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BALDERSTON, ELLSWORTH. INTERVIEW 9874

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

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BALDERSTON, ELLSWORTH.

INTERVIEW.

#9874.

Field Worker's name Robert W. Small,  
This report made on (date) January 26, 1938

1. Name Ellsworth Balderston,  
2. Post Office Address R. F. D. #1, Nardin, Oklahoma.  
3. Residence address (or location) One-half mile south, one and three-quarter miles west of Nardin.  
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 24 Year 1862  
5. Place of birth Illinois.

6. Name of Father Joseph Balderston Place of birth Ohio.  
Other information about father Farmer and school teacher.  
7. Name of Mother Anna Fisher Balderston Place of birth Ohio.  
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 Six.

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Robert W. Small,  
Investigator.  
January 26, 1938.

Interview with Ellsworth Balderston,  
R. F. D. #1, Nardin, Oklahoma.

Ellsworth Balderston was born on November 24, 1862, in the state of Illinois. In 1891, Mr. Balderston made a trip from Hunnewell, Kansas, down the Hunnewell trail, crossing the Salt Fork River at Pond Creek by fording the stream as no bridges were then to be found in that part of Oklahoma and went thence on south and west to the North Canadian River where he crossed it near the Rock Island Railroad line; then he traveled here and there over different sections of the country; he visited the towns of Kingfisher, El Reno and other places. At the time he was at El Reno many Indians lived thereabouts and Mr. Balderston went through some of the Indian colonies which consisted of numerous tepees erected in close proximity to each other; in the center of each tepee was a fire or fireplace on the bare earth; the Indians gathered small limbs of wood and carried them into the tepees and laid them across the fire. The smoke from the burning wood ascended through an opening at the top and center of the tepee where the poles which

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supported and held the tepee expended in a circular manner; the walls were crossed and fastened together by strands of rawhide leather or similar fastening. In some of the tepees they had beds erected from poles cut from native timber.

The Government furnished the Indians with mule teams, wagons and harness. The Indians would remove the top side boards of the wagon and lay poles across the bottom boards for the squaw and children to sit on when they went anywhere and the Indian man would sit in the spring seat alone and drive the team.

Mr. Balderton went to the Sac and Fox country when it was opened to settlement just to see the country and witness the opening. He did not like the country for farming purposes.

At the opening of the Cherokee Strip Mr. Balderston made the run on horseback from a place four miles west of Hunnewell, Kansas, and staked a quarter section of land that proved to be school land when he ran down the

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cornerstones and then it was too late to find other land of the best type but he found a quarter section that has proved to be much better than he thought it was at the start and he filed thereon; this is the northwest quarter of section 25, township 27N., Range 3 West. Mr. Balderston built a small house 12 x 14 feet, dug a well and built a small barn on the place.

The years prior to 1897 were almost failures in the crop line but in 1897 he harvested twenty-seven bushels of wheat per acre from sixty-five acres of old land and sixteen bushels per acre from twenty-seven acres sowed on sod land. When he came to the claim he had only one horse but bought a team and wagon later; he was a bachelor for the first three years after taking his claim. He had but few implements to farm with; he had an old sod plow and he picked up an old cultivator that he worked and patched on till he got it to where he could use it and it answered the purpose for some time.

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Mr. Balderston has served on the school board of his district since the opening of the country; the first school was taught in a dugout upon which site he now has a large house of modern design in which he lives.

Their first frame schoolhouse was built by public donation in 1895; in Mr. Balderston's district they have always had good schools; they hired good teachers and paid them a little better salary than the average schools paid.

Mr. Balderston had to haul his wheat to Medford and Hunnewell, Kansas, to market, a distance of fifteen and eighteen miles respectively and some years wheat was only worth 35¢ per bushel at market. He had some rough roads to haul over and therefore he always earned more than he received for his grain.

In 1897 Mr. Balderston built a new house and barn, also making other improvements on his farm. He raised many horses and mules as well as cattle on his farm.

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For several years mules were very profitable stock to raise but that in the long <sup>run</sup> cattle have been the most profitable stock on his farm. In the early years Mr. Balderston worked at the carpenter's trade and helped to build many small houses over the country; his wages were about \$1.00 per day where he furnished the necessary carpenter tools to work with.

Although Mr. Balderston's original claim was not the choicest place in the country by any means, he has worked long and faithfully; he managed well and has acquired enough to buy another quarter section just north of his old claim. He has it well improved and every modern convenience installed.

Mr. Balderston cannot praise his old pioneer neighbors enough; he thinks that no better people ever lived than the old settlers who developed the Cherokee Strip; they were kind, generous hearted, sociable and sincerely interested in each other's welfare. They visited the sick with unfailing punctuality ; if any person was known to be



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in need of anything that some neighbor had a surplus of the needy one was supplied without having to ask for it; the settlers looked after and inquired about each other's welfare with sincere earnestness; in short, they felt as one band or family of brothers; no contentions existed to mar the peace, dignity or quietude of the community.