

MCKINLEY, WILLIAM HARRISON

INTERVIE.

#8368

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

Field Worker's name ELIZABETH L. DUNCAN

This report made on (date) August 9, 1937

1. Name William Harrison McKinley
2. Post Office Address Pond Creek, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) S.W. East 1 South Rock Island Depot
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 6 Year 1859
5. Place of birth Junction City "Geary Co." Kansas
6. Name of Father William Harrison Place of birth Claremont County, Ohio
McKinley Born Jan. 18, 1822. Union Army.
Other information about father Farmer - also a Civil War Veteran
7. Name of Mother Sarah Ann Elrod. Place of birth Claremont County Ohio
Born July 28, 1823.
Other information about mother House wife - Doctor

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 1.

FIELD WORKER ELIZABETH L. DUNCAN
Indian-Pioneer History S-149
August 9, 1937.

INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM HARRISON MCKINLEY
Pond Creek, Oklahoma.

Mr. McKinley's father moved from Claremont, Ohio, to Canton, Fulton County, Illinois. He bought a farm and this farm had a coal mine on it. However, Mr. McKinley did not know the coal mine was there when he bought the farm. One day, about two years after he had bought the farm, he was out digging wells all over the place, trying to locate good water. The last well he dug, he struck a black substance which was in layers. Mr. McKinley asked some of his neighbors to come over to see what this black substance was. They told him that it was coal and that they would help him dig it out if he would give them some. He agreed to it. Mr. McKinley also sold coal.

In 1858, he sold out and bought a farm at Junction City, Kansas. In 1859, Mr. McKinley's son, William, was born. As he grew older, William Jr. would make trips down into the Cherokee Strip with his father to haul buffalo meat back up into Kansas. During 1875 he came

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down into the Cherokee Strip after the terrible blizzard had passed. Mr. McKinley said he saw frozen cattle for miles. The ranchers would go out and cut the hide loose around the necks and skin the cattle by hitching a team of mules onto the hides. They would spread the hides out on the ground and stack them as high as possible. Then the freighters would stack these hides on their wagons as high as they could and rope them on. The freighters would also get permission from the ranchers to take the carcasses of the cattle and cut them up in quarters and bring the meat back up into Kansas and distribute it among the farmers, as the meat was good. That was the McKinleys' last trip down into the Cherokee Strip.

During the year of 1893, William McKinley, Jr., learned that the Cherokee strip was to be opened for homesteads. So on September 12th, 1893, William McKinley and his brother, Thomas McKinley, Mr. Crist, and Mr. Duffey, came to Caldwell in a covered wagon,

bringing food supplies and water. Mr. McKinley also brought a riding horse. After Mr. McKinley saw all the people who were already there he told his companions that there was no use in trying to get a homestead, but his companions talked him into the notion of staying. The boys all lined up to register, but the crowd that they were informed companies of a hundred and they appointed a captain to let them know when their company was to fall in line to register.

Mr. McKinley figured out that his horse was not as fast as the other horses he had seen, so he sold it.

On September 16th, 1893, at 12:00 o'clock noon, the guns were fired. Mr. McKinley and his companions got on the train. They were in car Number 49. The train was not allowed to go over thirty miles an hour, and so the horses outran the train quite a distance. The men would crawl over the sides of the coal cars and drop off while the train was moving. Mr. McKinley and Mr. Crist got off right in the center of Pond Creek. Mr. McKinley staked his two lots three blocks east and

one block south of Mr. Crist's claim. Also Mr. Crist staked two lots and they combined their claims. After they had staked their claims, Mr. McKinley went back up toward Caldwell to see if he could locate the covered wagon. The covered wagon had the store goods in it also their tent and other belongings. He located it quite a way off the Chisholm Trail going in a south-westerly direction. Mr. McKinley helped the man who was driving the covered wagon get straightened out on his directions and then he went on ahead to let the men know that he had located the wagon. About six o'clock that evening the wagon with the supplies pulled into Pond Creek. As soon as the wagon arrived Mr. McKinley and Mr. Crist put up the tent and the rudely constructed shelves to put the canned goods on so they could be able to sell their merchandise.

The following day, which was Sunday, was a very busy day for Mr. McKinley and Mr. Crist as there were lots of people who had not brought any supplies down with them. The people would come to the store before

Mr. Mc Kinley and Mr. Crist were up and dressed. They served the people as faithfully as they possibly could while in the little tent store.

The following month they laid a floor in the tent and built up the sides so as to keep the cold out. Then in the month of November, they finished up the one room where the tent stood and by the month of December, they had built a two room store, but in the meantime, while they were building they began to have trouble with the railroad.

