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BARNES, W. D.

INTERVIEW

4572

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BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-History Project for Oklahoma

BARNES, W. D.

INTERVIEW.

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Field Worker's name Ida A. MerwinThis report made on (date) June 25 19371. Name W. D. Barnes2. Post Office Address Perry Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) 707 Ivanhoe Street4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 1 Year 18615. Place of birth Richard County, Nebraska6. Name of Father Francis Marion Barnes Place of birth BaltimoreOther information about father Maryland in 18337. Name of Mother Mary Jane Drips Barnes Place of birth BellvilleNebraska in 1827Other information about mother One half Otoe Indian

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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Ida A. Merwin  
June 25, 1937  
Interviewer.

Interview with W. D. Barnes  
Perry, Oklahoma  
707 Ivanhoe Street

I was born in Richardson County, Nebraska. My parents, Francis Marion and Mary Jane Barnes, are both dead and are buried at Barneston, Nebraska, a town which they platted and which was named for them.

I am seventy-six years old and am one-fourth Otoe Indian. My mother was one-half Otoe. Father was a white man. My mother was educated at Kaskaskia, Illinois. She was a classmate of Julia Dent, who later became the wife of President Grant. I received my education at St. Marys, Kansas, in a Catholic School.

In 1880 my father was one of a delegation under General McNeil to look up a place for a reservation or settlement for the Otoe and Missouri Indians. Others in this delegation were Major Wooden, Batise Du Roin (an interpreter), and five Otoe Indian Chiefs. They were sent to the Indian Territory, coming by train to Arkansas City, then by stagecoach, buckboard, horseback or any conveyance they could secure. They came south from Arkansas City

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and were asked to consider a tract of land where the town of Tonkawa is now located and which would have taken in a majority of the land in Kay County. At this time there were some prisoners of war being kept on this tract, but the Indians did not want to be so close to the Kansas line. They said "No, too close to white man - go farther. White man steal horses and cows!"

This delegation visited with the Pawnees and Sac and Fox Indians and scouted over much of the Indian Territory, finally deciding upon a tract 12x18 miles, north of old Oklahoma and south of the Ponca settlement.

In 1882 approximately 460 Otoe and Missouri Indians were moved to this reservation and an Otoe Agency was established, with Major Wooden as the agent. This was a very dry and hot summer which caused much suffering among the Indians due to lack of water and food.

In the fall of 1882 my brother and I, with Grant Barnes, two white men, Jesse Johnson and Frank Ellis and three Otoe Indians, John Jones, Joseph Plumley and Wendel Philips, drove two ox teams and brought two hundred and fifty head of Government cattle from Nebraska to the Indian Territory. It took us twenty-five days to cross the state of Kansas.

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We arrived at the Otoe Agency in what is now Noble County, October 9, 1882. We camped there for the winter, using tents for our shelter. During the winter I took an ox team and went to Arkansas City, Kansas, where I bought a sawmill and returned to our camp. We soon had the mill installed and began sawing lumber, which was used for the building of houses. Some of the first lumber sawed was used for the bridge over Red Rock Creek, near where the town of Red Rock is now located. This bridge a little later was the toll bridge.

At the Salt Fork Creek near the Otoe Agency was a toll boat. This was used on the trail that the stage-coach and freighters used. This was the trail from Arkansas City by the way of the Otoe Agency, the Pawnee Agency, the Sac and Fox settlement, on south to Shawnee town (this was a settlement of Shawnee Indians near where the town of Shawnee is now located), then on south into Texas. Two years later I began work for the 11-M Ranch as a cowpuncher. This ranch was located about two miles north of where the town of Sumner is now located and comprised many acres, I do not know how many.

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In December, 1883, I made a trip to the Captain Nip horse ranch, near where the town of Perkins is now located. During the night it turned cold and the Cimarron River froze over in one night. Many cattle were frozen to death and were found in great drifts and piles where they had huddled together.

During the next spring or early summer a prairie fire broke out and, swept in a northeasterly direction by a heavy wind, burned everything in its path; thousands of cattle were burned to death and some were found afterwards with severe burns that caused many to lose their eyesight. This fire did lots of damage to the country, destroying the grass land and cattle.

Soon after this I started to make a trip to Shawnee-town to buy some horses. I thought I could ride the distance in one day but night came on and as there were so many wild animals I felt afraid to camp, for fear of the panthers. I stopped and tried to rest but with the fear of these panthers I decided to go on. I was not following any trail, I was just going cross country, so did not have anything for a guide after dark except the

stars. I set out on my way guided by a certain bright star. After riding quite a way, both the pony and I were tired. I came upon a small stack of hay. Turning the pony where it could eat, I dug a hole in this hay and lay down to rest. At daybreak I found I was about two miles from the Shawnee settlement.

The return trip was by the Sac and Fox settlement, located southeast of what is now the town of Chandler. While there the boys talked a lot about ghosts in that part of the country. That night I came to a house, or hut, and as there was no one in it I decided I would stay there for the night. But I did not rest for I thought of the ghosts that they had talked of at the settlement and it appeared to me that there were some about this house. This trip was a great experience and was very trying on me.

On several occasions I have been in the company of desperadoes; among them were Bill Doolin and Os Smith. When we were making the general round-up in 1884 about thirty or forty of the cowpunchers were near Hunnewell,



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Kansas, and as there was a tent show there we decided to go there. When they saw us coming they began taking down the tent, they thought we were a band of outlaws. While we were there three United States Marshals confronted us and arrested Os Smith. Some of the gang went to the town officially and told them we would tear up the town if they did not release Smith. When he was released we returned to the Indian Territory and continued on our way.

In the latter part of 1884 my brother and I sold out and delivered the cattle to the Osage camp, then returned to Nebraska where I took up farming and cattle raising.

In 1904, I came to Oklahoma and secured my allotment of land, which was 280 acres. This was located about six miles northeast of where the town of Morrison is now. My four children also received an allotment of 280 acres each. This land has always been used for grazing purposes and we have had some oil rentals from it.

In 1910, I moved to Morrison and in 1927 to Perry. In 1930 I was elected County Treasurer and held that office two terms.

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Some of the most peculiar traits of the Indians were the performances when one of the tribe died. There were feasts held and the dead were supposed to take part of the feast, as well as personal belongings, to the next world with them. In many instances the favorite horse was put to death and buried with them as was also the saddle, tomahawk, pipe and other cherished articles. There were times when a body would not be buried in a grave, but would be placed in a box, which was hung high in a tree, and left there. In those days they did not use caskets, and oftentimes would just wrap the body in blankets. I have known some to be buried in a sitting position. Each tribe or settlement had their own burial grounds near their camp.