

McGANLESS, J. W.

INTERVIEW

#4492

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Thad Smith, Jr.

This report made on (date) 6-16-37

1. Name J. W. McCannless

2. Post Office Address Chickasha, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 516 Pennsylvania Ave.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 26 Year 1857

5. Place of birth Tennessee.

6. Name of Father John McCannless Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about father was Confederate Soldier

7. Name of Mother Mary Morris Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about mother Buried in Dallas, Texas.

Notes 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. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 6

Thos Smith Jr.

Interviewer

6-18-37

Interview with J. W. McCanless
Chickasha, Oklahoma.

My father -in-law and I left Hillsboro, Texas, in the spring of 1889 and headed for the opening of old Oklahoma.

We each had a wagon pulled by an ox team. We forded Red River north of Burkburnett, Texas, and drove through the Kiowa and Comanche Reservations.

We forded the South Canadian River north of Minco. One of my steers that I was driving when I left home had given out and I had traded him to a rancher for a wild one that I put in the other's place. By the time we reached the Canadian River the wild steer was pretty gentle but still didn't know very much about pulling, and on my way across the river he got down in the river and I had to cut him loose and I lost him.

When we landed in old Oklahoma it was in June, 1889. We hadn't made very good time due to several mishaps we had on our trip.

We knew the run was over, but we still were not discouraged and we commenced to hunt for claims.

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The first place we stopped to cook our lunch, after we landed in old Oklahoma, two men rode up on horses and told us to move on. They thought we might be going to try to take their claims away from them but after we explained that we only wanted to cook our meal everything was all right.

e drove on northeast and we didn't have to go far before we each found claims that hadn't been filed on.

My claim was five miles north and two miles east of Union City.

After staking our claims we drove to Kingfisher to file. The first day there were about a hundred men in line at the Land Office so we lined up with the other men. The Commissioners did not get down to us that day, but told us to come back the next day and line up the way we were then.

The next morning e were there bright and early and found fifteen men sleeping on the Land Office steps. After the office men opened up, several of us who had waited in line the day before

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went to the rear door of the Land Office and knocked and when one of the men came to the door we told him that if we were not allowed to file that day, that there would not be any Land Office in Kingfisher the next day.

When the front door was opened of course the men who had slept on the steps rushed in to file but the fellow we had spoken to told them that they would have to go out and get at the foot of the line, as some of the men in line had been waiting there for two days to get filed.

All of the men who had gone there from near Union City got filed that day, and we started back to our claims.

I went on back to Texas after my wife, and another man and his wife wanted to come back with us, so our wives drove the wagons and we drove about fifty head of cattle. We did not know that the cattle had tick fever when we left with them but we soon found out and after we crossed Red River, at Red River Station, into the Chickasaw Country, I had an opportunity to sell the cattle, which I did, for

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\$14.00 per head.

When we arrived at our claim I started to work with a pick and shovel and dug a hole in the ground. I made what was called a half dugout out of this hole by building about five feet above the ground with logs-chinked with mud. I covered the dugout with a framework of poles and then covered them with brush and then put dirt on top of the brush. This might seem to be a very crude roof, but it turned the water. The floor of the dugout was red clay and after it was wet down a few times and packed by every day usage, it became nearly as hard as a rock and was not hard to keep clean.

The first year on my claim I did not get very much land broken out and what little I did get broken out I sowed in turnips. They made good and I put up what I thought we would eat during the winter and fed the balance to my horses and cows.

The next year I got more land broken out and sowed it all in wheat. I made about eighteen bushels to the acre, which I sold for about 35 cents a bushel at El Reno.

About the third year I sowed wheat but the black rust hit it and I only made two bushels to the acre.

I bought most of my groceries at the Bee Hive Grocery in Oklahoma City but some of my neighbors who had not been as fortunate as I, were issued groceries at Yukon, by the Government.

When I first settled on my claim there were thousands of prairie chickens, quail and wild geese, but they did not stay long after the opening of the country.

Most of the homesteaders would help one another by working and in various other ways.

There were several homesteaders who were good people but a neighbor could ride up to one of their houses at meal time and the man would say that he would come out and talk as soon as he finished eating his meal. These settlers would never ask a neighbor to share a meal with them.

For the first three years we did not have school houses nor church houses, but after that school houses were built three miles apart and church services were held in them.

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Before the country was permanently settled, that is, men would leave their household furniture and other things in their dugouts and maybe be gone six months and no one ever stole anything, but after every one was settled and times became so hard, stealing began in earnest.
