

HARRIS, WALTER

INTERVIEW

#9071

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

308

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HARRIS, WALTER INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Jimmie Birdwell

This report made on (date) October 18, 1937

1. Name Walter Harris

2. Post Office Address Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 620 Northeast First Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 4 Year 1862

5. Place of birth Kentucky

6. Name of Father Walter Harris Place of birth Unknown

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Unknown Place of birth _____

Other information about mother _____

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 2.

An Interview with Walter Harris, Negro Pioneer.
By - Jimmie Birdwell - Investigator.
October 18, 1937.

Walter Harris came to Wagoner from Kentucky in 1883. He came in a wagon, driving a team of mules that were so poor that he had to stop along the way to let them rest.

Harris lived out east of Wagoner in the bottoms and when he farmed he share-cropped. He did not farm very much and when he did the land owner would furnish everything, team, tools and feed. The share-cropper got half.

Harris never had hogs and only a few chickens.

Sometimes the land owner would furnish a cow.

He made more money working on farms than he could make farming. He would work on a farm during the summer months and hunt all winter. Harris said that the life of a negro was hard, he had to work for the lowest of wages, sometimes twenty-five cents per day. He said if he tried to farm for himself the landlord would beat him out of his share of the crops,

giving him barely enough to live on.

The only time he would really make any money was when he would hunt and sell fur, mostly opossum and skunk hides.

There was not any school for negroes. If the parents could not teach the children they did not get any schooling, and most negroes then did not know enough to teach their children. Harris said that he was pushed around from one place to another. No one wanted a negro living close to him. He finally came to Oklahoma City.