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ATTWOOD, ROBERT W.

INTERVIEW

8694

279

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

ATTWOOD, ROBERT W.

INTERVIEW

8694

Field Worker's name Ethel B. TackittThis report made on (date) September 15 1937

1. Name Robert W. Attwood
2. Post Office Address Hobart, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) _____
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 24 Year 1887
5. Place of birth Scottsville, Allen County, Kentucky

6. Name of Father Clayton Attwood Place of birth Kentucky
 Other information about father Confederate Soldier, Civil War
7. Name of Mother Frances Straits, Attwood Place of birth Kentucky
 Other information about mother From a Pioneer Family of Kentucky.

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 7.

ATTWOOD, ROBERT W.

INTERVIEW

8694

Ethel B. Tackitt,
Interviewer,
September 15, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. Robert W. Attwood,
Hebart, Oklahoma.

I was born at Scottsville, Allen County, Kentucky, December 24, 1857. My parents, Clayton Attwood and Frances Straits Attwood, were both natives of Kentucky.

I came to Texas where I lived until 1887, then I moved to Old Greer County which was under control of the big cowmen at that time. I came from Dallas County, Texas, and as I was not a cowman, I settled near Doan's Crossing on Red River. I got a claim and built a dugout there for there was a store and a small settlement around Doan's Crossing.

There were few settlements nearer than Mangum at that time. Ranches were scattered over the country, but there was no farming except a few patches along the creeks where some ranchman had fenced in a little place and had undertaken to grow a little feed or perhaps his wife might have planted a little early garden. The cattle usually broke down these flimsy wire fences, as all the wire had to

ATTWOOD, ROBERT W.

INTERVIEW

8694

- 2 -

be hauled from Quanah or Vernon and hauling was such a task that all the wire was used on pasture fences and not much wasted on garden patches.

I worked at fence building, digging dugouts, freighting for the ranchmen and did most any kind of work I could get. Many times I would be away from home two and three weeks at a time and some times longer. My wife was left alone as our children were babies. She took care of what little stock and other property we had and lived in constant fear of the snakes, polecats and wolves, as well as fear of the Indians who came that way in going back and forth to Quanah and Vernon, from the Cheyenne, Kiowa and Comanche country. One time I came home and she had been frightened almost to death by Quanah Parker and some of his tribe, who had come by our place and stopped. They had not harmed her or anything about the place but she feared them so much that it made her sick.

When taking a wagon and team across the country it was the custom for a man to take along a pick and shovel and when he came to a creek or gully that he wanted to cross he would simply drive up to the place, stop his team and proceed to dig down the bank until it was level enough to get the

ATTWOOD, ROBERT W.

INTERVIEW

8694

- 5 -

wagon and team across. Some times this required only a few minutes and some times it took hours to fix a crossing and in this way many permanent crossings were ^{made} on the creeks.

If a cowboy happened to come along, he would tie his rope to the end of the wagon tongue and then to the horn of his saddle and help pull the wagon across.

I farmed as best I could, having few tools and little to work with. Seeds were hard to get but in 1889 or 1890, I raised some good cotton and as there was no gin in the country, I hauled it across Red River to Vernon, Texas, and shipped it on the railroad to Wichita Falls, Texas, to have it ginned.

In 1891 the country had settled up quite a good deal as the large ranchers had been replaced by smaller ranchmen who had cut up the big pastures into smaller pastures and many Nesters had come into the country with the object of securing land and making farm homes. I moved to a place fifteen miles west and five miles north of Mangum, into what is now the Dear Creek Community. Here I got a claim and built a dugout. There were a few settlers

ATTWOOD, ROBERT W.

INTERVIEW

8694

- 4 -

in the country and more were coming. My children had grown to where they needed to know something that we had not given them.

One day I came home after being gone some time and my wife said to me that a man had been there that day and asked if he might have an appointment to preach in our home on a certain time. I had been converted when a boy in Kentucky, but I had been in the West so long and had not given such things any thought, until I guess I was clear back and about as rough as they get to be, so my wife had not known what to tell the preacher. I told her to tell him when he returned, "Yes, you are welcome to preach in our dugout." When the appointed time came I met Reverend Solomon, a Baptist preacher, who was going over the country preaching wherever he could get the few settlers together. The neighbors came in and we had services and he left an appointment for the next month. The settlers got together and decided that we would build a dugout and have school, Sunday School and preaching in it.

ATTWOOD, ROBERT W.

INTERVIEW

8684

- 5 -

By this time William Paxton, Thad McMin, Sam Saulsberry, Paxton, Neil McMillian, Ben Whitener and Amos Ross had all settled in the valley and all had children who needed school and church. Everybody got busy taking their teams and wagons, picks, shovels and scrapers and went to the selected spot on the bank of a small branch which runs into Deer Creek on Neil McMillian's land and we dug a hole in the bank big enough as we thought to hold the congregation and about four feet deep. We had made up enough money to buy lumber to build up the sides and floor and we put in a few glass half windows on the sides and shingles on the roof. Some of the men took teams and hauled the lumber from Vernon and so the first church and schoolhouse in the community was built.

All the denominations preached in the dugout, preachers sending their appointments a month ahead and that way there were services two or three times a month. There were Reverend Solomon and Reverend Finley of the Baptist Church, Reverend Bryant who lived in the Delhi Community and was a Free Methodist and Reverend Bird who was a circuit rider for the South Methodist Church. These men were everybody's preachers and on Preaching Day, people came here from ten and fifteen miles around. Joe Frazier and his family who

ATTWOOD, ROBERT W.

INTERVIEW

8894

- 6 -

had moved in from Parker County, Texas, led the singing and few radio singers of the present can equal him in anyway.

Barney Edwards taught the first school in this dugout which was called in fun "Rock College" because part of the sides were built out of the native stones on the ground; the schoolhouse was generally patched up.

I felt that I must act differently from the way I had been going and one day while I was with Brother Solomon at the Jester schoolhouse where ^{we} had an appointment, he said, "Bob Attwood wants to say something." I don't know how he knew it, but I was nearly dead to preach, so I got up and talked a little but I surely was happy and after that, I went with Brother Solomon some and then Ben Whitener and I went up to the Salt Works near where Salton is now located and Mrs. J. J. Chaney asked us to preach at their house, which we did and left an appointment. Reverend J. J. Chaney was running the salt works at that time and he helped us with our preaching. After a few years the schoolhouse which had been

ATTWOOD, ROBERT W.

INTERVIEW

8694

- 7 -

built about a quarter of a mile south of the site of the present village of Jaster was moved down on Deer Creek about half a mile north of the dugout and was used as a church and schoolhouse in later times.

There was a long neighborhood discussion over the moving of this schoolhouse. There were not many children near it and many people felt that it should be moved to a more central location, but Mrs. Caver had been instrumental in building it and she refused to allow it to be moved. She had gone out among the cowboys and solicited money from them with the promise that they should have dances in the schoolhouse when it was built and she was determined to keep her promise so she went down and locked the door and would not let anybody in or allow the house to be moved. This lasted for several years but at last Hutchins was put on the School Board and as there were no longer any cowboys near who wanted to dance in the schoolhouse, Mrs. Caver was over-ruled and the house was moved. It was used down on Deer Creek for awhile then it was accidentally burned down. I have lived constantly in Greer County and in Kiowa County for fifty years and I still own farms in Greer County. Such things as the roads and buildings have changed a good deal but the old timers are good to meet.