

MACKEL, T. J.

INTERVIEW

7187

23

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

Field Worker's name Alene D. McDowell

This report made on (date) August 10, 1937 1937

1. Name T. J. Mackel
2. Post Office Address Washington County Court House, Bartlesville  
Okla.
3. Residence address (or location) Washington County Court House
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 31 Year 1873
5. Place of birth Independence, Kansas

6. Name of Father William Mackel Place of birth Ireland

Other information about father Buried in Kansas

7. Name of Mother Kate Meagher-Mackel Place of birth Iowa

Other information about mother Lives at Caney, Kas. age 84 years

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 20.

Alene D. McDowell, Field Worker  
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149  
August 10, 1937

Interview with  
T.J. Mackel  
Washington County Court House  
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

T.J. Mackel was born March 31, 1873 at  
Independence, Kansas.

Father - William Mackel was born in 1843  
at Dublin, Ireland, and came to America when  
he was 19 years old. He settled in Canada  
where he lived for a few years, then came  
to the United States and settled in New York  
City, New York, and later removed to Iowa,  
where he married. A few years later he moved  
his family west to the "promised land." They  
made the long trip in covered, ox drawn wagons,  
and settled at Independence, Kansas, where the  
subject of this review was born. In 1884 he  
removed to the Indian Territory. He died in  
1914 and is buried in the Sunnyside Cemetery  
at Caney, Kansas.

Mother - Kate Meagher-Mackel was born in  
Iowa and is now living at Caney, Kansas, at  
the age of 84 years.

My father came to the Indian Territory in the early 80's and leased pasture land, where he fed cattle for four years. In 1884 he removed his family to the Indian Territory, from Chautauqua County, Kansas, and settled on a farm, on Buck Creek, near Pawhuska, in Osage County. He leased this farm from Ed Labadie. We had a two room, log house, with a stone fireplace in one end, for heat, and we used kerosene lights.

Our furniture was all factory made, with the exception of the chairs, which were home made, with split hickory bark bottoms.

#### EARLY DAY TRADING POSTS

The trading posts came with the Indian migration from the east. While these posts carried the same stock of commodities that had been handled by the old Indian traders, they also carried goods and wares that were suited to the needs of the civilized Indian

MACKEL, T. J.

INTERVIEW.

#7187

3

and frontier white settlers, including, boots, and shoes, cheap clothing, dry goods, garden tools, simple farm implements, saddles, harness, etc.

The opening of Oklahoma brought all forms of retail merchants to the new towns, and in order to establish a trading post, the Government required each merchant to secure a permit. These posts were known as licensed trading posts.

Our nearest trading post was the old Bartles store, located on the north bank of the Caney River, across from the present site of Bartlesville. There was a licensed trading post at Pawhuska, where the Indians were sadly cheated, for they were charged two prices for their supplies. Other trading posts where the Indians and settlers bought supplies were: Coffeyville, Independence and Chautauqua Springs, Kansas.

MACKEL, T. J.

INTERVIEW.

#7187

4

EDUCATION

I received my early education in Kansas. After our removal to the Indian Territory, the parents in our community, organized a subscription school, built a one room box building from rough lumber and hired Mrs. Ed Elam for our teacher. My younger brothers and sisters received their education in this school. I attended this school for a while.

POST OFFICES

There was a post office located 4 miles west of what is now Hulah, in Osage County. This was the Hampton post office.

A stage route operated through Gray Horse, located five miles north east of Fairfax, in Osage County. There was a post office located at this station, known as the Gray Horse post office. These post offices are no longer in existence.

BOOMERS

In 1879, E. C. Boudinot, a well known Cherokee, wrote an article for the newspaper, stating that he had discovered several million acres of land in the Indian Territory, that was public land and subject for settlement and Homestead entry. This was the beginning of the invasion of Oklahoma lands. These invaders were known as Boomers. The United States Government became alarmed and sent troops to the border to stop the threatened invasion..

The following year, David L. Payne, who had recently returned from Washington, District of Columbia, became their leader. He was a natural leader and for four years he organized colonies and made attempts to occupy the Oklahoma land. He was arrested and ejected from the Territory several times. He died in 1884 and the movement was carried on by W. L. Couch, who also failed to establish a permanent

MACKEL, T. J.

INTERVIEW.

#7187

6

settlement. My two uncles, Tom and Jim Meagher, went with Payne to the Unassigned Land. They built shacks, broke land and lived in the promised land for about two years, but finally gave up. When Oklahoma became a state, it was known as the "Sooner State."

THE CHEROKEE STRIP LIVE STOCK ASS'N.

