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ERICGS, CASSINS M.

INTERVIEW

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

BRIGGS, CASSINS M.

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Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora L. Lovin, El Reno, Oklahoma.

This report made on (date) March 9th, 1938

1. Name Mr. Cassins M. Briggs.

2. Post Office Address Bathany, Oklahoma.

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

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 10 Year 1862

5. Place of birth Cedar County, Iowa, on a farm.

6. Name of Father John M. Briggs, Place of birth Eastern Ohio.

7. Name of Mother Mary Jane (Allman) Briggs, Place of birth Iowa, September 15, 1823.

Other information about mother Died in 1864. (Married in 1844)

~~Other information about father: Died June 30, 1880.~~

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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Mrs. Nora L. Lorrin,  
Investigator,  
March 9, 1938.

An Interview with Mr. Cassins M. Briggs,  
Bethany, Oklahoma.

I was born on a farm in Cedar County, Iowa, on the 10th day of January, 1862, the youngest of ten children. Father moved to Harrison County, Missouri, in 1861; he died June 30, 1880 and Mother died in 1864. On February 25, 1883, I was married to Della E. Sperman. In the Fall of '83, my wife and I started for southern Kansas in a covered wagon with all our worldly goods, consisting of two mares, one set of leather harness, and one wagon, accompanied by my wife's father, mother, two brothers and two sisters. We arrived at Harper, Kansas, in three weeks.

In the Spring of '84, we moved on our claim fourteen miles northeast of Medicine Lodge in Barber County, Kansas, and lived there for four years, farming. Our crops burned out every year. In Fall of '88, I lost the claim because of a mortgage and moved to Kiowa, Kansas, and on April 19, 1889, my father-in-law, two brothers-in-law and two neighbors came in two wagons headed for Oklahoma. On April 22,

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at ten A.M., we arrived east of Concho Schools. We saw a line of teams and horses down in the river bottom so we waited there with about twenty outfits to make the Race from there. We got a claim on Uncle John's Creek, twelve miles northeast of El Reno. We built a sod house on my claim then I went after our goods, but I got a job in Medicine Lodge, Kansas, and I worked there until June. I had a pony that wouldn't pull the <sup>hat</sup>/off your head. I had turned it out in a ten thousand acre pasture south of Kiowa. I got my pony and she was so poor that her backbone was as sharp as a knife. I had no saddle so I strapped a blanket on my pony, using a one-fourth inch rope doubled for stirrups. I rode her from Kiowa to El Reno, a hundred and forty miles in two days in the Fall.

I did not have the money to file so when the six months were up I sold my sod house for \$40.00. That Winter we hunted and trapped and gathered bones for a living. In 1890, I started out afoot to the south looking for work. At El Reno I found an Indian going to Anadarko in a spring wagon. I went with him to Anadarko and went from there to Rush Springs.

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I got work with Tom Burke, a cattleman, for \$18.00 per month plowing corn. I plowed barefoot and poisoned my feet until I could hardly walk. After I had worked for three weeks, I got a letter from my wife saying that they were all down sick in bed and that I would have to come home. I had to walk all that distance on feet swollen until I could not get my shoes on. I was two long days in June making the trip.

In July I worked at a sawmill northwest of Yukon, with my feet so bad I could hardly walk. I was having a chill every day. At that time I was so sick, I wrote to my folks in Missouri for some money to buy medicine. They sent me railroad tickets to come back there as I had a cousin who was a doctor. He cured me all right. He said the cure was arsenic but I guessed at the dose once and it came near killing me.

My wife came back in the Spring; we didn't have money for both so I had to work my way back. In '93, I got a claim three miles northwest of the Concho school. I moved onto it with my wife, four children, no horses nor cows, no hogs, not even a chicken. We had a dugout close to an Indian trail. The dugout was covered with brush and dirt. It had one door

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and no windows and <sup>we covered</sup> the ceiling with gunny sacks to keep the dirt from sifting through.

My father-in-law loaned me a pony to ride looking for work. I spent a week riding to El Reno. The last day a storekeeper, who still has a store in El Reno, gave me a twenty-five pound sack of flour, if I would carry a carload of flour off the sidewalk to the back of his store and stack it there. The flour was selling for 40 cents a pound so I was glad to get it. Our boys were so hungry, they could not wait until my wife could get it wet with water. We had no lard nor milk and the water was so gippy that you could not break it even with lye. We built a house out of native cottonwood lumber, twelve by fourteen feet and we built a 'dobe kitchen. We sold twenty-eight acres to the Cement Company for \$5.50 an acre. It cost \$250.00 to prove up on the land and \$200.00 to buy a team and cow, chickens, and a pig. We were lucky to land in a friendly neighborhood. When the neighbors butchered a hog, they said, "Come and help", then they would send enough meat to last a week. One neighbor gave us all the skimmed milk that we wanted, often as much

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as three gallons a day. If it had not have been for this aid we would have had to give up sooner than we did. My father-in-law wanted to move to town and offered me his place and fourteen milk cows so we moved on his place and put in wheat. We raised one crop of corn on the place and got twelve hundred bushels and that with my stock gave me the money to build the shell of a house on the four lots I got out of our claim. We moved to El Reno in '98. I went to work at my trade of tinner that I learned in the '70s. I got \$10.00 per week. We finished the house and raised a family of five children on the \$10.00 per week. When the last boy was born I got a raise to \$12.00 per week. So that ends the claim, but this is not all, just some of the heights of our experiences.

In February, 1884, a team of mules ran off with me and hurled me out of the wagon <sup>and</sup> the hind wheel ran over my head. I had to lie to my wife so that I could drive them again. The way I had to work those mules was a tale in itself. In February of 1910 I was handling some gutter on the light plant in El Reno and touched a bare wire with



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my ear. I got a shock of twenty-two hundred volts. It knocked me off a fourteen foot ladder onto the frozen ground, that was all that saved me that time.