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

Field Worker's name Ruth E. Moon

This report made on (date) October 22 - 25 1937

1. Name Reverend L. J. Anthis
2. Post Office Address Guthrie, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) 316 North Broad Street
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 23 Year 1860
5. Place of birth Richland County, Illinois

6. Name of Father Madison Anthis Place of birth Illinois
 Other information about father Farmer and preacher

7. Name of Mother Georgia Ann Jenner Place of birth Kentucky
 Other information about mother With husband pioneered in Illinois
 when it was new country

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 10.

ANTHIS, L. J. (REVEREND)

INTERVIEW

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Rath E. Moon

Interviewer

October 25, 1937.

Interview with Reverend L. J. Anthis
316 North Broad Street, Guthrie, Oklahoma.

The parents of the Reverend L. J. Anthis moved from Illinois to Cowley County, Kansas about 1875, and there the son grew up. He spent some time during the years of '87 and '88 as a cowboy on various ranches down across the line, most of it on the Tuttle Ranch on Turkey Creek, which was also called the Mule Shoe Ranch. Sometimes there were more than twenty thousand head of cattle on this range. L. J. Anthis knew and worked with Evan G. (Parson) Barnard, author of "A Rider of the Cherokee Strip", and knew, first hand, many of the experiences related in that book. On Easter Sunday 1888, John Zoll and L. J. Anthis saw two big "Lofer" wolves and raced after them for four or five miles and Mr. Anthis lassoed his and killed it, but the wolf Zoll was after got away. At that time there was a \$20.00 bounty for every wolf that was killed offered by the Cattlemen's Association, but the bounty had to be claimed at Caldwell, Kansas. Mr. Anthis did not go to Caldwell until the fourth of July and by that time the bounty had been reduced to \$5.00.

Coyotes did so little damage that early settlers paid no attention to them. But wolves could kill a lot of cattle in the

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winter when the stock was poor and weak and cold. During the summer months the cattle could defend themselves; this fact accounted for the difference in the amount of the bounty paid at different times of the year and this was the last time that Mr. Anthis ever saw a wolf on the range. One summer (probably in '88) he farmed in the Osage country and in the border town of Maple City, near Arkansas City. He became acquainted with Miss Amanda Blakesley. Her father had sold his farm in Washington County, Kansas, about 1886 and had moved down to Maple City, so he would be ready for the rush for land when the Territory should be opened. The Blakesley family was large, ten children, and almost three years of waiting there had used up the money that they had expected to use to get started in the new land. It took three sacks of flour a week just to keep the Blakesley family in bread. So, by the time the country was really opened to settlement, they were practically out of money. Two of the elder sons who were still farming in Kansas helped them out during those first lean years.

Mr. Anthis and Miss Blakesley were married on New

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Year's Day '89, and started to farm near Maple City, Kansas, but when they learned that Oklahoma was actually to be opened on April 22, Mr. Anthis left his young wife there among relatives while he went back to Arkansas City, where he and four relatives joined a company of seventeen Civil War Veterans who were making the race together. The soldiers had built a small ferry, just large enough to carry one wagon at a time and this they hauled down to the Salt Fork of the Arkansas River and made plenty of money transferring people's goods across the river, which was very high just then. The team was tied behind the ferry, and the horses swam across, helped by the men who pushed with their breasts against the ferry boat, which was operated by ropes wound around the whole load and connected to a pulley on the shore. The Anthis-Blakesley group had agreed to help operate this ferry in order to get their own things across the river, and Mr. Anthis worked all one night and the next day for that privilege. Many people paid \$15.00 or \$20.00 to be ferried across. Just when most of the crowd was over, the river began falling

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fast, and the stragglers were able to ford it.

Mr. Anthis' whole company settled in the neighborhood of Mulhall (called Alfred at first) and of the twenty-two men who made that run together, only one of Mr. Anthis' brothers-in-law and Mr. Anthis himself are still alive. Mr. Anthis' claim was just a mile and a half south and a mile and a half east of the town.

