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CAMPBELL, DAN W.

INTERVIEW

#12441

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

Field Worker's name James Russell Gray

This report made on (date) December 15 & 16, 1937

1. Name Dan W. Campbell
2. Post Office Address McAlester Route 4
3. Residence address (or location) Pocahontas Community
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1860
5. Place of birth Murray County, Tennessee
6. Name of Father David L. Campbell Place of birth Tennessee
Other information about father 4 years in Civil War. (South)
7. Name of Mother Emma McMurray Place of birth Tennessee
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 _____

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James Russell Gray
Investigator
December 15 & 16, 1937.

Interview with Dan W. Campbell
McAlester, Oklahoma,
Route # 4

Did you see that pinto stallion in the yard as you came in? He's about the only thing of value that I own now, but I am proud of him. I do like a good horse; when I was young there were not any automobiles. People traveled on horseback, in wagons, in buggies, and sometimes even in ox carts.

I've spent many an hour in the saddle. I ran away from home when I was seventeen, and I've been sort of a drifter ever since. And I've done most of my drifting on horseback. I've worked for ranchmen, too. In 1890, or thereabout, I worked at the P. & M. Ranch for Phillip McBride. That was about six miles east of Kiowa.

The Choctaw Indians used to hold big feasts in those days. The cattlemen would "chip in" and give the Indians cattle, and the Choctaws would get together and stay sometimes for two weeks, eating and listening to speeches. I've seen over a hundred

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Indians camped together like that.

They would have other things to eat besides beef. Indians liked to eat; they'd have pork, bread coffee and most anything they could get. Their most important men would make speeches about political matters, and sometimes, if there happened to be a lot of white men at the feast, some of the speeches would be made in English.

Some of the Indian surnames were: Pickens, James, Perry, Lewis, Beams, Morris, Holsom, Moore, Russell, Collins, Consaw. Peter Consaw was a Light-horseman, an Indian officer something like a ranger. Isom Pickens was an influential old Choctaw.

As I told you, I ran away and drifted into the Indian Territory. I was born in Murray County in Tennessee in 1860. My father's name was David L. Campbell. He fought four years for the South during the Civil War. Mother's name was Emma McMurray before her marriage. She was born in Tennessee.

Dad was a railroad worker; he worked for the L. & N. Railroad before the Civil War. We moved

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around to follow his work; we went to Hickman, Kentucky, and then came back to Warren County in Tennessee. It was then about 1878, that I left home. I drifted over to Arkansas, at Huntington. I worked in the coal mines around there for a couple of years.

I got the itching heel again in 1880 and crossed over into Indian Territory. I lit at a place just west of Fort Smith, Arkansas. It was called Pacola, and it was maybe forty miles or so from Fort Smith. About all there was to the place was a store, a post office, and a coal mine. A man and his team and wagon could make good money hauling coal then; the coal was floated down the Poteau River on barges, and then hauled to Fort Smith in wagons. All the output of the mine was marketed at Fort Smith.

A man named Will Hartshorne ran the mine, and it took seven men to do the digging, hoisting, and so on around the mine. The coal was hoisted by horsepower.

I knew a lot of Choctaw Indians around Pacola. Let me tell you a story about a young Choctaw named Billy Willis. He lived south of us at Skullyville,

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near where Spiro is. He rode off somewhere, probably to Fort Smith, and got on a big drunk. Then he was seen to start back home, but he never reached home alive. I remember that the Indians were pretty stirred up about his disappearance.

A man named Tinsley and I were working in the Poteau River. One of the coal barges had turned over there and spilled about a thousand bushels of coal. We had a contract to get the coal out.

We found Billy Willis' horse in the river with his head just out of the water, and his bridle caught in some brush. We turned the horse loose and took the saddle and bridle back to the mine. The Indians from Skullyville came and identified the saddle; then they set out searching for Billy's body.

After three days of hunting they found it. The body was caught in the roots of a tree at the bank of the river. One of his arms was hooked over a root as though he had tried to crawl up out of the water.

It was queer the way they buried Billy Willis. The Indians cut down a hickory tree a little bigger

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around than a man's body. They cut off a piece of the trunk longer than a tall man. They split the bark all down one side; then they beat the bark to loosen it. That was in the Spring of the year when the trees had plenty of sap in them, and the hickory bark came off in one piece. Well they wrapped Billy in that bark and buried him; that was all the coffin he had.

I remember old lady Socco was his grandmother; the Indians had a big cry at Billy's funeral, and this old woman brought some Tom Fuller to the cry. You see, the Indians all brought food and had a feast at almost every social occasion; cries, ball games, and camp meetings.

About 1885 I drifted up into the Sans Bois Bottoms, between the Arkansas River and the Sans Bois Mountains. I was there two years. That was good farming country. An Indian named Jackson Moore ran a country store there.

Then I went on north into the Cherokee Nation and stopped twenty-five miles or such a matter from Fort Smith. I stayed there maybe three years. You

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remember the run of 1889; I didn't go but I loaned a man named Barrett a horse with which to make the run.

I came to the neighborhood of Hartshorne along about 1890, working on ranches and farms and then went on westward. The next year I was gathering corn on the Washita River between Chickasha and Paul's Valley.

I have done my share of building railroads. I worked some on the Rock Island; the old Rock Island that ran through Chickasha going north and south. I worked on the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf; on the Comanche line at Duncan; on the Frisco from Fort Smith to Texas.

By 1894 or '95 I was working on the strip pits around Hartshorne. John Grady had the contract to operate those strip pits. The coal was close to the top of the ground, and we took off the dirt above the coal with slips pulled by horses and mules.

Hartshorne wasn't much of a town then; dirt streets and only a few stores. A hotel, P. Grady's store, the Grady Trading Company's store and a man named Merrill had a store and a pool hall. It was a good town; lots of coal was being produced.

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At that time there were only two houses in Haileyville and I lived in one of them. The other was the section house. A man named Vic Carroll, a coal shooter, came to me and asked me to rent the house where I was living to him. He said he was bringing his wife to the Territory and he didn't want her to have to live in a tent. I made a deal with him and his wife; I gave them the house and all my groceries and furniture and they agreed to let me board with them. I paid them \$3.50 a week for board.

I've lived around Hartshorne ever since then; I'd drift away but always come back again.