In 1883, the cattleman of the Cherokee Outlet, organized the Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association, at Caldwell, Kansas, and leased the land from the Cherokee Nation, for a cattle range. This lease was for a term of 5 years. The land was sub-leased to various individuals who had established ranges in the Outlet.

The lease expired in 1888 and after considerable trouble, the Association leased the land for another five year period.

THE CHEROKEE OUTLET.

The land of the Cherokee Outlet or better



known as the Cherokee Strip, was sold to the United States Government by the Cherokee Nation in May, 1893.

On September 16, 1893, this land was thrown open for settlement. Land offices were established at Perry, Enid, Alva and Woodward, where the intended settlers registered. A registration certificate was required as an identification, at the District Land Office, to file a homestead after the opening. This was to eliminate the "sooners" entering the state; however, they caused plenty of trouble.

Albert Hit, Sam Smith, Johnny Sweeney and myself were working on the Joe Hurt Ranch in Osage County, when the Strip was opened for settlement. We were young and ready for adventure, so quit our jobs and made the run for a homestead.

MACKEL, T. J.

INTERVIEW.

#7187

8

After a long, tiresome wait, we filed at Perry, and decided to be the first settlers at a claim located about 4 miles *east* and 15 miles north of Stillwater, on Black Bear Creek, between Perry and Pawnee. This claim was about 15 miles west of Pawnee.

We started from the south boundary of the Strip land, about 3 or 4 miles northeast of Stillwater. The race was to begin at noon, September 16, 1893. There were thousands of people, with as many different modes of travel, lined up along the border, ready and eager for the signal to start. Men and women were on horseback, in wagons, drawn by mules, horses and oxen, in two wheeled carts drawn by a cow or horse, on foot and with every conceivable sort of vehicle, each seeking a home.

We each had a good, fast horse and had

trained them well for the race. Horse thieves were active, and we guarded our horses and took turns night watching.

A few minutes before the appointed time, we urged our horses into the front line. The people and stock were restless, but there was not a sound, except for the milling of the stock. Everybody was anxiously awaiting the signal shot, and when it rang out, the mad rush was on.

We gained our desired location of 160 acres, and were making ready to file at the land office, when to our surprise, five or six "sooners" approached us with Winchesters. Sam Smith, who was older than the rest of us, acted as spokesman. The sooners ask him if he was married, he informed them he had a wife and two babies. One of them pushed a Winchester in Smith's stomach and said,

MACKEL, T. J.

INTERVIEW.

#7187

10

"If you want to see them again, get going."

We were so scared, we did not need a second invitation. Smith did not have a family, neither, did he care to die. I was not old enough to hold a claim, and it was not hard to persuade me to leave.

My father, William Mackel, made the run into the Strip and secured a claim joining the townsite of Perry, on Cowskin Creek. The Santa Fe Railroad, ran through this claim, and he made the run on the train. He improved his claim and lived there many years.

There were many outlaws entered the Outlet, and held claims for the sooners.

My father told of an experience he had, while making the trip from Kansas to the opening of the Cherokee Strip.

There were about 500 wagons camped near a little creek. Most of these were from

11

Kansas and Missouri and the people thought the Indians were dangerous.

There were several tons of hay, which had been cut, but not yet baled, across a fence from the camp. The travelers were all feeding the hay. About 8 or 9 Blanket Indians, with feathers on their heads, came to the camp, counted the horses and made it known they charged 25 cents a head for the horses feed. The speaker pretended he did not speak English, but my father was of the opinion he was a white man, painted and dressed in Indian garb.

The Indians did <sup>not</sup> prove ownership to the hay, but gipped the white men, for they would rather pay for the hay, than have trouble.

We had an amusing experience on our trip to the opening of the Strip. Sam Smith had bought a big, rangy sorrel horse, with four white stocking legs. One day Sam was riding him, when very unexpectedly he pitched and

12

threw Sam.

Sam was bald headed, and always wore his hat. He wore his hair long around the edge where it showed from under his hat. When the horse started pitching his hat flew off, this made Sam mad, for there was a group of Missourians camped with us and Sam was much embarrassed. He again mounted the horse who lowered his head for another siege. The horse was surprised this time, for Sam seized his six-shooter from his belt and began shooting on first one side of the horse's head, then the other. He soon conquered the horse and the old Missourians thought we were a bunch of outlaws.

#### INDIAN SCHOOLS

There was a Government school for the Osages located at Pawhuska.

MACKEL, T. J.

INTERVIEW.


#7187

13

A Catholic school for girls was established on Clear Creek, west of Pawhuska, and one for the boys at Timbered Hills, near Gray Horse in Osage County.