Mr. Anthis carried the first mail between Alfred and Perkins. It was a Star Route, and required three teams and the horses were changed at Clarkson and Cimarron City each way. Mr. Anthis made a daily round trip drive of sixty miles, and carried that route for thirteen months. He furnished one of the teams, and the remuneration was \$1.25 per day.

There was a community in Payne county which had been settled by Sooners. The Emberys and Terrills were two of these families. Mr. Anthis used to bring groceries out from Alfred to Mrs. Terrill, as the Star Routes carried packages and passengers too. There was an investigation on about who were Sooners, and Mrs. Terrill remarked to Mr. Anthis one day, "If anyone

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bothers Mr. Terrill about his title, he would just sheet him down". Just two weeks later Mr. Terrill, who was a member of the first Territorial Legislature, killed his neighbor Embury at the Land Office in Guthrie, because Mr. Embury had testified against him. Embury had ridden out home on the hack with Mr. Anthis just two or three days before he was killed.

Before Mrs. Anthis first came to their claim she thought that her husband had made a dugout for them to live in and he did not tell her that he had built a 14 x 16 foot box house instead. As far as it went the house was well constructed, but Mr. Anthis could not afford enough lumber for a floor. In the late Fall of 1889 Mr. Anthis went to the station to meet his wife and tiny baby girl, and then they all started off across the prairie to their new home. It was not far away for they could travel "as the crow flies" then as so little of the land had been broken or fenced that one did not have to go around by section lines. Soon Mrs. Anthis caught sight of the little box house, and said, "Oh, if I could only have a house like that, I would

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be so proud!" When Mr. Anthis stopped the horses in front of it, she asked, "Why, what are we stopping here for, I want to get home". Then he told her that that was their house and "I was the happiest woman in the world", Mrs. Anthis says. "My husband made it all neat and nice by papering the walls with newspapers and I thought it was a wonderful house. It had two windows and one door. And the very next morning I insisted on seeing every bit of our land, so Mr. Anthis carried the baby and we walked all around the edges of our land and all over it. I was never so happy in my life, unless it was when we finally got a floor in our house. One of Mr. Anthis' brothers had a saw-mill on his place near Seward, and he sent us word that he had taken a lot of logs for doing custom sawing, and would give us enough to make us a floor if we would come after them and it was a proud day when we first had a floor. It seemed a little queer at first though, for the floor was put in several inches off the ground, and it made the windows seem so much lower than usual and soon these flooring boards shrank, and cracks at least an inch wide were

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left between them. But Mr. Anthis' father, who was a good carpenter as well as a preacher and farmer and who was living on our place until the Strip Opening, took these weathered boards up, planed them, and fitted them together solidly. The result was a good floor that could be scrubbed until it was almost white."

Mr. Anthis had always been a Bible student, and had been converted in a big evangelistic meeting held in Arkansas City in 1888 and almost immediately after settling in Oklahoma, began to help organize Sunday Schools, and to preach in school-houses. In 1902 he was ordained a minister of the Christian Church in the Antiech Church near Mulhall, which he had helped to organize. He had finished a course from a theological seminary at Kimberly Heights, Kentucky, and from then on the ministry was his life work, but he continued to farm to pay expenses.

Besides the Antiech Church, Mr. Anthis helped to organize a church at Clarkson, and one at Mulhall and only about ten years ago he helped to re-organize the work at Antiech and Mulhall. He has preached in school-

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houses and country churches all through this part of the country, but among these places where he has served regularly are Orlando, Hubbell, Petter, Clarkson, Mulhall, Antiesh, Green Mound, Glencoe, Cashion, Piedmont, Waterloo and Harmony. His last regular work was with the Union Church at Harmony, which is south and west of Guthrie. About seven years ago Mr. Anthis suffered a stroke of paralysis and since his recovery the doctor has forbidden him to preach. He says that it is hard to see so much work that needs to be done, and realize that he cannot do any of it. When Mr. Anthis expressed this feeling to an old acquaintance one day, the man said, "But Reverend Anthis, you are helping. The people whom you helped when you were able to work, hundreds of them, are still active, and after them, their children will be carrying on so that your work will be living and growing many years from now". That thought made Mr. Anthis feel a lot better.

