

Field Worker Gomer Gower,
July 24, 1937.

Interview with Lyman Moore,
Spiro, Okla.

Born October 25, 1874,
Scullyville County, Choctaw Nation, I. T.

Father Lyman Moore, 3/4 Creek Indian,
born-Alabama.

Mother Fannie Moore, born-Alabama
of white parentage and of the
Moncrief family.

Lyman Moore, the subject of this sketch, was born
at Scullyville on October 25, 1874.

After completing his studies in the community
school at Scullyville, he attended the Arkansas University
at Fayetteville, Arkansas, for the term of three years,
beginning in 1890. On completion of his studies at this
university he spent a year in travel, acquainting himself
with conditions outside the schoolroom.

In 1894 he secured a position in the mercantile
business of Thomas D. Ainsworth at Scullyville. Shortly
after this he was appointed as County Clerk and Treasurer
of Scullyville County by Judge Ed Lanier, in which position
he served approximately four years.

In 1897 he was appointed to the position of Deputy District Royalty Collector for a term of two years; a position which required rare ability and tact.

In 1899 he was united in marriage to Ida M. McCurtain, the daughter of Colonel Jackson and Jane F. McCurtain, and engaged in stock-raising, accumulating extensive holdings in this endeavor.

In 1907 he organized the First National Bank of Spiro, and served as assistant cashier for a period of two years, when he was elevated to the position of cashier, in which he served for a period of ten years. In the meantime he had been elected vice president (but not active).

In 1920 he organized the Farmers' State Bank of Spiro, which he managed until 1931, and then took over through consolidation the First National Bank. He held his interest intact in both these banks. In 1933-1934, it was decided by the Board of Directors, of which he was a member for both banks that the institution be discontinued and its affairs liquidated. It must be understood here that the action of the stock-holders and directors was voluntary in all respects and was taken solely for business reasons.

At this time he is engaged in looking after his considerable farm and other interests. The lands allotted to him are still held intact.

With that rare business acumen which has characterized the lives of the Moore brothers, Edgar and Lyman, the land improvements of the Moore family, under tribal regulations, had been extended and embraced the land on which the City of Spiro is now located.

It may be interesting here to note how these extensions were made under those regulations. They were made, not only by the Moore family, but by all citizens of the Choctaw Nation who so desired. Those regulations provided that where a citizen had made improvements on any land, however remote from land already held by that citizen, no other citizen could encroach to a point nearer than four hundred and forty yards to such improvements. It is thus shown that citizens could, and did, place improvements on land at a point one-half mile distant from the boundary of their original homesites, and by repeating this procedure and placing improvements on land one-half mile distant from the detached improvements,

could extend their holdings indefinitely. The only limitation being that these detached holdings did not encroach to a point nearer than four hundred and forty yards to the holdings of another citizen. When such obstructions were encountered, it was possible in most instances to buy the improvements of the original owner, pay him, and enable him to find another homesite of his own selection in accordance with the regulations. These sales of improvements would, in most instances, prove to be mutually beneficial to the parties concerned.

The holdings thus acquired by the Moore family were traversed by the Kansas City Southern and the Fort Smith and Western railways, their junction being on the east side of the City of Spiro, where a commodious and sightly union depot is now maintained. The two roads use a joint track or spur from Spiro to Fort Smith, a distance of about seventeen miles.

The two brothers, Edgar and Lyman, had a townsite platted on that part of their holdings adjoining the right of way of these railways, and before allotments of land were made, sold lots-or it may be more proper

to say-possession privileges, conditioned upon approval or disapproval of the Townsite Commission. The townsite was later approved by the Commission and the contingent sales of lots which had been made were thereby validated, and a beautiful little city was placed on the map of what is now Oklahoma. Its main business street, extending from Highway 271 to the Union Depot, and lined on both sides with flourishing business establishments, is noted for its ample width. It is now being paved with a gravel and asphalt composite.

In addition to its railway facilities, it is served by Highway 271 from the south and north, and by Highway 40 from the west. Busses arrive from and depart for Fort Smith, a distance of seventeen miles, at intervals of about two hours.