#### RANCHES

I worked on the Joe Hura Ranch located in Osage County. The cattle range extended from Big Caney River on the east to Sand Creek on the west and the north boundary line was Elgin, Kansas and the south line of Osage County made the south boundary line of the range.

He shipped approximately 20,000 head of cattle a year, from Elgin, Kansas. His cattle brand was 0000 and his horse brand was .

We always drove the cattle into Tinker's Hollow, south of Elgin, where we camped while awaiting shipment. Some times we camped for

MACKEL, T. J.

INTERVIEW.

#7187

14

several days before the stock yards were clear.

One time while we were camped, Tom Pugh, a cow hand, returned from town drunk. Joe McGuire, (brother of Bird McGuire) was our cook, and was plenty mad when Tom rode around the chuck wagon, shooting holes in the tin cups and pans. Tom shot behind him and the bullet lodged in his horse's hip, breaking it. This caused the loss of a good horse.

Carpenter's Ranch was located on Dog Creek, south of Hewins, Kansas, in the Indian Territory. Their brand was a small "c" and they shipped about 5,000 head.

Texas Stokes, who owned a big ranch in Texas, leased grazing land in the Indian Territory, in Osage County, where he pastured large herds. I worked for him,



15

but I do not recall his brand.

I worked for various ranches in the Indian Territory, for over a period of ten years.

There was a bridge built over Rock Creek, between Pawhuska and Elgin for the mail hack. One day a cattleman named Blocker drove a trail herd across the bridge. The bridge gave away and he lost part of his cattle.

#### ROADS

The old road from Bartlesville to Tulsa was located about three miles west of the present United States Highway #75, near what is now known as Nigger Gap.

In the early 90's there was no road from Bartlesville to Pawhuska. We followed Sand Creek which was a winding trail and several miles out of the way.

There was a bridge across Sand Creek, six miles north of Indian Town, located

east of Pawhuska.

### FERRIES

There was a ferry across Caney River, south of Bartlesville, on the Jim Day place and <sup>it</sup> was run by Jim Hill. A swinging bridge was built in the early 90's about the same location of the present bridge on State Highway #23.

There was a ferry across the Arkansas River at Cleveland, but I do not know the name of the ferry, nor the man who ran it.

### MISCELLANEOUS HAPPENINGS

When my maternal grandparents removed from Iowa to Kansas in 1869, they drove two yoke of oxen to wagons and a team of horses to a light spring wagon.

When my parents came to the Indian Territory, there were three families came in a group, all traveled in covered wagons.

17

My father and several other men, made a trip from Kansas into the Osage <sup>Country</sup> one time, while they were camped west of Copan one night, a band of young Osage Indians stole a bunch of their horses.

The white men went to the Indian camp, where some of the old Indian men were stationed, and whipped them. When the young bucks returned to camp and discovered what had happened, they returned to the white camp with reinforcements, and chased the white men to Chautauqua Springs, Kansas, killing one man, Frank Sellers. Old man White was so badly frightened, he went totally entirely insane. He never recovered from this shock, and this ghastly sight was never out of his mind.

#### FISHING IN THE EARLY DAYS.

The streams were all full of fish

and the white settlers as well as the Indians depended upon fishing for food and sports.

I was living on a farm south of Chautauqua, Kansas, in the Indian Territory. Pond Creek, a small stream, emptied into Caney River, on my place, and the river was up. Two other fellows and I stretched a barrel net across the creek and when the water receded, we caught two wagon loads of fish. These fish averaged two and three pounds each.

#### INDIAN CUSTOMS

The Osages traveled in bands of 40 or 50, and all traveled horseback, in single file. They always had a string of loose horses following and the squaws would tie their papooses and bedding on these horses. They would often travel for many miles, and the babies hanging on to the horses in their cradles. The Indians were usually good to

MACKEL, T. J.

INTERVIEW.

#7187

19

their children, but after they were old enough to care for themselves, they were turned loose to roam as they pleased. The squaws did all the work in the camp and the men hunted game and fished. They did not do any farming because the Government furnished them food and clothing.

Some of the Osages buried their dead in cliffs of the Osage Hills and rocks were filled in around the body. All the beads and trinkets belonging to the dead Indians were buried with them. These trinkets are often found, where the sand has been washed away, leaving them exposed.

I had many friends among the full bloods. The Callahans, Shaws and Ferrells were some of my school mates.

#### COMMENTS

Mr. Mackel came to the Indian Territory

MACKEL, T. J.

INTERVIEW.

#7187

20

when he was 11 years of age and has made this his home since. He was born in Kansas, only a few miles across the line from the Indian Territory and he feels that this almost makes him a native.