

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

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ROUNDS, (DR.) J. B.

INTERVIEW.

10036

Field Worker's name Amelia F. Harris

This report made on (date) February 24 1938

1. Name Dr. J. B. Rounds - Pioneer Baptist Minister

2. Post Office Address Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 16th and Villa

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 9 Year 1876

5. Place of birth Drumbo Oxford County, Ontario Canada

6. Name of Father Cicero Davenport Rounds Place of birth Canada

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Jennie Pierce Rounds Place of birth Canada

Other information about mother _____

Note 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 _____

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Amelia F. Harris
Journalist
February 24, 1938

Interview with Dr. J. B. Rounds
16th and Villa
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Pioneer Baptist Minister

I was born at Drumbo, Oxford County, Ontario, Canada, about 150 miles from Detroit. In 1889 my parents moved to Detroit and Father went into the saloon business. I had been converted before we left Canada and I wanted to enter the ministry but Father being a saloon keeper, I feared the pulpit was no place for his son. The idea, however, gradually built up on me and I decided to go into the ministry and Father told me he would not be a drawback - he immediately sold the saloon.

I had learned the printing business while in Canada and in order to enter the seminary to study, I didn't have money to pay my way, so I worked in a printing office for a year.

In the fall of 1895 I entered the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Kentucky, where I received all of my ministerial training. I preached while

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studying; also plied my printer's trade, to meet expenses.

When I completed my study I asked to be sent as a missionary to China. We - my wife, before we were married, and I - were invited to the church to hear some Indians talk, the invitation being from Dr. N. B. Reardon (Baptist) of Omaha. The Indians were Chiefs Buffalo Meat (Cheyenne) and Lone Wolf (Kiowa). Sam Ahtone, Indian, was interpreter for both languages. Dr. Reardon and these Chiefs made a strong appeal for missionaries to come to Oklahoma. These Indians, of course, each talked in his own tongue and Sam Ahtone translated for them.

My sweetheart and I decided to get married and go to the Oklahoma field, instead of China. In the summer of 1898 we came to Oklahoma and I was ordained by Oklahoma ministers. There was not an opening with the western Indians and they assigned me to Bartlesville where in my two years of service I established two mission churches, one at Dewey and another at Pawhuska. I was then transferred to the Dewey church for one year.

My real missionary work started in 1901 among the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians with headquarters at

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Wilburton. I spent four years among these Indians and soon learned their language and acquired the name of "Bolotka" from my Choctaw Indian friends, meaning "round like an apple." My work with these people was very pleasant. Most of them had some education and quite a few of the younger were college graduates.

In 1905 I was transferred to Darlington. The United Foreign Mission Society formed by the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches had this mission formerly, then the Baptist missionaries took it over. However before the Congregational minister retired he advised all of the Indians to unite with the Baptist Church. About eighteen miles southwest of Darlington, there was a reservation of Arapshoes which was in our jurisdiction too. I baptised many of the Indians. There were many amusing things happened during our association with them. There was one Arapaho Indian, sub-chief "Black White Man, who was converted and was baptised in the North Canadian and when he was about knee deep in water he paused and said (to about one hundred Indians who had gathered on the banks) "You Indians have always called

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me Black White Man all my life. I am now a Christian, and going to be baptised and when I walk out I want you all to meet me on the banks and call me Rising Sun - for Jesus has risen in my heart with healing in his wings and I am a new man." After that he was always called "Rising Sun"; he died about two years later and asked to be buried under the name of Rising Sun.

"Starving Elk", a Cheyenne Indian seventy-eight years old, wanted to join my church. He had a crucifix that he showed me, saying he had Jesus man twenty-seven years on crucifix but "no understand not worship Jesus man like white man do". He said he wanted to go on Jesus Road what I preached about and "feel good inside", (touching his heart) "All time". I baptised him over at Saddle Mountain Church in an artificial baptistry built in the side of the mountain.

An Indian boy came to me one day and said he wanted to unite with the church and in giving his experience, he told that when he was about four years old early one morning his mother carried him on her back out in the woods where she built a crude altar of rocks and put

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wood in the center and made a fire and put a buffalo hide on the fire. Then she turned her face towards the rising sun and she prayed to her God that he would lead her boy into the right religion. He said his mother was a sun worshipper but that she wasn't satisfied, and that he wanted to go on my "Jesus Road" and we baptised him in Saddle Mountain baptistry. He only lived eleven months after uniting with the church. On his death bed he called a conference with the Indian agent, the Indian merchant at Darlington, the Indian physician and me. We four met at his bedside. He said he was a "Christ Man" and that his doctor said "no get well". He said he owed the merchant for some things he had bought and he wanted the Agent to pay him. He asked the merchant to read off to him everything he had bought. This the merchant did and when the merchant finished he said, "Yes I bought 'em Agent-pay". Then he turned to me and said "I want you bury me - not like pagan." He instructed the Agent to give me money enough for a coffin, a tombstone and a fence around his grave. He wanted his body taken to

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the church and his funeral preached just "like white man", and he wanted to be buried in the old cemetery, which was northeast of Darlington, I did everything he requested, I gave him a white man's funeral, put the tombstone up, and had a fence built around the grave.

