

DICKASON, S. M.

INTERVIEW

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Billie Byrd,
Field Worker,
May 20, 1937.

An Interview With S. M. Dickason,
Aged 68, White, Okemah, Oklahoma.

I was among the hundreds that made the run for settlement of the Cherokee Strip. I had come on horseback from Colorado purposely to make the run. The run was made September 16, 1893, during the presidency of Cleveland.

I made the run in the northwestern part of what is now Oklahoma and came in from the State of Kansas.

Most of the land making up the Cherokee Strip was bald prairie. There was no kind of timber land that would have been enough to cover a jack rabbit. There were a few trees and shrubs here and there, but there were not enough trees to make into logs.

When the different settlers had staked their claims, they would make some sort of shade or shelter from whatever shrubs or tents could be had.

There were some, but mighty few, who staked their claims for forty acres as most of the claims were staked for the usual 160 acres.

During some of the other runs, there had been humorous or pathetic incidents, but in the vicinity where I

made the run so far as I knew there were only peaceful feelings.

The people went in different directions. Some went East, West, Southwest and Southeast from where I was.

Many of the people who were not able to make runs for considerable distance staked their claims just inside of the Strip line while you could see those on horseback riding hard and stirring up a lot of dust.

I made my claim for 160 acres near what is now Waynoka, Oklahoma, and filed my claim at Alva, Oklahoma. I sold my claim years ago and moved to this vicinity.

Just as soon as the settlers could get to it, the construction of sod houses was begun. Farming was taken up the following spring.

There were little patches of almost anything that could be planted, but the red headed kaffir corn was the leading product. At least forty or eighty acres were put into the red headed kaffir corn.

The lands of the western part of the Cherokee Strip after settlement were rented out for \$2.00 an acre, the central part for \$1.50, and the eastern parts for \$1.00 an acre.

Alva was the nearest place where we obtained our supplies and flour. We bought the flour from a Jew for 50 cents per hundred pounds, and it was a dark flour which made dark biscuits. We had to go to Wichita, Kansas, or to Oklahoma City for a better and larger supply of flour.

The Indians had always had always regarded this land that was known as the Cherokee Strip as their own special hunting grounds. It has been their desire to keep the country wild, open and free so that the wild game could find a place to stay and multiply. The Indians protected the wild life just as they would their own stock in the pens. They killed only enough to supply their meat needs.

The buffalo had disappeared when I came. I have seen a lot of the buffalo bones and skulls scattered over in some places, but I never knew if they had been killed or had just died. There were some signs that showed that the buffalo had been plentiful as I noticed places where they had rested and fought flies.

I have been told that the buffalo herds had roamed along the Buffalo Creek and Buffalo Springs.

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It was where the Buffalo Creek empties into the Cimarron River that there was salt. People would come in wagons pulled by oxen to haul salt to their homes and for their stock. The cleanest of the salt was used for home use. Some places the salt was four to twelve inches thick. There was no sort of salt works constructed there then and sometimes the salt was shipped to Kansas City:

The cattlemen had owned great ranches all fenced up prior to the opening of the Strip for settlement and most of the ranches had good wells on them. Some of the rancher's time expired and others were ordered out when the Strip was to be opened for settlement.

We first obtained our water from the streams, any of the waterholes, or the old ranch wells until some of the settlers began the use of the wind mills. The wind mills never pumped continuously but they were operated by hand in such a way to pump only a day's supply of water at a time.

The only railroad was a branch line out from the Panhandle, Texas, to Alva. The settlers were subject to taxes after the seven years.