Its water requirements are adequately supplied from an artificial lake or reservoir situated about one mile northeast of the city.

For a small city, it has a number of beautiful and commodious homes, having expansive lawns studded with shrubbery. The blooming crepe myrtle at this time lends enchantment to the scene.

The founding and fostering of a city of the beauty and trade advantages as that enjoyed by the City of Spiro, by two young men, who through death had been deprived of the directing assistance of a father who died when they were both very young, is in itself an accomplishment which is a monument not alone to their sagacity and civic pride, but a greater tribute to the mother who unaided and alone inspired them with courage to undertake this and other laudable enterprises.

Mr. Moore, in a reminiscent mood, brought to mind his attendance on numerous "Indian Cries", the last being on Jonico Prairie near the home of John Jonico, about four miles west of the village of Panama.

These cries were attended principally by the full-blood Choctaws and their families, and were held at the Indian cemeteries located near some church. A family who had recently buried one of its members would give out word that a religious service and cry would be held at a given time and place and inviting all who wished to attend. When all had congregated, religious services in the Choctaw language would be conducted. These,

both preaching and singing, would be in a low, hushed tone of voice. Occasionally as many as three preachers would deliver sermons. At the close of the religious services all would repair to the nearby cemetery and for about the space of one hour would give themselves over to weeping and extolling, in low voices, the virtues of the dead relatives, after which they would return to the meeting place and enjoy a good dinner especially prepared for the occasion.

This Indian custom follows--or possibly precedes--a like ceremony practiced by the inhabitants of the mountainous regions of our Southeastern states, and is designated by them as "preaching the funeral," and may follow by some months the burial of the deceased. There is surely a similarity in the two practices.

This custom is fast giving way to more modern trends as the Indians merge with the white race.

Mr. Moore has ever been a lover of good horses and has owned several thorough-bred saddle-horses. In the pre-automobile days he indulged his fancy for fast saddle and trotting horses to no little extent,

and always employed a darky to care for them in their commodious quarters in his stables. His predilection along these lines is best portrayed by the fact that he decreed that his favorites should not be turned out into the stable yard or pasture except at night when the sheen of their glossy coats would not be impaired by the fading effect of the warm sun.

Mr. Moore very wisely refrained at all times from indulging in the "Sport of Kings" to the extent of betting on races, contenting himself with the thrill of viewing the performances of the spirited and fleet animals.

It has been noted that the position of Deputy Collector of Royalties was one requiring rare tact and ability.

The regulations concerning the payment of privilege permits by business concerns in the Choctaw Nation were that, in addition to an annual permit based upon the approximate annual amount of business done, a certain percentage was required to be paid upon the gross sales of such concerns, very much after the

manner of the present system of sales tax payments in the state. In the performance of the duties of a Deputy Collector of Royalties, Mr. Moore was required to travel over a vast territory and personally collect these payments. In many instances he would find that the concerns would attempt to conceal the true accounting of their gross business, hoping, thereby, to escape the payment of a part of what was actually due the treasury. On such occasions Mr. Moore would insist on a more accurate accounting, and a full compliance with the law.

The practiced eye of Mr. Moore stood him in good stead in estimating the gross business done, and comparing the estimate with the visible inventory of goods on hand as compared to what it was at the time of his former visit and doubtless he more than earned his keep by the exercise of vigilance .

The saddest event in the otherwise happy life of Mr. Moore was the loss, by death, of his mother, Fannie Moore, which occurred on January 31, 1933, shortly after the death of his wife, Ida M. Moore, which occurred on

June 4, 1932. Her parents, Jackson and Jane McCurtain, are historically too well known to require more than a passing notice here. Still, the noble example of a mother such as Jane McCurtain was, must have left a beneficent imprint on the life of her daughter, Ida M. Moore, the close companion and wife for a period of thirty-five years of Lyman Moore, or he would not have attained the high plane upon which he now stands, and to which she contributed through her wifely and motherly cooperation and for which her memory is revered by Mr. Moore and her children in a fitting and consoling manner.