The railroad company wanted the county seat at Jefferson, as they had given the Indians allotments so as to hold the county seat there. Then Hoke Smith, Secretary of the Interior, took the matters into his own hands and moved the county seat to Pond Creek, and when this was done the railroad said, "we will not stop at Pond Creek;" and disregarded the people's plea. It was very necessary that the railroad should stop at Pond Creek, as there were lots of things being sent down in here from Kansas to the different families

who had homesteaded here.

The battle between the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific railroad and the people of Pond Creek started then. The people gathered together in bands and started out trying to flag the trains down, but their attempts were met by volleys of shots fired from the passing trains. However, the shots from the trains were fired high enough to miss the band of people. The people began to get desperate, so they informed the railroad company that if the trains would not stop, the railroad company would have to suffer as the people were suffering. The people began to catch freight trains going through Pond Creek with food stuff; they would break the seals on cars and dump off barrels of flour and all kinds of canned goods; the railroad company began to report these thefts to the United States Government and Government men were sent into Pond Creek to check up on the report. The people told these Government men the reason for their

behavior. The Government men turned around and went back; the people became a little bolder all the time. They began to tear up the tracks and take the ties and cut them up for fire wood. But this did not seem to make the trains stop at Pond Creek. The railroad company began to put out men to guard the tracks. The people would keep the guards in a stew all the time. They would go away up the track and tear it up. Then by the time the guards would get down to the place where the track was being torn up, the band of people up above the guards would start in tearing the track, up there.

When the spikes were pulled the track would curl over and over just like a coiled spring. Mr. McKinley said sometimes the tracks would be coiled like that for more than a mile. Trains were derailed quite a number of times, cattle were killed, and coal cars would be emptied when the trains were derailed. Then, too, the people would turn the cattle loose and let them run. There was quite a lot of hard feeling among the people against the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific railroad.

During the time of the fight between the people and the railroad company Mr. McKinley and Mr. Crist would have to go to Caldwell and Jefferson to get their shipments of goods. They had hard times getting the wagon across the Salt Fork River. They had to hitch four head of horses to the wagon to pull it across. On one of these trips Mr. McKinley saw a wagon load of sugar go down in the water when a man was attempting to cross Salt Fork River. The water was pretty high. The man driving jumped into the water and unhitched the horses to save them. When the water was high Mr. McKinley camped for three days on the banks of the Salt Fork River until the water subsided. When the water went down they began to hunt for the wagon load of sugar, but the wagon was never found, and as for the sugar, it had melted.

The hauling of dry goods was kept up for six months. During the sixth month, the railroad company compromised with the people of Pond Creek, saying that if the people at Pond Creek would let the trains and

the tracks alone the trains would stop at Pond Creek; so the agreement was signed and the railroad company stopped the trains at Pond Creek to deliver the freight and other stuff, and the people stopped tearing up the railroad track.

The town of Pond Creek didn't seem to flourish as the people thought it would. The weather was disagreeable and the hot winds were terrible in the summer time. There was no good water in Pond Creek. People had to buy water at 25¢ a barrel.

In 1896 Mr. William McKinley was married. He then took one of the lots on which he had homesteaded and built a small house on it. The trade at the store was getting better all the time. He and Mr. Crist had all the business they could handle, but yet the trade increased. Mr. McKinley told Mr. Crist that he thought he would start a store of his own after a while. So in later years the two dissolved partnership, Mr. Crist moving one block north and one block west from the old store. Mr. McKinley bought a place one block north, on the northeast corner of the main street.

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Many a hungry man and woman would come into the store. Mr. McKinley helped them all he could, for times were really hard for some of these people. Others were cared for by their families in Kansas.

In 1922, Mr. McKinley traded his stock of goods for a farm in Canadian County close to Union, twelve miles south of ElkReno. Then later he bought two farms, One farm was west and the other farm was south of Pond Creek.

Mr. McKinley was appointed postmaster of Pond Creek under Coolidge and he served as postmaster also under Hoover and part of a term under Roosevelt. Altogether, he served twelve and a half years as postmaster of Pond Creek.

Mr. McKinley also was elected mayor of Pond Creek. The year he was elected mayor he supervised putting in the water system, as there were only a few cisterns in Pond Creek that were fit to use.

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The first cottonwood tree that was planted in Pond Creek was planted by Mrs. Conrad Strecker, who still lives. The tree still stands.

Mr. McKinley lives on the lots where he homesteaded. In 1935, he built a beautiful home and he has two children, both of whom have Bachelor's Degrees in College.

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