

METHVIN, J. J.

INTERVIEW

#4246

METHVIN, J. J.

INTERVIEW BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

257

Field Worker's name Lillian Cassaway

This report made on (date) May 31, 1937 1937

1. Name Rev. J. J. Methvin,

2. Post Office Address Madarko, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 709 W. Alabama Avenue.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 17 Year 1946

5. Place of birth Jeffersonville, Georgia

6. Name of Father John Methvin Place of birth Georgia

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Mourning Glover Methvin Place of birth Georgia

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 _____.

Field worker, Lillian Gassaway,
May 31, 1937.

Interview with Reverend J. J. Methvin,
Anadarko, Oklahoma.

Reverend Methvin was born in Jeffersonville, Georgia. He now lives in Anadarko, Oklahoma. He is ninety years old, and has served fifty-two years as missionary among the Indians, called the wild tribes. These were the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache tribes.

My father was John Methvin, born in Georgia, in 1811, died in 1879. My mother was Mourning Clover, born in Georgia, 1816, died in 1851.

I was sent to the Indian Territory in 1835 to take charge of a female seminary. This school went by three different names, New Hope, Oak Lodge and Scullyville.

Scullyville means money; here was where the money was paid to the tribes. This school was a Choctaw school, so was among the civilized tribes. In 1836 I was sent among the Seminoles to take over the school at Sesakwa. This, too, was a female school. This name means goose.

Chief Brown asked the government for a post office for this town but it had no name. He was asked to name the

-2-

town so he sent in a name and there happened to be another town by the name that he sent, so he sent another but there was another town by that name, also. This made Brown mad and so he said, "They must be a goose." He sent the name of Sasakwa and it was accepted. Both of these schools were run jointly by the church and Nation.

During my year at Sasakwa, I took a trip west and scouted over the entire western part of the state for a suitable place for mission work. In 1837 I was sent by Bishop Galloway of the Indian Mission Conference of the South Methodist Church to Anadarko, Oklahoma. This became the center of our missionary operations among the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache tribes, all south of the Washita River. This work consisted mostly in visiting them in their tepees (they had no homes for they are a roving people) and trying to teach them the right way to live.

Home Building.

These Indians had no houses, nor settled homes. They camped around the Agency at Anadarko most of the time, but moved around at their own pleasure. They received

-3-

Grass Money once or twice a year. This money was paid by the cattlemen for the use of the Indian land for pasturage. The Indians spent this money foolishly, for such things as beads, shawls, canned goods, and gambling. They received rations every two weeks by agreement of the Medicine Lodge Treaty. This provided that the Government was to feed and partially clothe the Indians for thirty years. This kept them close around the agency. This, too, afforded them ample opportunity for gambling and other dissipation. As I said, they had no houses. When the Grass Money was about due, I talked to some of the Indians and advised them to build houses; so when they got the money some of them brought me the money for houses-- from \$50.00 to \$500.00.

The nearest bank was in Caldwell, Kansas. I kept the money for them until the railroad was built to Chickasha. Lumber yards were established there, and lumber was cheap on account of competition. I advised the Indians to buy at this time. I ordered the lumber for them and they hauled it themselves, and the Government sent out carpenters to build the houses. Still they did not live in them right away. They kept their harness and such things in them and

METHVIN, J. J.

INTERVIEW.

4246

-4-

continued to live in their tepees. Gradually they began to live in the houses, and in a few years they wanted bigger and better houses for these were only box-houses, 14' x 28'.

Schools.

In 1890, under the direction of the Mission Board of the South Methodist Conference, I asked the Government and Indians for a quarter section of land to build an Indian school. This was granted. This was the Northwest Quarter of Section 22, Township 7. North, Range 10. West. This now comprises part of Anadarko. When built, this school had the capacity of seventy-five students but was soon increased to one hundred. It was named Methvin Institute, and I was put in charge.

After the opening of the country, and the nearness of Anadarko, the demand of the property for the growth of the town was great. When the school closed in 1908, and the property sold, my connection with school work ended. I continued in the field work for many more years, living among the Indians even now.

Graveyards.

Riverside School was established in the early days of the Government, under the Quaker administration. With the demand for a graveyard, one was started on the summit of a high hill north of Anadarko, across the Washita River. Many white people as well as Indians are buried here.

When an Indian would die women would cut off the ends of their fingers, cut their hair, and with a sharp butcher knife slash their arms and breasts. They buried almost everything that belonged to the deceased along with him; such as, saddle, blankets, etc. Sometimes the dead were not buried in a grave but put in a shallow hole and covered with brush, or even in trees. Later, the Indians began to bury their dead at the place which is now the Anadarko Cemetery. There is a section which seems to be reserved for the Indians. There are graves all around that are not in any graveyard.