

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

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Field Worker's name Alene D. McDowell

This report made on (date) June 25, 1937 1937

1. Name Madison J. McLeod

2. Post Office Address 519 East Third, Bartlesville, Okla.

3. residence address (or location) 519 East Third, Bartlesville, Okla.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July 24, Day 24 Year 1878

5. Place of birth Goldwater, Mississippi

6. Name of Father Jefferson J. McLeod Place of birth Scotland

Other information about father buried in Mississippi

7. Name of Mother Virginia Scott-McLeod Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about mother buried in Mississippi

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 6.

Alene D. McDowell
Research Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149
June 25, 1937

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Interview with
Madison J. McLeod
519 East Third
Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Madison J. McLeod was born July 24, 1878 at Coldwater, Mississippi.

Father - Jefferson J. McLeod was born in Scotland and came to the United States with his parents when he was a child. He died in Mississippi and is buried in the family cemetery there.

Mother - Virginia Scott-McLeod was born in Tennessee. She died when the subject of this review was seven years old and is buried in Mississippi.

I came to the Indian Territory from Memphis, Tennessee, in 1903 and settled at Oklahoma City. I answered an advertisement for a manager of the cotton gin for Harris and Irby at Oklahoma City. I had learned the cotton gin business from my father in Mississippi and after sending my application and qualifications to Harris-Irby, I received a pass to Oklahoma City, from Mr. Harris. Harris and Irby organized and operated the cotton gin and W.W. Berice, who owned an oil mill in Oklahoma City, financed them. They later operated about eighteen gins in Oklahoma.

I was manager of the Oklahoma City cotton gin for a few months, then was promoted to field supervisor

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and traveled over the state, locating building sites for gins. I supervised the building of gins at Ripley, Okemah, McLoud, Yale and Seminole and was manager of the gin at Seminole for three years.

In 1903, prior to my removal to the Indian Territory, I married Imagene Kirkland, a native of Kentucky, at Memphis, Tennessee. We lived at 908 North Phillips, Oklahoma City, for a number of years. Our children were all born in Oklahoma.

From half to three-fourths of all the cotton grown is in the United States, and Oklahoma comes in with the southern states as a cotton producing state. A bale of cotton is about three feet square and five feet long. When the cotton is ripe, it is one of the most beautiful sights of the world. The plants are about waist high, and shining on the green and brown back ground of the bushes, are many white bunches that look like soft snowballs.

The lowest price we paid for cotton was 5 cents a pound; this was unusually low, for the average price was 9 cents a pound. It cost about \$3.50 a bale to gin cotton in those days.

The process of ginning cotton: It is thrown into the

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~~the~~ machine where it falls between fine circular saws so arranged that the seeds can just pass between them. The lint is caught by the teeth of the saws and torn from the seeds, while the seeds drop below.

Between the saws are stiff brushes which pull the cotton from the teeth and roll it out in a beautiful, fleecy sheet. As it drops on the floor at the side of the gin it looks like a drift of pure snow. In the days before the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney, a Massachusetts school teacher, the cotton was taken from the seeds by hand. It would take one man nearly two years to seed one bale of cotton.

As it comes from the gin the cotton is ready for baling. This is done in huge presses which so squeeze the cotton together that a great quantity of it is pressed into a bale about two or three feet square and five feet long. It is next wrapped in a rough cloth ~~made~~ like coffee sacks, and bound with bands of hoop iron. The ordinary bale weighs from four hundred and fifty to five hundred pounds. The cotton seed is carefully saved and is used ~~in~~ making oil ^{and} other things. The seeds are ground and the oil is pressed out. The crushed seeds are used in making oil

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cake, for feeding cattle and other stock. The hulls of the seeds, which are taken off before pressing, are also used for feeding and as a fertilizer. Cotton seed oil is used in making soap, butters, oleomargarine and salad oils.

When I was learning the cotton gin business in Mississippi, we did not have the steam power, but operated by horse power and used four horses. This was a much slower process than the present method.

One day I was at Okemah buying cotton and the man I had made a deal with told me I might make a good deal at Boley. I called the gin man at Boley and made an appointment to meet him the following day. When I arrived the man was at the train to meet me, and to my surprise he was a negro. When I told him my name he remarked the mayor of the town was named McLeod and I said, "He must be my cousin." After our business was finished he suggested that I meet the mayor. I went with him to the city hall where I received another surprise when I was introduced to the mayor and found he was a negro. When he heard my name and found I was from Mississippi he began to call my family ^{by} names, he knew them better than I did. He then told me he had

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lived with my uncle Bob McLeod after the death of his mother and when he removed to Oklahoma had taken the name of McLeod. He was an intelligent negro and told many interesting facts about the building of the town Boley. I did not know when I made the appointment that Boley was a negro town.

One of the experiences he told me was of the paving of the streets and sidewalks in Boley. The paving company was taking advantage of the negroes, and were not using enough cement in the concrete. McLeod knew this but said nothing, but kept a record of the cement used. When the inspector checked the paving McLeod told him they had not used the required amount of cement and he would not accept the work. When the bill was presented for collection the city refused to pay it and their paving did not cost them anything.

Seminole was the largest cotton field in my district.

I worked for the Oklahoma Street Car Company in Oklahoma City as a conductor. This line was owned and operated by a man named Classon and the Superintendent was Banks. We had a nick name for the boss

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and all the employees spoke of him as "Tig". One day a man came into the office and ask the name of the boss and someone told him "Tig." He then went into the private office and addressed the boss as Mr. Tig, and we were all called on the carpet.

I removed to Bartlesville several years ago and expect to make this my future home here.