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INDEX CARDS:

Greer County
Farming
Fords
Dugouts
Churches and Schools

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

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Field Worker's name Virgil CourseyThis report made on (date) July 23 1937

1. Name M. W. Abernathy
2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) 402 East Broadway
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 3 Year 1866
5. Place of birth Mo

6. Name of Father D. L. Abernathy Place of birth Missouri
 Other information about father _____
7. Name of Mother Mary Rhodes 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 _____.

ABERNETHY, M. W. INTERVIEW.

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In December, 1889, my father and I bought claims on three-quarters of a section of relinquished land in Oklahoma. We were living in Eastland County, Texas, at that time, having moved from southeast Missouri in 1876. In the following January my brother, Dan, and I moved on this claim seven miles southeast of Altus. We came in wagons drawn by horse teams. We also brought two yoke of oxen. I worked the oxen and brother drove the horses. At that time this was Greer County, Texas, a county some forty-five by ninety miles in size, running in a northwesterly and southeasterly direction. It was later divided into three counties.

Dan and I lived alone and "batched". When we were not engaged in our farm work we hauled freight to and from Vernon, Texas. We received our mail at Frazier, some distance from us. The town of Frazier no longer exists, having been moved to the present site of Altus after the flood of 1891. At one time Frazier was a thriving little frontier town.

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Crossing the river was the main difficulty in hauling from Vernon. There was quicksand in the river and it was very treacherous, especially after a rise. The sand was sometimes settled by running cattle across the river. Then light wagons were crossed ahead of the loaded wagons to test the sand.

Along about 1891 or 1892, I was hauling lumber for a lumber yard in Altus. I had a new wagon and was very proud of it. On the return trip we were heavily loaded but I felt my wagon would stand up provided we did not sink in the quicksand. So we doubled teams to my wagon. We had some difficulty out in the river and almost before we realized it, the water had risen until the wagon load of lumber was almost ready to float. We quickly unhitched the mules and someone carried them to the bank. In a last moment of panic I tied a rope to the top of one of the back wagon wheels and hastened to the banks. I had just reached safety when the wagon began floating. It flopped over in the water, the wagon landing on the load of lumber. The wagon

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tongue pointed down stream and the whole thing began drifting.

There were some fifteen or twenty men present. We began pulling on the rope. In a short time my wagon was pulled to shore. Not one piece of lumber was lost. This was very fortunate, because I have known many instances where the wagon and everything in it was lost.

~~Some of the old settlers had a very hard time getting by. Money was scarce and even if one did have money he sometimes had difficulty in getting supplies. I knew one family that had nothing to eat for several days except pumpkin. Many people rendered pole cat tallow for use in grease lamps.~~

Most of the early houses, as well as churches and schools were dugouts. One would be surprised how nice and cozy these dugouts could be made. They were rather attractive with white canvas on the walls and gunny sack carpet. They were cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

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My brother married after we had lived here about two years. He now lives in New Mexico. I married a school teacher in 1895.

I remember I had one of the first buggies in this country. Dr. Dobbs had one, and a Mr. Sumrby at Locke had one.

I began carrying the mail on the rural route south and west of Altus in 1909. I drove a horse and buggy for nine years, then used cars until my retirement, five years ago.

There was a big snow storm in February, 1913. I remember I was the only carrier out of six that made the route that day, but I had a nervy little pony and a good enclosed hack with a coal stove. On the return route there was a long stretch where I was driving due north. Ice froze on the port window until I was compelled to look out from the side of the cab to see how to drive. Then when we turned east the ice fell to the ground in one big sheet.