

DICKERSON, J. E.

INTERVIEW

10068

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WORKS RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Tenant History Report Form

DICKERSON, J. E. INTERVIEW

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Field Worker's name Robert W. Small

This report made on (date) February 16, 1938 1938

1. Name J. E. Dickerson

2. Post Office Address Nardin, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 1 mile east, 3 north Nardin

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 34 Year 1852

5. Place of birth Tennessee

6. Name of Father S. B. Dickerson Place of birth Tennessee

7. Name of Mother Margaret Compton Place of birth Tennessee

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 _____

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Field Worker, Robert W. Small
February 16, 1938

Interview with J. E. Dickerson
Nardin, Oklahoma.

I was born in Tennessee in 1852 and in 1880 moved to Hunnewell, Kansas.

In 1883 I went down into the Cherokee Strip and made a deal to work for Richmond and Son on their cattle ranch which was located a short distance east of the present site of Blackwell and it extended south some distance, lying on both sides of the Chikaskia River.

I secured logs from timber cut along the river and built a log cabin on the ranch near a creek called Lost Creek. I was then married and my wife and I lived in the cabin and I worked on the ranch at different jobs. Sometimes a bunch of cattle would be bought down in Texas and I would help to drive the herd to the ranch. In driving the cattle through the Indian Territory the Indians were always asking us for a beef to eat, as it was a custom to pay a tribute to drive herds of cattle across the different nations of the Indian Territory where they invariably

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ate of the grass along the route traveled.

Richmond and Son bought, sold and raised cattle on their ranch. I only worked a year or so on their ranch, then I moved away. There was a little wild game in the country here and there, some few deer, antelope, wild turkeys and prairie chicken. The roads of the country were mostly dim trails, with no bridges across the streams. If you came to a river crossing and the river was up you simply had to camp till the stream ran down. Sometimes in making a trip with wagon and team, a distance of fifty or sixty miles where several streams were to be crossed, it might require two or three weeks time to make the round trip.

At the opening of the Cherokee Outlet, I entered the race on a line east of Hunnewell, Kansas. I was riding a very fractious horse and in the rush and excitement he became unmanageable and I lost all chances of getting a claim. But I knew one or two men who were making the race with the expectation of selling their claim if they obtained one, and as they secured claims I immediately bought the relinquishment on one and filed on the Northwest Quarter of

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Sec. 31, Twp. 28 N., Range 2 W., for which I paid \$100.00.

I set to work digging a well, the first thing, then I built a dugout. After that I took a team and wagon and went over east of Newkirk and hauled poles to build a stable and shed for stock. A little later on I bought a one-room shack in Hunnewell, Kansas, and moved it down to the claim.

I broke out sod land at every opportunity and put out a crop in the Spring of '94 but it was a failure. The next year was but little better. In the Fall of 1896 I rented forty acres additional land which I put in wheat and the following year of 1896 I harvested what I could of the forty acres and had it threshed. When my neighbor came to get his rent for land he put his share in a sack and hauled it away in an old buggy, the amount being about three bushels. In 1897 I made an average yield of thirty-three bushels per acre, having in about one hundred twenty acres, my crop amounted to near four thousand bushels.

This big crop of 1897 was a life saver for the people of this section; good prices were realized for this bumper crop and since people could not get much credit they did not owe

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much and they could spend their money for improving their claims and buying the necessities of life; and most of them needed everything, too. From that year on we have had better crops and have added improvements to our farms through the years and built the public improvements in keeping with all others.

Our community in the early days was just like one big family. We all got along splendidly under the circumstances. In 1895 we built our first school house by public donation; largely, our church and Sunday Schools were held in private homes or under brush arbors in mild weather prior to building our school house.

It was a common occurrence for me to take my wagon and team and go to some neighbor who owned an organ and load that organ in the wagon and drive to some neighbor's house where the community would meet for social pastime. The next day I would take the same organ to some other neighbor's place, and from one to another until we had visited many places of the neighborhood and on every occasion we enjoyed ourselves immensely.

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I was justice of the peace in the early days and, not knowing the exact limits of my jurisdiction, I exercised judicial authority over most of the northern part of the Cherokee Strip and on one occasion I sent into Grant County to get a man for horse stealing.

Our old school house over here which is in good condition is vacant- not a child enters it any more. The tractor, combine, etc., have caused farmers to rent their lands out and to move to the towns. In short, the combine and tractor have been largely responsible for depopulating the rural communities in the wheat-growing sections of Northern Oklahoma.
