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Grant Foreman  
Director  
April 5, 1938.

Interview with Mrs. Ollie Byrd  
Olustee, Oklahoma

I am one of the surviving children of Alfred C. and Lizzie Floyd McNeill. After the death of my first husband, W. J. Atchison, I married Bun Byrd.

My grandfather, Thomas P. McNeill, the descendant of an old and honored Scotch-Irish family, who settled in New England in Colonial days. On attaining his majority, he left the rugged hills and rocks of his native state going to South Carolina where he followed his trade as a carpenter and builder. He was a typical pioneer carpenter, securing his material for building in the forests, felling the trees himself and erecting buildings, as one may say from the stump. Diligent and thrifty he made a good living and continued a resident of that southern state until his death. He married there and there reared his six children namely Charles W., Marion and Warren, all killed while serving in the Confederate Army; Alfred C., my father, who would have enlisted in the Confederate service had he been old

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enough, John E. now of Mississippi and James L. of North, Texas.

My father, Alfred G., McNeill, migrated to Mississippi when a young man, bought land and was successfully employed in tilling the soil until 1885 when he moved with his family to Hays County, Texas. He there continued as a farmer and stock raiser until his death June 4, 1890. He was a man of resolution and force, an able farmer and a faithful and highly respected citizen.

He married Lizzie Floyd who survived him and the year following his demise 1891, she came to Greer County, Texas with her little family. Homesteading a section of land under the Texas law, she engaged in stock farming, superintending the management of her property most successfully.

There were four of us children Floyd McNeill; Burley, the wife of J. H. Rogon; Dora wife of W. B. Love, and I. After the death of his father, Floyd McNeill came with his widowed mother to Greer County and as the oldest child and only son assisted her on the farm until 1898, when he took up a homestead and began the

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improvement of a farm. He was very active in upbuilding of the town being instrumental in securing a post office which he named Cora Lea and was made its first postmaster and had a star route. He served as postmaster five years and then sold to my husband, W. J. Atchison, one of the foremost men in the Democratic Party. Brother filled the various offices within the gift of his fellow townsmen, serving as town clerk, road overseer, and school director. He was a notary public, issued all legal documents of the township, keeping blank deeds, laws, books, etc., on hand and made himself generally useful to the people of that vicinity, being their advisor and counselor in all matters.

Disposing of all his interest at Cora Lea to my husband, W. J. Atchison, Brother located in Mangum in January, 1902. A few weeks later in February 1902, he was appointed, by S. E. Echols, Deputy County Clerk. In 1904 he was elected county clerk of Greer County and served with such ability and fidelity that at the first state election held in November, 1907, he was re-elected to the same position. In all offices of public trust

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and responsibility, Brother proved himself eminently capable and trustworthy. He is a Royal Arch Mason and a member of the Independent order of Odd Fellow. He is now County Judge at Dalhart, Texas.

Sister Burley and her husband, J. H. Rogon, secured the first post office at Olustee and there reared their two children. Later they too moved to Dalhart. They reared one girl, Lizzie Belle, and there Mr. Rogon died. Sister is still living at Dalhart.

I was born in 1881 near Corinth, Mississippi. All four of us children were born near Corinth. I was married to W. J. Atchison in 1897 and for four years we lived on the land he settled on in 1891. In January, 1902, we bought my brother, Floyd McNeill, out at Gora Lea and my husband took up all the McNeill duties where Floyd left off. Mr. Atchison died on December 8, 1904, leaving me with two children A. R. Atchison and Lizzie Belle.

I now am sitting writing and also looking out of my window, watching the snow fall April 6, 1938. It puts me in mind back in the days of 1891 when my widowed mother and we four children sat in our dugout 12x24 that

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my brother had dug himself and Mother taking most of the money we had to furnish the dugout and there we set in to fight our way with the wolves, snakes, polecats, and other wild beasts. It was 1892 we planted the first cotton, just a small patch with the seed Mother had packed her dishes in when we moved from Texas but we planted it too late. It grew waist high but it didn't open and the frost got it but the people came from miles around to see it, most of them from the Northern states.

My, my! the good and also the bad times we had. I look back now and for the life of me I can't see how we lived. No work, very little money but as Mother used to say "Where there is a will there is a way." We lived on corn bread, milk, butter, cheese and rabbits for meat for dinner. For supper as we called it then home made light bread or biscuit. For breakfast homemade syrup, always plenty of milk and butter. After the first year we had chickens and eggs; but the first two years, oh, my! forty miles from a sack of flour. For coffee we roasted wheat. We had wild plums and grapes cooked in syrup but when there was a wedding there would be a big dinner out

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of whatever they had, and guests came from miles around.

I know when Mr. Atchison and I were married he came thirty miles in a wagon with his mother, sister, cousin and my sister and her husband. I then lived near Quanah, Texas, with my mother. They came the day before the wedding. We were married just before noon. There was a large bunch of neighbors around about and from Quanah. At last we got started for his home that is just across the road from where I live now and when we got in the hills about six miles from here it began to rain and such a rain! it was the 10th of October and it was cold just in an open wagon. We could not see the horses but Mr. Atchison just gave the horses the lines and they came on in home all OK.

My schooling was nine months in three years, three months per year, two years in a dugout and three months in a little rock schoolhouse called Aaron, four and a half miles from where we lived. Most of the time I walked to school.

Our wood was roots and limbs of the mesquite. As Brother was away from home most of the time and as

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I was the strongest of the girls I have carried wood as far as a mile in a sack on my back and helped pick up bones to buy food. These bones Brother would take to Juana.

Our parlors when our fellows came would be in the shade of a mesquite tree; our refreshments would be home made candy and pop corn balls. It was horseback rides instead of car rides and go five and ten miles to big camp meetings. Our dresses were to the ground instead of to our knees; our hair in little pig tails down our back; our shoes, when we had a Sunday pair, had tops half way to our knees and our everyday ones would be with soles a half inch thick and laced like men's work shoes; and our hats, oh, my! what funny looking things they were.

I worked in the courthouse with my brother, Floyd McNeill, after my first husband's death.