Chief Three Fingers and his wife were converts of our church. Mrs. Three Fingers weighed 315 pounds and I weighed 115 when I baptised her. They were both full blood Cheyennes.

Little Chief Timid visited with us a great deal. He kept complaining of his side hurting, saying he had a boil, I persuaded him to go with me to the doctor which he did. The doctor examined the boil and said he thought there was something in the side. He made a small incision and cut out an arrow head. The Chief said he was shot with an arrow forty years before.

There was a Mescal Indian named Shave Head. He came to me with this proposition "You are a good fellow, want all Indian be good. I tell how to get him". He showed me a Mescal bean and said "You take Mescal road

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I take Jesus Road. We get all". I told him "no". I asked him in to dinner and he came in the house and looked around. My wife had a nice drop-head sewing machine. He walked over to it and patted it, he admired the wood so much. After dinner he left and I never saw him again.

I spoke of the Arapaho Reservation being in our jurisdiction, too; I went to preach for them in the summer out in the open. When I finished I asked a \$5.00 pledge from each Indian to buy a tent to preach under. About eighteen subscribed to be paid from their Government checks. I had a convert "Shot-Him-Self", who had a bad name among his people. They said he stole chickens and would not pay his debts and when he wanted to be baptised they protested but he told me he had Jesus in his heart and would not do wrong again so I baptised him anyway. ~~He~~ was one of the eighteen who pledged \$5.00. I bought the tent and the day they got their checks was the day I told them to meet me there with the \$5.00. I also wanted their help to put the tent up. Most of them were waiting with the money; others

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were getting their checks cashed. Shot-Him-Self was there with \$5.00 and gave it to me; but an Indian came up and said "Jesus Man Shot-Him-Self borrow money but he no pay back." Shot-Him-Self said, "I no get checked cash - I pay." The poor old Indian turned and walked off with a dejected look. Shot-Him-Self got on his horse and rode away. He rode hard eighteen miles to the Agency, got his check cashed and rode back that evening with three men with him. He called me to come over - one of these men he paid the \$5.00 to, the other two and myself were witnesses. "I pay all I owe - Jesus here", and he put his hand over his heart. I patted him on the back and told him I knew he was a good Christian.

At this meeting a pagan Indian, a sun and idol worshipper, came up to me with his baby. He put the baby in my arms saying "You bless and make a Christian too, I want good boy."

These Indians gave me the name of "Whirlwind" which was the name of a favorite old chief that they all loved so well. I had completed my work as missionary among the Indians. We were all gathered at the little Indian mission.

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My audience sat in sad silence, and when I had finished my farewell sermon an aged brave arose and asked us to let him talk. He was Chief Left Hand, leader of the Arapahoes for forty years. We told him to speak. He spoke to his people in their language and an interpreter translated so the whites could understand. He said, "I have been watching these missionaries for fourteen years. I have come to believe that what they tell is right. I think the Jesus Road is the right road and I want you Indians to get on the Jesus Road and get out of my way so I can get on it too." When the chief had finished I called him aside and said, "Chief Left Hand you have led your people for many years. You have always been brave and fearless. Now your people are starting on a new trail and instead of you leading them, you want to follow. You are not being brave." The old chief thought in silence for a while, then he raised his head and said, "You are right - I join church now." I was never so happy in my life.

I was then assigned as missionary to the non-English

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speaking miners of the state with headquarters at McAlester, I came in contact with people of fourteen nationalities and carried tracts in all of these languages for distribution. My first step was to break down the feeling of the aliens that here was just another American out to exploit the foreigner. This required about six months to do but I won their love and confidence and remained with them until 1911 (two years), when I came to Oklahoma City and organized the Trinity Baptist Church at 1329 N-W-23rd. I remained at this post eighteen months. I then was elected Secretary of the B. Y. P. U. I continued in the young people's work for seven years and during that time we purchased the assembly grounds near Davis, in the Arbuckle Mountains, and established the summer assembly which has become an annual affair.

At the conclusion of my service as B. Y. P. U. Secretary, I was elected Assistant State Executive Secretary and in 1922 I was elected State Executive Secretary, a position I held for eleven years. This is the highest position in the Baptist Church. Then I served six months in evangelistic work.

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I returned to Oklahoma City to become pastor of the Cristwood Baptist Church at 16th and Villa. Since I took over this church we have organized and are supporting four mission churches. My son, Reverend W. C. Rounds, is pastor at one of these missions at Wright Station.

Each year I take a week off and visit among my beloved friends, the Indians. I go to one group one summer and the next summer I spend a week with the other. But I love my Cheyenne - Arapaho and pagan Indians and am so thankful we came here instead of going to China. An all wise Father guided where I was best fitted among the Indians, many well meaning persons do not consider the Indian ceremonies or dances as matters of religion yet most of these ceremonies are deeply religious and represent a survival and refinement of ideas which are ancient.

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Legend told by Grant, Arapaho Indian,
Interpreter for Dr. Rounds.

Many moons ago my people came over water, Traveled through ice and snow, they traveled for many years through big timber and high land. Snow all the time. Cross water and finally came to prairie. Here they stop. Plenty of game. Grant believed his people came from Asia and that they came through Alaska finally drifted into the United States. He stated that this tradition had been handed down from generation to generation.