

MAYFIELD, HILLY HOWARD

INTERVIEW

#8349

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

Field Worker's name Anna R. Barry

This report made on (date) August 16, 1937

1. Name Hillry Howard Mayfield

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 1011 West Rogers

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 26 Year 1869

5. Place of birth Carrol County, Missouri

6. Name of Father Edward Mayfield Place of birth Bullitt County, Kentucky

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Elizabeth Holtzclaw Place of birth Bullitt County Kentucky

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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Anna R. Barry,
Interviewer,
August 16, 1937.

AN Interview with Mr. Hillry Howard Mayfield,
1011 West Rogers St., El Reno, Oklahoma.

I was born in Carrol County, Missouri, on the
26th of September, 1869, being the son of Edward and
Elizabeth (Holtzclaw) Mayfield.

I received a common school education in a rural
school near our farm home.

After the opening of Oklahoma for settlement in
1889, my parents decided to sell our claim, and move
to Oklahoma. I liked our home in Kansas and begged my
parents to let me stay on the farm there; that they
could move to Oklahoma, then if they failed to file
on a claim they would still have a home to come back
to.

In the early fall of 1890, they sold our farm,
against my wish. As I was old enough to file on land
I decided to come along with them to Oklahoma.

On October 10, 1890, we started for Oklahoma with
our three wagons, loaded with bedding, household goods,

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farm implements, a coop of chickens and a chest of carpenter tools; we also brought three good milk cows, and five head of horses besides the ones we were driving. We were between two and three weeks making the trip. We all enjoyed camping out in the open and cooking our meals on an open fire. I shall never forget how good that food tasted, fried potatoes, gravy, bread cooked in Dutch oven and black coffee.

My parents settled on a delinquent claim, nine miles north of El Reno. There was a little rough frame shack, eight by ten feet, on this place, which we tore down, and built a two room house, eighteen by twenty feet. How proud my father, mother and two sisters were of that little home. I took more interest in the field work.

In those days of beginning, we depended on our neighbors. We used a system of swapping and borrowing. The man who had no work team, did carpenter work for the man who had; he who had a harrow, loaned it to a neighbor for the use of his planter. Farm

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implements were almost like community property. Sometimes we had to go to three or four houses before we found our plow, or harrow. But there was no grumbling, we always felt glad when we met someone to talk with, or a neighbor chanced to stop in about meal time. It did not matter how little we had to eat, everyone was welcome.

Before the opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Country for settlement, in 1892, people came by our little hut from every direction. I remember the big covered wagons, the tired horses, usually followed by a few head of cattle, and one or two persons on horseback. Several bright eyed children poked their heads out from under the flapping canvas always pointing at something to show the others as they slowly traveled along.

They dreamed as they rode along. Why should they not dream? Behind them lay crop failures, cold winters, shattered fortunes, but before them was hope. In after years those dreams were to come true, but before them

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lay the days of the prairie fires, the coyotes, the little cabins, and the rade sod shanties. We dreamed as we worked. There was no home but had some heartache or distress, but we were kind to each other, always willing to offer a helping hand to one in need.

One day a bunch of men were sitting in front of a little frame shack in El Reno which was a grocery store. The house of a widow woman who had several small children had burned the night before. They had lost everything, even to their shoes in this fire. As we there talking, each man would tell something about the fire, and then end his story by sympathizing with her.

At last, a cowboy jumped to his feet said "boys that isn't my way of showing sympathy". At this he took off his large cowboy hat, threw a five dollar bill in it, and continued to pass the hat around, being careful not to miss a person. We counted the

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money, and there was almost fifty dollars. He then sent a boy after this woman. When she came, he gave her the money. This little story is told just to show how people really helped one another. When the shadow of disaster or death fell upon a home, all the neighbors came in and helped to cultivate the crop. Some plowed, others hoed and by nightfall, this crop was clean and a family was made much happier.

My mother learned from a neighbor woman how to make jelly and butter from the sand plums, good pies out of sheep sorrels and green tomatoes. She learned that several different kinds of wild greens were good to eat.

In fall of 1891, the Rock Island Railroad furnished seed wheat for the farmers to plant. Each farmer received around ten bushels. When a crop was made, this was to be paid back. My father, Edward Mayfield, owned the first threshing machine in our neighborhood. It was a horsepower machine. We threshed our first wheat

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around Piedmont at five cents per bushel. Each farmer just had in a small patch of wheat and oats, from five to ten acres. If they raised a hundred bushels of wheat, they thought that they had raised a large crop. I shall never forget what a time we had getting this machine over gullies and canyons. Sometimes we almost had to make a road to travel over. Men received from seventy-five cents to one dollar per day for labor with their room and board.

