

MAUPIN, ROBERT W.

INTERVIEW

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

MAUPIN, ROBERT W.

INTERVIEW

#10322

Field Worker's name Amelia F. Harris

This report made on (date) March 25 8
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1. Name Robert W. Maupin

2. Post Office Address Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 1221 NW 16

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 15 Year 1881

5. Place of birth Warrenburg, Johnson County, Missouri

6. Name of Father Charles Smith Place of White Hall
Virginia

7. Name of Mother Ann Jean Ramsey Place of Warrensburg,
Missouri.

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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Amelia F. Harris
Journalist
March 25, 1938.

Interview with Robert W. Maupin
1221 NW 16th Street, Oklahoma City.

My father, Charles Smith, was born at White Hall, Virginia, and my mother, Ann Jean Ramsey, was born at Warrensburg, Missouri.

Father met my mother when she was attending school at Hollins Institute in Virginia but Mother's parents lived in Missouri and after she and Father both graduated Mother returned to Missouri and they were married in September, 1867, and I was born in Warrensburg, Missouri, November 15, 1887.

Father and Mother established a home near Sedalia, Missouri at a mining town called Nastrum and Father went in to the general merchandise business. He and mother lived here for three years but he had poor health here so decided to try a new climate. He sold his stock of merchandise and moved on a farm in Collin County, Texas, near McKinney where he raised fine horses and farmed from 1870 to 1875.

He regained his health and returned to Missouri in 1876 and farmed there until 1892.

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We read and heard so much about the new town of Oklahoma City and the wonderful possibilities of getting rich quick that father decided to try his luck so he left Mother and us children on the farm and came by train to Oklahoma City.

He arrived at night and stopped at North Side Hotel located where the old Skirvin Hotel stands today. The next morning Father was up early looking for some business to buy out and he bought the city livery barn and forty head of horses, some buggies and three or four spring hacks. This was a thriving business for a while, or until Father lost about thirty head of his horses with the blind staggers. He continued in business and in July of 1892 he wrote for Mother to come. We had already sold everything but our wagon, buck board and ten of our fine horses so my oldest brother drove one horse to the buck board, Mother and we younger children drove the wagon, with three horses tied on behind and my second oldest brother rode a horse and drove the other three horses all the way to Oklahoma.

We were on the road eighteen days - days full of interest to us children but very tiresome to Mother. We camped out

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every night and we didn't have a tent so building fires was a problem, especially when it rained. At such times we would build the fire under the wagon and Mother would have to crawl under there to bake her bread, fry meat and cook potatoes and the smoke came up in the wagon and filled our eyes with smoke so that we would have to hang our heads out of the wagon in the rain to breathe. My oldest brother took our old fashioned muzzle loading shot gun out of the wagon and shot two squirrels with it then put it down beside a tree to clean the squirrels. The next morning we left at day break and forgot our gun; we also lost our Shepherd dog and we presumed the dog stayed with the gun. This was near Butler, Missouri.

Two days later we drove into Kansas, and encountered much trouble in getting feed for our horses. We would drive up to a farm where they had plenty of feed but when we would ask to buy some they would shake their heads and say "No; we have none to sell." It took all day to drive thirty miles and that night when we drove up to a farmer (still in Kansas) and asked to buy feed, he said "Sure, go out to the barn and

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help yourself". We gave the horses a good feed then took a tow sack full of oats and corn and when we asked how much we owed him he said, "Nothing at all". We told him how the farmers had treated us when we first entered Kansas. He said it was because we were "movers" and they were too lazy to let us have it.

We spent the night near this farm and bought eggs, milk and butter. Mother cooked big biscuits in the Dutch oven and we had a real feed - hot biscuits, butter and sorghum molasses.

We left early the next morning and drove hard, so we wanted to get into Pawhuska the following day before dark.

We had heard much about the Indians going on the warpath and scalping white folks and the closer we got to the Indian country the more scared we became. That is, Mother and we smaller children were scared but my oldest brother wasn't, as he had worked on a ranch there as cowboy and had also driven a stage coach from Fort Reno to Wichita, Kansas. He had had some dealings with the Indians and knew something about them. We drove fast but dark overtook us before we could get into Pawhuska. We saw lights in the woods and my oldest brother walked over to

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where they were and found about three hundred Indians camped there. He talked to them awhile and two Indians walked back to the wagon with him, a man and his boy. They were friendly but we were scared to death and were scuffling around in the wagon, trying to get under some quilts. The big Indian said, "What are you loaded with? Little Indians?" Then he peeped in and said, "Humph, hogs". Brother laughed and told him it was his little brothers; then he asked the Indian how far it was to Pawhuska and he held up two fingers, which meant two miles. We drove on into town and were happy to spend the night in a frame hotel which was crowded. Brother drove the wagon up into the backyard and he slept out there. By the time we reached the hotel I was getting over my scare and was curious to see more Indians. The next day we drove into Grey Horse but before we reached there we forded a small creek. We had stopped about the middle to let the horses drink when an Indian drove up in a small spring wagon, with his wife sitting by his side. He began yelling, "Me have road, got squaw in wagon! Me have road, got squaw in wagon!" We pulled over to one side and let him pass and we never knew why he was

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in such a hurry. We drove on and met quite a few Indians who had about ten or twenty dogs with them.

