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BIRDWELL, R. D.

INTERVIEW

#10445

175

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

BIRDWELL, R.D.

INTERVIEW

10445

Field Worker's name Maurice R. Anderson

This report made on (date) April 12, 1938

1. Name Mr. R. D. Birdwell

2. Post Office Address Paula Valley, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 18 Year 1890

5. Place of birth Arkansas

6. Name of Father A. J. Birdwell Place of birth Arkansas.

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Matilda Stinephar Place of birth Missouri

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 1

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Anderson, Maurice R.

Investigator

April 12, 1938.

Interview with R. D. Birdwell

Pauls Valley, Oklahoma.

I was born in 1890 in Arkansas. My father died in the spring of 1893, leaving Mother with eight children to look after and in the fall of 1893, Mother loaded up the wagon and with us eight children, the oldest one only fourteen, left Arkansas for the Indian Territory. I was only three years old but I remember making the trip. We were about three weeks coming to where we settled. We got into Davis, Indian Territory, in the Chickasaw Nation, one evening and after supper, I remember, my mother ripped up an old wagon sheet and sat up nearly all night making cotton picking sacks.

There was lots of cotton made that year and the farmers were wanting people to work. Mother and the older ones picked cotton for about a month for Mr. Nelson P. Price; then she rented a small farm from Mr. Price and the first crop we raised was made with only a turning plow and a Georgia stock. My oldest brother would lay off the rows with the Georgia stock and Mother and some of the other boys would drop the corn

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by hand and cover it by raking the dirt over it with their feet. I can look back now and see Mother sure had a hard time making a living and trying to send us children to school.

At that time there was only a subscription school and it cost one dollar and fifty cents for each pupil a month, so some of the children didn't get to attend school very much. Mother would sit up sometimes until ten or eleven o'clock after working all day in the field and have us children read and spell. My first school was at Whitehead and I was eighteen years old. I went to this school two years. At the end of these two years there were about sixty-five boys and girls taking examinations for a teacher's certificate, and that night everybody over the community was there. When Mother and I went to the school house that night I didn't have any idea that I was going to take the examinations, but after we got there, I was talking to some of the boys the teacher had passed as ready for the examination and they said: "Why don't you try without the teacher's knowing about it?" so, after talking

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it over, I decided I would, more as a joke, not really thinking I would pass; so after the questions were given out and the work was passed on, I was one among the very few who made a passing grade. I want to give all the credit to my mother for sitting up night after night and saying: "Just read that over once more, then go to bed." The next year after receiving my teacher's certificate, I was given the school at Goose ranch, a few miles north of Paoli, Oklahoma, Garvin County. I taught at this school for three terms, then I taught one year at Roundup school in Carter County, and one year at the Camp school in Carter County. For the past several years I have been working as salesman.