

MAVITY, W. E.

INTERVIEW

#8041

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

Field Worker's name Robert W. Small

This report made on (date) July 23, 1937

1. Name W. E. Mavity

2. Post Office Address 803 East Grand Ave.

3. Residence address (or location) Tonkawa, Oklahoma

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 10 Year 1867

5. Place of birth Illinois

6. Name of Father L. F. Mavity Place of birth Indiana

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Lucy F. Mavity Place of birth Ohio

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 7.

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Interview with W. E. Mavity,
803 East Grand Ave., Tonkawa, Okla.

Mr. W. E. Mavity was born in Illinois , December 10, 1867, his father, L. P. Mavity, having been born in Indiana, and his mother, Lucy Fox Mavity, in Ohio.

March 4, 1891, Mr. Mavity married Hattie Pease of Nebraska, in which state they made their home till March 15, 1894, when they moved to Oklahoma Territory, shipping their household goods, four horses, some pigs, chickens and a wagon in a car to Cross, Oklahoma Territory. Being unable to immediately get a house into which they could move, they spent two nights in the car, then moved into a little "shack" in Cross.

Mr. Mavity had come to the new country for the purpose of making it his future home; not being here at the time the Cherokee outlet was opened for settlement, he was compelled to find someone who would sell their relinquishment on their claim to him. In a short time he found a desirable place, secured the relinquishment, and placed his own filing upon the Northwest quarter of Sec. 24, Twp. 26.N., R. 1 East, Kay County, Oklahoma Territory.

This claim had a small house, 12' x 14', built on it;

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a well of water and twelve acres of sod had been broken.

Mr. Mavity bought a house, 14' x 16', in Cross and moved it on the claim and built sheds for his stock and fenced the entire quarter section with a barb wire fence.

He planted the twelve acres that had been broken on the claim to wheat, but the dry weather during the Winter of 1894 caused the wheat to die. He plowed it in the Spring of 1895 and planted it in corn from which he harvested only a very few bushels the following Fall. During the year of 1895, he broke out 48 acres more of sod land. In the Fall of '95 he sowed thirty acres in wheat and the following Spring planted several acres to kaffir corn and other feed crops. His wheat made a fair yield the Summer of '96 and his other crops also made fair yields. He continued to break more sod land each year. In the Fall of 1896, he planted 95 acres to wheat and a few acres to oats, both of which made good crops on the place as long as he lived there.

In the Fall of 1895, he put out an orchard consisting of most all kinds of fruit, planting 64 apple trees and 64 peach trees. The following year he planted 100 ad-

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ditional peach trees. The young orchard grew and flourished and soon he had an abundance of all kinds of fruit. Most all the settlers in the new country had put out orchards, all of which thrived and bore fruit in such quantities that there was no sale for it, but it made a large and valuable part of every family's living.

Mr. Mavity raised several head of horses and cattle on the farm and lots of chickens, but not many hogs.

Mrs. Mavity, like most pioneer women, made the farm produce pay for a large part of their expense for groceries, clothing, etc. She made a quantity of butter each week which, with the eggs from their flock of chickens, she would load into her cart, hitch a horse or mule to it and drive to Cross, their nearest market, seven miles distant and trade for merchandise the family needed.

Mr. Mavity states that during the early years in this new country he bought good young mules for \$62.50 per head and good horses for \$25.00 to \$40.00 per head. Farm wagons cost about \$65.00. Sulky plows, \$30.00. A set of good leather harness could be bought for \$35.00.

He bought wood for fuel on and near the Arkansas

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River, hauling it a distance of thirteen to sixteen miles to his home. The wood cost only twenty-five cents per load at that time. Oak, elm, pecan, walnut and hackberry timber were the kinds mostly used for fuel.

There was an abundance of fish in the Arkansas River and often Mr. Mavity and his neighbors would go fishing and it was not unusual to catch some catfish weighing thirty to forty-five pounds. Some were caught with seines and nets of different kinds. Occasionally someone could catch a fish weighing as much as ninety pounds.

Mrs. Mavity made almost all the family wearing apparel from material secured with produce she took to their local trading point. She brought a Montgomery Ward sewing machine with her when they moved to this country.

A school house was built in 1895 that is still being used and is in a good state of preservation today.

Church and Sunday School were held in homes and groves in the early days and most people attended them with a degree of punctuality that has not been maintained since, and it was a common incident for one neighbor to invite

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and have two or more neighboring families accompany him home to spend the day. Neighbors visited each other frequently and all truly enjoyed such visits. Neighborhood quarrels or other ^adisension were /rare occurrence among the early settlers. They lived quietly and peaceably, strictly observing the "Golden Rule" in their everyday life. They were almost all of a pioneering stock of people and, though poor and hard pressed for money and the necessities of life, they lived to help their neighbors in every commendable way.

Mr. Mavity states that if a neighbor needed an extra team to work a day or two ~~that~~ he could always secure one from any neighbor who had an idle team and no thought of charging for the team was entertained. Often men would go help a neighbor for a day or two to do some job of work and never expect any pay for his services. There was no class distinction among the pioneers. They were all on an equal footing and shared their joys and sorrows in common.

Mr. Mavity states that with the exception of the winter of 1898, when the mercury dropped to twenty-two

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degrees below zero, the extremes of heat and cold during the years was more nearly normal than it has been in recent years.

The wages paid for hired help on the farms in the early days never exceeded fifty cents per day or \$15.00 per month, but hired help in those days was unusual.

The first two or three years after opening of the new country to settlement was a trying time for the poor people who settled it. The precipitation of moisture was very light. People would work hard to break up the sod lands and plant their crops only to see it later wither and die for lack of moisture. The soil was rich and most everyone cultivated his land in a suitable manner but it required a certain amount of moisture to enable it to grow and produce. Beginning with the season of 1896, the rainfall increased and continued with sufficient regularity to insure ^{from} fair to bumper crops for a number of years and the country grew and prospered in every way. The little "dugouts" and "shack" houses through the country gave way to more commodious and luxurious homes, farms were all fenced,

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roads made on the section lines, bridges built, enterprising towns began to spring up here and there over the country; railroads entered, and commerce and industry thrived from the abundance of the products of the farms.