At the opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Country, April 16, 1892, I made the run for a claim. I staked it, six miles southwest of Okarche. I put up a little frame shack ten by twelve feet. At this time I didn't own a horse, the only way I had of traveling was to walk. The girl, Lula Hill, I was going to see had staked a claim not far from my place, but at this time was teaching school at Frisco. When I went to Frisco to see her, I would pay Preacher Springer fifty cents for the use of horse and buggy. On January

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29, 1893, we were married in this buggy, near the river bridge north of El Reno by this preacher.

We then moved to my wife's claim, which was located four miles south of Okarche. She had a little frame hut, ten by twelve feet. We bought new furniture for our little home.

The coming of spring found us busy, setting out little trees for shade, fencing the yard, making flower beds and planning where to plant the garden.

My wife was very fond of pets, we didn't go any place, that she didn't bring home a cat, dog or chicken. She had each of them named, even to the old red rooster and the nine hens.

I remember one time we had two hens setting on some eggs. We looked forward to the day they would hatch. One day my wife came running to the field where I was working and told me that our hens were hatching, and there was a nest of downy yellow chicks. That night we heard a terrible outcry from the chicken coop. I ran

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out, grabbed an axe, and called to my wife to come with the lamp. Here we saw a large chickensnake.

The snake had swallowed several chickens.

As I cut this snake in two, one little chicken that he had eaten wiggled. My wife quickly grabbed it up, ran into the house, wrapped it up in a woolen cloth and placed it near the fire. Next morning when we awoke our little chicken was out and running over the floor. It became a beautiful hen, and pet. We named her "Beautiful".

Our farm was near old Chisholm stage line. Every day Indians came by going to and from Darlington.

Some were on horseback, others in buggies and wagons.

I have been at several beef issues. The cattle issued by the government had to stand for twelve hours in the corrals before being weighed for the Indians.

Groups of Indians would inspect the steers and make their selections. These would be released and the bucks would chase them on horseback, shooting them with guns, revolvers or arrows; the aquaws would proceed with the butchering; nothing was really wasted.

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for the brains, kidneys, livers and hearts were considered good. Once or twice a week liver or kidneys were eaten raw as medicine. The tripe was also prized and the intestine, after being cleaned and washed, were fried crisp, and were considered a great dish. The stomachs served as tubs or water containers.

An Indian's wealth was measured by the number of ponies he possessed. They often camped a number in one camp, which might be established in one spot for a long period of time. They dwelt in covered wagons and tepees, which could be taken down and moved at a moment's notice. Very few had a permanent house, and they did little farming. Fish were caught by hook and lines or in traps.

In the early '90s the Mennonite Missionaries taught their religion to the Indians. Some of the Indians had their own religion, with their own God or "Great Spirit". Many of these Indians were good,

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while others were bad. They held dances, but most of their ceremonies were in the nature of feasts or dances, for good crops, or success in hunting. I have known Indians to move a camp site, rather than disturb a nestling bird, or a cat with a litter of kittens. During all my many years among Indians I have never yet had an Indian break a promise, fail in his word or betray me.

Not far from our claim lived an Indian family by the name of Eaglenest. They had a son about twelve years of age, who died. Soon after this boy had died, Indians came from every direction in wagons, buggies and in cars. They beat their drums, hollowing and mourning in the Indian language. This Indian family were well to do, had a nice home and lovely furniture. As each Indian family made ready to leave, they took the furniture they wanted. Some took beds, others tables and chairs. One family took the nice majesty range stove. Another Indian woman wanted a fine walnut

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dresser, she had come there in^a car from Watonga, and couldn't take this dresser home in the car, so she just emptied its contents on the floor, and took the dresser drawers, saying she would be back after the dresser the next day. The daughter of this Indian family owned a fine beaded buckskin dress (which was valued at a thousand dollars) Just as soon as her brother died, she quickly grabbed this dress wrapping it carefully and ran down into a field and hid it, until after her brother was buried. These Indians just stripped this house. I have passed later and this woman was cooking the family meal out in the yard on an open fire. This was one of the Indian customs.

In 1892, I worked at Concho, helping to build some of the new brick buildings. Concho is located two miles west of U.S. Highway 81, by the side of the Caddo Springs. These springs on account of excellent water

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were a well known camping place in the early history of the country. We received from one dollar to one and fifty cents per day for our labor on this building.

On our claim, we reared our family of eight children. In later years we sold our farm, moved to El Reno and bought us a little home. Today our children are proud to say their parents are pioneers of Oklahoma.