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BIRD, MARION.

INTERVIEW

9039

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INTERVIEW.

9039

R. B. Thomas  
Interviewer  
October 27, 1937.

Interview with Marion Bird  
Muskogee, Oklahoma.  
506 Cherokee St.

I was born in Muskogee County, October 16, 1879, near Briartown. My father was Tom Bird, a white man, and my mother was Delilah Latta Bird, born in Cherokee Nation in 1857, died in 1922; she was half-blood Cherokee, an orphan and had a hard life among the Indian friends. She went through a great many hardships and saw the Indians fight with other tribes. She ran away from home when sixteen and went to Missouri to visit her white relatives but they made light of her dark skin and Indian blood so she returned to Indian Territory and was married to Tom Bird and settled near Porum and has raised her family there, I grew up around Porum. I have one brother, Charles Bird, and one sister, Margaret Israel, Tulsa. My wife is Rhoda B. Bird, one-eighth Choctaw, born in 1882, in Missouri. We had one child, now deceased.

I am one-half Cherokee and am familiar with all the Cherokee customs and ways as we were raised in the Indian way and carried on the tribal customs and went to Indian ceremonies and dances;

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I farmed and raised cattle.

When I was mail carrier from Briartown to Texanna in 1893 I made the forty mile trip every day horseback, fording creeks and had to have good horses to stand the trip every day and change them often. The Texanna post office was robbed, supposedly by the Starr gang who lived in Briartown, and the old house that Tom Starr lived in is still standing one half mile from Briartown. It is a double log house with two chimneys and Tom Starr had portholes in each end that he would shoot from if a stranger came to his home; he looked through a hole and if it was an officer or spy he shot to kill and they never did capture him; the officers finally made a treaty with him to surrender.

There were a great many outlaws in this vicinity and there was a canyon called the Belle Starr Canyon where the outlaws hid out. I knew Belle Starr, Tom Starr and Bill Starr personally. This canyon was the hiding place of Missouri, Oklahoma and Arkansas outlaws and for Frank James, Bill Doolan and all the Starr gang. Belle and uncle Tom Starr would protect them and

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feed them and it was difficult for the officers of the law to find them. I remember seeing them ride out of Briartown on several occasions and they rode into Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri and robbed banks and would return with a big haul. The country was sparsely settled and it was easy to hide with friends and they had plenty in Oklahoma who would protect them and feed them if the officers were on their trail, therefore Tom and Bill Starr and others evaded the law several years. The Doolans, Tracys and other noted outlaws were hidden here. I have heard my father talk of this gang when I was a boy, he lived one mile from the Starr home, and he said it was a pretty tough gang. People were afraid of Tom Starr and Bill Starr, even officers hesitated to molest them because they were risking their lives. They made concessions to old Tom and he gave up and was not punished, thereby ending a life of crime and the citizens were relieved when this occurred because they had been kept in terror.