

FIELDS, TOM C.

INTERVIEW

4608

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FIELDS, TOM C.

INTERVIEW.
BIOGRAPHY FORM

Form A-(S-149)

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4608.

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Maurice R. Anderson.

This report made on (date) June 21, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mr. Tom C. Fields.

2. Post Office Address Elmore City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) General Delivery.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1860.

5. Place of birth Tennessee.

6. Name of Father William B. Fields. Place of birth South Carolina.

Other information about father Deceased.

7. Name of Mother Margaret Buchanan Place of birth Tennessee.

Other information about mother Deceased.

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 4

Maurice R. Anderson,
Interviewer.
June 21, 1937.

An Interview With Tom C. Fields,
General Delivery, Elmore City.

I came to the Indian Territory in 1881. I came from Tennessee to Caddo, Indian Territory, on the train. At Caddo, I took the stage to Pauls Valley; the stage left Caddo at sunup and we got to Pauls Valley at midnight, it cost me ten cents to ride on the stage for one mile.

I stayed around Pauls Valley a few days; there was only a store and a blacksmith shop and a stage stop there. Pauls Valley, at that time, was located about half a mile south on Rush Creek from where the present town is today. I went to work on Colbert's ranch about sixteen miles northwest of Erin Springs. I worked there awhile but ranch work did not suit me. I came back to Pauls Valley and went to clerking in the store for Mr. Grant. I worked for Mr. L. C. Wantland near where Wynne Wood now stands. There was an old one room log house built there, that no one lived in, so Mr. Wantland and I cleaned this shack up and I passed the word around that there would be Sunday School and preaching there every Sunday. The first Sunday there were few

people out, but after a few Sundays the house would not hold the people who came.

After the Santa Fe Railroad was built through Pauls Valley, I came back there, and decided that I would start a newspaper business. I ordered what supplies I needed. I had been in the newspaper business back in Tennessee. It was about three months before the supplies I ordered from St. Louis, Missouri, arrived. There was a one room log smokehouse that stood in Pauls Valley; it belonged to Sam Paul. I set my press up in this log shack. My press was a Washington hand press and the first copy I made I got too much ink on one side and in one corner I didn't get enough ink so my first copy was no good.

A Mrs. Hart, who still lives in Pauls Valley, has the first copy.

At that time you had to have a permit to publish any kind of a paper. Governor William M. Guy was the governor of the Chickasaw Nation at that time. It was in 1887 and the governor had the right to revoke that permit, if anything was said about the Five Civilized Tribes. Someone had made a complaint against me and I received notice to

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appear before the court at Tishomingo, and defend my rights.

I went to see my friend Sam Paul; he was a part Chickasaw Indian. Sam told me to get five gallons of whiskey and we would go to Tishomingo and see what we could do. I managed to get the whiskey and Sam and I went to Tishomingo.

I let Sam handle the situation and the next day when my trial came up, there was no complaining witness, and my permit was not revoked and we found out that it was ^{not} the full-blood Indians who were making the complaints against me, it was the intermarried citizens. They thought they could run this country to suit themselves.

When I first started the paper, I took Mr. Tom Martin in with me. After a few weeks Mr. Martin wouldn't pay anything, so I dropped his name, and took it over myself.

In 1894, I established the "Pontotoc County News" at Old Center. Old Center was a small place at that time and in a short time after I started the paper there the town grew to about sixteen hundred population. I operated that paper until in the year 1900, when new Ada started building up. I sold the paper and came back to Wynne Wood, and started a paper there. Wynne Wood was named after two surveying engineers, named Wynne and Wood.

I circulated a petition to have the postoffice at Cherokee Town named Wynne Wood, spelled with two capital W's, and sent this petition to Washington and it was approved but after I started the newspaper at Wynne Wood, I ran short on capital W's so I started spelling Wynne Wood with one capital W. Today it is called Wynnewood. I sold out my paper business at Wynnewood, and now live at Elmore City.