That night we camped about one mile from the Arkansas River near the home of a highly educated civilized Cherokee Indian and asked if we could camp near where we could get water. He said, "Sure, you are welcome," so we got out and soon had a fire going. The Indian came down with a bucket of sweet potatoes and we got milk and butter from him too. He sat down and chatted for some time with my big brother and he told us to be careful in driving across the Arkansas River, that it had a quicksand bottom. When we got to the river we found two channels of water, divided by a sand bar on which were lots of skeletons of horses and cattle. We were afraid to drive in, but my big brother finally started across with the wagon. He was yelling at the horses and got them so frightened that they stopped on the sand bar. Brother jumped out and unhitched the horses and we boys rode one and led the other out. Brother put Mother and Sister in the buckboard and we drove across and left the wagon to sink. We watched it expecting it to sink but it didn't. Before long an Indian came along,

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driving a pair of Indian ponies to a spring wagon and Brother told him if his team could pull the wagon out he would pay him for it. The Indian said, "Speck so, me try". He unhitched and drove his ponies in, hitched them to the wagon and pulled the wagon out. We were happy when we got to Perkins and found a bridge across the Cimarron River.

Our next town was Guthrie and we were met at the edge of town by a committee of Boosters who said we were foolish to go further for Guthrie was the largest town in Oklahoma Territory. They said that Oklahoma City was just a mud hole and didn't even have a newspaper but we told them our Dad was in Oklahoma City in business and that we would drive on to where he was.

We arrived in the city the 18th day of August hot, tired and dirty and we couldn't find a house. Finally, Dad succeeded in renting the first floor of a brick building on the southeast corner of 4th Street and Broadway and bought some furniture, mostly beds and a cookstove. We all took a bath in a wash tub and were thankful for the tub. The next day Father bought some lumber and partitioned our big hall into four nice rooms

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and we lived there for six months, until the owner needed the building for business at which time we moved to the North Side Hotel. Later, Mr. Harmon finished a cottage for us at 18 NW 3rd Street where the New State Brewery now stands and we lived in this cottage until August 1893, when Dad sold his livery barn and bought a stock of merchandise at Choctaw City, which at that time was a thriving city as it was the Kickapoo Indian Trading Post.

Their reservation was northeast of us and the Kickapoo Indians did a great deal of trading with us. The women bought bright colored calico and the men bought big wide brimmed hats, most of which were of the Stetson Brand. The Indians always had a dozen dogs with them and we were told by old settlers that they ate the fat dogs. The first run in which Father took part was for town lots near Cloud Chief; he got ten lots and in due time received a Government patent for them.

His second run was for a homestead in the Cherokee Strip Opening, September 16, 1893. Father with three other men, selected a section of land from the map and had the location in their mind. Father hitched two of his fastest horses to the buckboard

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and he and his three friends made the run for this section of land which ^{was} Section 35, Township 2ⁿ, Range 1 West. They started two miles ^{from} Orlando; Father and Chas. Brant were in Father's buckboard and the other two were horseback. They all drove and rode as fast as they could until they reached Cow Creek and there Father and Mr. Brant unhitched ^{the} horses from the buckboard. The horses had soft saddles on them and Father and Mr. Brant left their buckboard at Cow Creek and rode these horses to the place ^{to} selected. All filed on their land without trouble except Father; a man named Patter contested Father's claim but he bought him off - gave him five of his lots at Cloud Chief and \$150.00 cash.

Father had bought a half block at Choctaw and they named the street Maupin Avenue for him. He had purchased the lots with the intention of building, but thought it best to improve the farm.

He plowed the virgin soil with a fourteen inch plow, then cut this sod in three foot lengths and he built two rooms 16 x 18 feet with walls three feet thick. In making this house he always placed the grass side down, otherwise, he said, the

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the grass would grow. He covered these rooms with oak clapboard shingles and the floor was made of 1 x 12 cottonwood planks.

After the house was finished my older brothers went hunting and caught a coon, which they cleaned and Mother baked it. This was our first meal in our new home. We never got cold in the Winter or hot in the Summer in our sod house.

There was a creek running through our farm called Blackberry creek which was alive with snakes that had sought refuge there when the soldiers burned the grass off in the spring of '94. We boys killed hundreds of snakes and piled them up.

We worked hard and improved our farm well. We all went barefooted from early Spring until late Fall and I was eighteen years old when I first wore shoes the year round.

In 1901 our parents moved into Perry to send us children to school. After father moved to town he sold eighty acres for \$3500.00 and bought a brick building in Perry. Father died in 1925 and I was appointed administrator for the estate. I sold the brick building in Perry for \$6,000.00.

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Mother didn't want to keep the farm as it was too much for her to see after but for sentimental reasons, my brother, Dr. Charles Maupin of Louisville, Kentucky, and I own the old homestead near Perry.