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BIGGS, WILLIAM E.

INTERVIEW

#8968

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8962

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

Field Worker's name Mildred B. Mc Farland
This report made on (date) October 21 1937

1. Name William E. Biggs
2. Post Office Address Edmond, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) R. R. #3
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 26 Year 1868
5. Place of birth Ruardean Hill, Gloucester, England

6. Name of Father George Biggs Place of birth Bristol, England
Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Susan Tippin Biggs Place of birth England
Other information about mother Born in Ruardean Hill, Gloucester

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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Mildred B. McFarland,
Interviewer,
October 21, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. William E. Biggs,
R. R. 3, Edmond, Oklahoma.

I was born in Ruardean Hill, Gloucester, England. I lived there with my parents until I was thirteen years old. They decided to come to America, so selling our home and possessions we started out on a new life in a strange country.

We arrived in Braidwood, Illinois, in 1881. Father was a stone mason by trade and did quite well in Illinois. When that work gave out he worked in the coal mines. In 1889, he read about the possibilities of obtaining a home in Oklahoma. As my mother always wanted to live on a farm, father decided to make the run. He boarded a train and came into Oklahoma from the north.

Father staked his claim three miles south of Edmond. I still live on the old homestead. Of course Mother and we children stayed in Illinois until father had a place to bring us to. I was the oldest of six children. There

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was plenty of lumber on the siding at Edmond for people who could pay the price. Father bought enough to build a house 8x8 feet. He later added to it. He went back to Illinois in October for his family.

We chartered a box car and shipped our furniture, four cows, a mare and colt, two dozen chickens, a sow and six pigs. We had sufficient food, although times were pretty hard for the first four years. When the crops began to pay returns we got along fine. Of course we all had to work hard. My father had learned how to make brick while in England. We decided to build a house of brick, so we proceeded to make a kiln. It was made of mud and adobe brick. Father mixed and prepared the clay and I molded it into brick. We then placed them in the kiln to burn. It takes about ten days to do this. On the third day a strong cold wind came up and caused a high pressure of steam in the kiln. It blew out one side and as we had no more materials we finished our house with native rock. It still is as good and strong

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as when we first built it. We are still using our first little house for a chicken house.

Our first year we only used two acres of ground for it had to be plowed and worked over as it had never been used before. We planted that two acres in turnips.

We got our water supply from a spring on the place. When that dried up we hauled it in barrels from a well in Edmond.

After things were running smoothly, Father, my brother and I started to dig a well on our place. It was a very tedious job. Father would get down inside and dig until a large bucket was filled and then I would draw it to the surface with a rope. We got water at thirty-four feet, but we put it down to fifty-four feet. We valled the well up with native stone and we still use it.

There were several old buffalo wallows on the place, but of course we never saw any buffalo.

The Indians never mo'ested us. They always camped

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on our place. We children would hide behind bushes and watch them around their camp fires. They never came to the house because we had a big Russian bloodhound and they were afraid of him.

There were plenty of deer, wild turkeys, prairie chickens and squirrel.

We attended the Methodist Church in Edmond. We got our supplies from the Pioneer Grocery which was the first store there, and it was in a tent. A frame building was later built.

Mrs. Annie Ricketts gave one acre of ground to build a school. It was always called the "Rickett's School". It is now called "Prairie Bell" and is still being used. We would all gather at the schoolhouse for social affairs, singing school, literaries and spelling bees.

"Edmond Sun" was the first newspaper edited in Edmond and was published by Mr. Reynolds. The Indians called him "Kicking Bird".

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Mother knit all our socks and made all of our clothing by hand. Father died in 1923. He lived on the homestead for thirty-four years and I have been here forty-eight years and have made quite a few improvements. I purchased the farm just north of the homestead. There are graves of two children buried almost on the eastern boundary line of my place. They were buried in 1887. The section hands of the Santa Fe Railroad Company always care for the graves as they were children of a man named Davis, who worked on the railroad before the opening of Oklahama.