The Anthis family saw really hard times during the first hard years. His ministry took a great deal of time but the farm work had to go on if they were to eat. Many a time, Mr. Anthis had to drive fifteen or

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twenty miles to preach a funeral sermon leaving his wife at home plowing the corn. She became a good shot and furnished many a meal by killing prairie chickens or quail, or catching rabbits. Their little dog would chase a rabbit into a certain hollow tree and Mrs. Anthis with a forked stick kept there for the purpose would twist the rabbit out and pull off the head for the dog. She carried the baby along with her on these forays.

Water had to be carried from a creek quite a distance from the house. Usually Mr. Anthis brought in water enough to last his wife while he was gone, but she remembers one time when she just had to have water. She could not carry the baby and two buckets, and she was afraid to leave the child alone. But, finally she decided to tie the baby in her high-chair, and then hurry. She ran all the way to the well and back with the water, to find that the baby had cried herself to sleep, and was slumped over to one side just held up by the heavy cloth by which she was tied to the chair back. One day some prairie chickens were drumming not far from the house and Mrs. Anthis crawled close to them, and lying flat on her stomach, took aim and fired. She did not know that Mr. Anthis had

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loaded the gun with buckshot in the hope of getting a deer and when she pulled the trigger the gun kicked so hard that it almost broke her nose, but she got her prairie chickens for dinner. The nearest they ever came to being completely out of food was once when they ran out of flour. Mrs. Anthis sifted out the meal in which her yeast was kept, and made some cornbread out of it.

They dug a well close to the house after awhile.

Mr. Anthis would be lowered into the well by Mrs. Anthis' father, who lived across the road and he would dig away down there. Every little while Mrs. Anthis would go out and draw up the dirt, but when her husband was ready to be pulled out, her father would do that. One day, Mr. Anthis hit a glancing blow with his pick and a rock hit him in the eye. His father-in-law was not there just then, and Mrs. Anthis told her husband to climb into the bucket and she would try to pull him up. The well was thirty-three feet deep but she managed to pull him up far enough for him to grasp the edge of the well before she collapsed. The water in this well was not extra

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good, but there was plenty of it, and it was close to the house.

An old trail ran through the Anthis place. One day they saw some men on horseback running their horses around in the cornfield that was close to the trail. Mr. Anthis took his dog and walked down that way. Mrs. Anthis and a sister-in-law, watching from the cabin, saw revolvers flashing in the sunshine and ran all the way down there expecting to find Mr. Anthis dead. But by the time they had gotten there the desperadoes had ridden on. Reverend Anthis said that the desperadoes were drunk and did not notice him, but drew their guns to shoot the barking dog. Some of them didn't want to kill the dog so they rode on. Late one night, as Reverend and Mrs. Anthis were returning home from the Potter Church, they saw several men on horseback by the side of the road and were pretty badly scared, but were allowed to pass without being molested. At this time there were many horse-thieves and cattle-thieves operating in the neighborhood. For eerie and lonesome feelings Reverend Anthis thinks that riding home alone from the Potter Church about fifteen miles on a cold, still night, with a little snow

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on the ground would take the prize. Coyotes and wolves would follow him most of the way, howling lonesomely.

Mr. and Mrs. Anthis have friends throughout Logan County and several other counties who still feel that Reverend Anthis is their pastor. It is hard for them to realize that he cannot marry their children or bury their dead, but they know he is still their friend. Two sons of Reverend and Mrs. Anthis operate a grocery store in Guthrie and the Reverend Anthis helps out there a bit when he is feeling up to it. Mrs. Anthis has a rose garden that takes all of her spare moments. Both are, of course, very much interested in the work of the First Christian Church of this city where they attend regularly.