, he bought a farm six miles west and three south of Pond Creek. The owner of the farm sold his rights to Mr. Crist. During the day Mr. Crist would work in the store and then would go out and break sod. He broke 80 acres that summer and planted it in wheat. After six months time, he built a one-room sod house which was well built inside and out.

The year of 1896 was a poor year. The wheat did not make. Mr. Crist broke out more sod and planted wheat again, also corn. The corn was fair. The year of 1897 produced a bumper crop of wheat, everybody had a good wheat crop that year. There were quite a number

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of cattle shipped, also. The farmers bought drills, cultivators, plows and all kinds of farm implements. After that year, Mr. Crist rented out his farm because he could not tend the farm properly. In the year of 1903, he sold the farm and added to his merchandise in the store in the line of furniture, dry goods and rugs. The business was unusually good, it seemed. Mr. McKinley and Mr. Crist dissolved partnership after nineteen years, in the fall of 1912. In the year of 1918, he bought a building, including the merchandise, (there were four rooms to the building) and paid \$75,000.00 for it all.

In the year of 1919, he did \$20,000.00 worth of business. This was during the war. He paid off the debt.

Mr. Crist claims he just was fortunate in all dealings, and says that by giving our Maker credit for what comes our way, and having faith, we will all prosper in some way or another. He says he has seen the town grow and as he grows older, he does not care to prosper, only to make a living.