



LOWMAN, A. T.

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Investigator  
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Interview with A. T. Lowman  
Geary, Oklahoma

I made preparations to bring my family to Oklahoma and in doing this I put double sideboards on the wagon and then put twelve inch over jets on the top. In this way I had plenty of room for our beds and lots of room under the beds to store away things that we wanted to bring out here with us. I had a good cover on the wagon and we did not fear any of the rain storms we had while we were on the road.

I brought my wife and six children with me. We came from Nebraska and were twenty two days on the road. I had four horses and we needed them as our load was heavy for the kind of roads we had. That was in 1893.

Most of the rains came at night. One time we camped in a grove of big trees in Kansas. We were near the edge of the grove and on the east side. There was a farm house near and we got permission to camp there. There was no sign of a storm when we went to bed but

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about nine o'clock the wind was blowing and those trees were bending over us and there was almost a tornado. The farmer's wife got scared and thought of that woman and children out in a covered wagon. She sent her husband with a lantern to find the wagon and get the woman and children. But the farmer was wet and we were not and the wind almost blew out the lantern flame and we were too comfortable to get out in the storm so he went back without us but our children were like all other children when they were awakened they wanted a drink and the farmer was kind enough to bring them some water even in the storm.

When we arrived in Dewey County I had a little money; this did not last very long, and the first winter the horses had to rough it like the Indian ponies as I could not buy feed for them.

Many settlers were cutting cedar posts on the north side of the South Canadian River. I thought I had just as much right to those posts as any one else, so I went over the river and cut posts, hauled them to El Reno and sold them for 5 cents each. It would

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take me seven days to cut and haul a load of posts. I got about \$5.00 for a load and this would buy coffee which was three pounds for 25 cents. Good salt pork or bacon was 4 cents per pound and one hundred pounds of flour was only \$1.50. I would always invest any extra money in flour. In this way I always had flour on hand. This came in very handy one time when we had an awful snow storm. The drifts were deep and did not melt very soon. I loaned out eleven hundred pounds of flour to my neighbors during that storm.

In the spring I was busy breaking up sod and my wife would take one team and some of the children and go out and pick up bones that were scattered out over the prairie and also in the canyons along the river. When she had a load of bones I would take it ~~to El Reno and get \$5.00 for it. Every bit of this~~ money helped to make a living; we bought as few clothes as we could get along with.

If I had my life to live over again I would wait five years and let the other fellow bear the hardships of a new country. It is no place for women and

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children. We had three babies born after we came out there on the claim. We were happy and did not go hungry but it is just too hard; I would never do it again if I were young.

The places of amusement were the country store and the post office. Saturday afternoon every one who could would knock off working and go to the store. There the crowd would play ball, pitch horseshoes, run horse races and exchange the gossip of the neighborhood. Many picnics were planned for Sundays and there were fishing parties and dances.

Watonga was our nearest post office and was twenty-five miles away. The road angled across the country and ran through a corner of my yard. Later, the country was surveyed and fenced and the section lines observed. The Frisco Railroad was built through to Fay. Then the Orient was built later. That was about 1910 I think.

I broke sod with a sod plow, and planted corn, kaffir and later wheat. There were no crows in those days but the blackbirds were just as bad and did as much damage as the crows do now.

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We were not bothered with the Indians except Big Baby, a Cheyenne. He would come to our house and he would time his visits so that he would be there at meal time. We always gave him something to eat. Our neighbors would tell us not to do this, that Uncle Sam was feeding him. But my wife said she would rather have his good will than his ill will and she always gave him something to eat. He would see her on the street in Watonga or Geary and he would pat her on the back and say, "Good squaw, good squaw." Big Baby went blind a few years before he died but he knew our voices if we were near him.

We had Old Settlers picnics after a few years and people would come for twenty and twenty-five miles in wagons, carts and sometimes on foot and many on horseback. They would camp for a week, visit and play games. ~~These picnics were held on Big Baby Creek between Oakwood and the South Canadian River.~~

Sawmills came into the country and I used to cross the South Canadian River to work and often the water would rise while I was working and I would be

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compelled to stay away from home as long as three days before I could cross the river.

I built a house 16 X 20 feet; I had a door in the center and windows on each side. This house I built of native lumber. I did not get a floor in the house until two years after we had moved in. The loose sand would get as much as three inches deep. This was also very dusty. We would build a fire in the center of the room and the smoke would go right on through those clapboards on the roof. We had only a cook stove and this did not keep us warm. Then my wife got so tired of wading around in that sand that she insisted that we spread straw on the floor and that kept down the dust and the children did not get so dirty. But it did away with our building a fire in the center of the room.

This house was in a low place and we had a flood that came up into the house. My wife wanted to move some place else so I built a dugout and made three rooms out of it. It was 12 X 32 feet. One end was higher than the other and we lived in one

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end for a while and kept our horses in the other end. This was built up of native lumber and it was green. When it shrunk there were cracks three inches wide. I made some mortar of "gyp" and sand and then put this on the roof three inches deep. The sides of the dug-out were also cemented up with the mixture of gyp rock pounded up fine, and it was hard and white and it was really a nicely finished house. We built a shelter for the horses and had all the three rooms for ourselves. Later I put a shingle roof over the flat roof and it was cool in summer and warm in winter.

There were lots of sand cherries and my wife would can or dry everything that she could, in this way we had a lot of wild fruit put up; wild grapes and plums were easy to get. Tomatoes used to grow out there just like you see pictures in the garden seed catalogs.

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Our children went to the district school; at first we had three months; then they got more money and extended the term to four, five, six, seven and finally we had an eight month term. Two of my boys

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would not go to school. The girls went pretty much of the time.

I had a reloading outfit for my shot gun and on rainy days the boys and I would re-load a lot of shot-gun shells while we had to stay in doors. These were to kill turkeys, shoot at coyotes and skunks that came to bother our chickens.

My wife raised one hundred and fifty little chickens with the twelve old hens that we started out with. I bought a cow the second year we were on the place, and later got a start of hogs and then we had our own meat, milk and butter. We tried turkeys but they would stray off a mile or two and were too much trouble unless some one herded them.

I was handy and I would make our chairs from saplings or small oak trees and put split bottoms in them and they looked just as nice as that one chair that I bought. I also half soled the shoes for the family. We all did our share. And our neighbors did the same. We all kept hustling along and there was not one in twenty-five who did not make a "go" of it.

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We had neighbors, an old man and woman, and he got a pension of \$80.00 every three months but they did not get along any better than the rest of us because they always had that money spent before they got it. If I made \$5.00 and got groceries with it I had to start thinking where I was going to get the next \$5.00 as I knew that what I had would not last long.

One of the best "breaks" we ever had was when I hauled four loads of posts to Kingfisher and cleared \$84.00. I put most of that money into things that would keep and things that we needed, like fruit jars and flour, leather for shoe soles, coal oil, etc.