

DUNHAM, JAMES HARVEY

INTERVIEW

#8369

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LIOGRAPHY DIV
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Elizabeth L. Duncanreport made on (date) August 10, 1937Name James Harvey DunhamPost Office Address Nash, OklahomaResidence address (or location) 1-South West of Main St.DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 23 Year 1861Place of birth Coles County, Fullers Point, IllinoisName of Father William Dunham Place of birth IndianaOther information about father farmerName of Mother Elizabeth Renfrow Place of birth VirginiaOther information about mother Housewife.

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
to be asked. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of
pages attached _____.

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FIELD WORKER ELIZABETH L. DUNCAN
Indian-Pioneer History S-149.
August 10, 1937.

INTERVIEW WITH JAMES HARVEY DUNHAM
Nash, Oklahoma.

On September 29, 1883, Mr. Dunham was married and moved to Rigo, Kansas, where he settled down on a farm. His main crops were corn and wheat. Mr. Dunham and his wife would take trips down into the Cherokee Strip and also down into what is known as Oklahoma proper.

One day when Mr. Dunham was down in Old Oklahoma hunting he ran across a fellow by the name of Bob Haynes, who was freighting from Arkansas City to the Indian Agencies down in here. He had been taken sick with a fever of some kind. Mr. Haynes had unhitched the horses and hobbled them and turned them loose as he was too sick to watch them. So he crawled into the wagon and laid down on some old sacks, and that was the way Mr. Dunham found him. The fellow told him what was the matter with him, but Mr. Dunham did not know what to do as Mr. Haynes could not go on although he was three days overdue at the

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Agency. Mr. Dunham said he would go catch the horses and get him to the Agency. Mr. Dunham stayed all night with Mr. Haynes and the next morning they started out for the Agency. They were, as nearly as Mr. Dunham could judge, about four miles off the trail. It took them two days to reach the Knapp Agency. By that time Mr. Haynes was delirious. Mr. Dunham stayed with Mr. Haynes until he was well then they both started back to Kansas.

Mr. Dunham made friends with some of the Cherokee Indians. He hunted with them and also caught many fish. They would cook them out on the open prairie around an Indian camp fire.

On September 11, 1893, Mr. Dunham and Jim Tripp came down to Cameron to register so they could make the run. It was a sight to see all the people who came from all parts of the different states. The town of Cameron was overrun with all types of people. They came in covered wagons, on freight trains, horseback and some on foot. It was a sight to behold at night,

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just as far as you could see, the lights from lanterns and tents. There was, too, quite a bit of stealing among the crowd of people.

Mr. Dunham was in line two days. It was the Ninth Company he was with. The men were formed into companies of a hundred. Before the companies were formed the people stood in line waiting their turn, but if some of them had money so they could buy their places in line that would keep the ones who had to wait, moving back in line. One man was killed on that account because the people were getting tired of being pushed back, so a mob formed and passed the word along the line, that if anyone else tried to buy a place in the line, they would mob him and different ones said, "Let's form companies and elect captains."

On September 16th, 1893, at twelve o'clock noon on Saturday the gun was fired as a signal that the people could enter the strip to homestead. It was a sight beyond words to describe the maddest scramble that

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a person could ever imagine. The ground fairly shook. You could not hear other people talk. There were many horses that were strewn along the way dead, for most of the people had no conception of how to handle horses. They made the horses go on a dead run to start with. The people were land crazed, for all a man could think of was a home. Nothing else, whatsoever, mattered.

Mr. Dunham and Mr. Tripp drove a lumber wagon, bringing with them a barrel and a five gallon jug of water, as they had heard that the streams were all dried up. They also brought a breaking plow.

From the start until they staked was one hour and thirty minutes. Mr. Dunham staked one mile west of Hawley and six miles north of Nash. His claim was in Coldwater Township. He spent the first night in fear that some one would try to jump his claim. Sunday morning Mr. Dunham got his breaking plow out and plowed a furrow around the farm, then he started digging a well, but did not finish it. That evening he put up the tent and rested until sunrise. The next morning Mr. Dunham did not know what

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to do so he made a trip over to see what Mr. Tripp was going to do. Mr. Tripp said he was going down to Government Springs to register, so Mr. Dunham decided to go down there too.

September 19, 1893, Mr. Dunham and Mr. Tripp started out for Government Springs to register. On September 23rd, 1893, Mr. Dunham and Mr. Tripp registered at Government Springs and started back to their homesteads. When they arrived Mr. Dunham found that his tent had been stolen and also that the wheels of his wagon were gone. Mr. Dunham started right away to build a one room sod house and by the last of September it was finished. He then went back up into Kansas for his livestock and feed ^{which} consisted of three head of horses, two cows, a dozen chickens, five bushels of kaffir corn and five bushels of corn. During the month of October, Mr. Dunham broke out five acres of ground and then the next month he broke out ten acres.

In the spring of 1894, Mr. Dunham broke out more sod and planted corn but it all burnt up. The following

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years were pretty hard. They had to make hominy out of corn and had to use kaffir corn ground in a coffee hopper to make coffee and cereal to eat. They had no bread. All they could get for bread was cornpone. Many a day went by when Mr. Dunham was hungry. 1897 was the best year of all the time that the new settlers had seen in Oklahoma.

In 1898, the prisco railroad was put through that part of the country. It was run right from one corner of Mr. Dunham's place to the other, cutting the farm in two. So one of the farmers on the south bought the eighty acres from Mr. Dunham and he sold the other half. He bought another farm. In 1904, he sold the farm, and bought a store in Hawley in 1905. Mr. Dunham was content with his little store. He helped many poor people. At the time he bought his store he was appointed post-office clerk. He served for fifteen years and served fifteen years as mail carrier.

In 1918, Mr. Dunham sold his store in Hawley. The four years that he carried mail he was blind but he knew his way around and he also had a dog to lead him from the

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depot to the post office. At the end of the fourth year he had his eyes operated on and had the cataracts taken off. He can see a little and still carries mail at Nash. He lives with his two sons. He also was the inspector of the Election Board for a while.

Mr. Dunham can remember the blizzard which occurred in the winter 1875, when cattle froze to death by the hundreds and when dogs and cats died from the cold in houses where fire was not kept all night. During this blizzard, in places the snow drifted as high as the eaves of the houses and in many instances, people were housebound and did not go out of doors for days.