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Interview with Thomas Oscar Newsome.  
Mill Creek, Oklahoma.  
By John F. Dougherty, Field Worker.  
May 17th, 1937.

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LIFE OF A PIONEER MAN.

My parents were Bill Newsome and Mandy Pascall Newsome, both born in Texas. (Dates unknown). Father was a farmer. There were fourteen children in our family.

I was born, March 9, 1872, in Parker County, Texas.

I have been a farmer all my life.

I came to Indian Territory in 1890. We came in covered wagons. There were two wagons and we drove horses. We crossed Red River at Sevils Bend on a ferry. We camped on Bear Creek near Courtney Flat. We tied our horses out, for the grass was waist high, and it was good grazing. The next morning they were gone. We could find no trace of them, so father posted a reward, and in a few days a man brought them to us and claimed the reward. This was quite often done in those days. I've seen cattle driven away from their ranges many times, to collect rewards. When our horses were stolen we had no way to travel, so we located at Courtney Flat, near Leon, on the Red River in the Chickasaw Nation.

Our first house was a log house with no windows and a dirt floor. We had a cat chimney. I can remember getting up many a night to pour water on the chimney to put out the fire.

They frequently caught fire. We had a dug well at this place. We next moved on Chickasaw Bill Bolen's place, east of Duncan, and then to Doyle.

I carried the mail on a horse from Doyle to Burt, during the time we lived here. Father and the postmaster at Doyle, surveyed a road through the timber for me to travel. One morning when I was on this route, I found a newly built fence across my trail, so I took a hatchet and cut the wires. The man certainly was angry about it, and we had a lawsuit, which I won. He had to move his fence, so the mail could be carried.

There were plenty of wild turkeys and deer. We killed deer with a 44 Winchester saddle gun.

We raised corn and cotton, and never had a crop failure. We hauled our cotton to Duncan and Marlow and got about five or six cents a pound for it. The first bale I ever got ten cents a pound for, I hauled to Nacona, Texas. I thought I was a rich man, and that money stayed in my pocket for a long time. There were no places to go to spend money in those days, and when a man got ten dollars in his pocket, it stayed there.

We traded hides for groceries. There were plenty of fur bearing animals, and we hunted and trapped through the winter.

We broke land with oxen and a home-made plow. It was made with a joint of steel or iron, and rods leading back to turn the sod. These oxen were peculiar animals. I've had them lie down many a time while I was working them and I had to build a fire under them to get them up. One day I was hauling logs with them, and I had a water jug hanging on the front of the tongue. The wind blew into this and made a buzzing sound. The oxen became frightened and ran away, scattering logs all over the country.

We planted our cotton by hand when we first moved here. Then we made a planter out of a nail keg. We got poles for runners and put a broom stick through the keg for a spindle. There were nails in this spindle to stir the cottonseed, as the keg rolled over. There was a hole bored in each stave, and the keg was fastened to the runners. There was a wooden joint in front, attached to a cross piece, which opened up the furrow, and a board behind which covered the seed. As the horse walked this keg rolled, and the seed came through the holes into the furrow. We used eye and grubbing hoes for hoeing.

We hauled our corn to Pearl on Fish Creek to a grist mill to be ground into meal. This mill had rock burrs. We also gritted corn at home on a home made gritter, when it was too hard for roasting ears, but not hard enough to take

to mill. This gritter was made of a piece of tin rounded, with nails driven through it. The ear of corn was rubbed over this and it made fine meal. This meal would not keep very long, and we would grit only what we wanted for a short time.

We bought very little sugar. We used sorghum, which we made, for sugar. We never bought candy for our children. We made candy out of the sorghum.

We would get a little wild horehound. boil it, and make a tea. Then we flavored our molasses candy with this.

We cooked on a fireplace with a skillet and lid.

We made coffee out of meal. We parched the meal, and boiled it for coffee. We drank water out of a gourd.

When we got sick, mother went to the prairies and got senna leaves, horehound, balimony weed, dog wood, celindia, and black haw. She boiled these and made a tea, which we had to drink. It was a bad dose, but it certainly cured our minor ailments. There were no doctors at that time. I didn't know what a doctor was until I was twenty years old.

We kept spunk, which we found in hollow trees, for making fires. We struck a flint rock with a piece of steel and the spark would ignite this spunk.

We made our own soap. We had ash hoppers, and the lye

dripped into a large gourd. When the gourd was full, it was poured into a vessel and kept for making soap. This soap was an all purpose soap. We used it for everything. We washed our clothes with a paddle. We'd put the clothes in to boil, and take them out and lay them on a board. We had a paddle made of a hewed log with holes bored in it. We would beat the dirt out of the clothes with this. We knew nothing about wash boards.

Our beds were poles fastened to the corners of the house. There were four poles for the posts, and other posts for rails. Then poles were fastened across from rail to rail for slats. There were no springs. We made mattresses out of straw or shucks and put feather beds on top of these. These beds rattled like hogs in a corn crib. We used blocks of wood for chairs, and later got nail kegs and pine boxes.

Our clothes were all home spun, and our socks were knit. We dyed our cloth with bark. Red Oak and Black Jack made two shades of brown. Polk Berries made red, and walnut bark made black.

Old Uncle Mike Davis, a neighbor, had an old mare staked out. He sent his boy, who was about eight years old, after the mare. A bunch of Commanche Indians caught him, tied him to the mare, and took him away with them. They kept him for

about two years, and brought him back in the neighborhood and traded him to a white man for a quart of whiskey. The white man found out who the boy was, and returned him to his parents, who were overjoyed at his return. He learned to speak their language, and about how they lived.

I gave a man one hundred bushels of corn for a pony.

We sold good cows for seven to ten dollars.

We received three to five cents per dozen for eggs, and sold large fryers for ten cents each. Hens were sold by the dozen for about three dollars.

I was married in Gainesville, Texas, in 1892. We have eleven children. I moved to Murray County, in March, 1937.

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