

METHVIN, J. J. (SWANSON) Mrs.

INTERVIEW . .

#4338

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

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Field Worker's name Lillian M. Cassaway

This report made on (date) June 7, 1937

1. Name Mrs. J. J. Methvin (Nee Ida Swanson)

2. Post Office Address Anadarko, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 709 West Alabama

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 9 Year 1869

5. Place of birth Near Paris, Illinois

6. Name of Father William Swanson Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Susan Nye Swanson Place of birth 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 8.

Mrs. Methvin was a teacher in the Methvin Institute in its early day.

FATHER Swanson, born in Kentucky, 1843, and died in 1924.

MOTHER Susan Nye Swanson, born in Kentucky, in 1846 and died in 1935.

My father came to Oklahoma in 1890 during the summer, from Kansas. We settled near Guthrie, where I taught school in 1891 and part of '92. I took the Civil Service teacher's examination in February of 1892 and soon received an appointment to the Sill School. This school is known as the Fort Sill Indian School now. It is only a few miles south of the new Fort. The school was new. J. W. Hadden was the superintendent. There had been a man teacher but for some reason he had been advised that he should devote his time to missionary work, so he resigned, leaving a vacancy. Mrs. Hadden filled this vacancy until a teacher could be secured. I came to the school in 1892.

The buildings were all ready but for the inability to get ready-made clothes for girls we only had boys in the school. The next year we had all girls, as we had gotten things ready. The first year there were forty boys and the next year there were forty girls.

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In the hurry to have things in running order in time, Mr. Hadden asked for another teacher. When the inspector came and found two teachers with only forty pupils, he asked why. On explanation, he said that a school was only allowed one teacher to every thirty children.

I was soon transferred to the Riverside School just across the Washita River, north of Anadarko. Coming to Anadarko from the Sill School I came by what was then known as the Wire Road. This road followed the telegraph line. This telegraph line ran from Caldwell, Kansas, to Henrietta, Texas, and was put on, I believe it was, four inch iron or steel poles. This was so the Indians couldn't cut or burn the poles down. I was in the Riverside School until October 16, 1893. Then on June 1, 1893, I accepted the position as teacher in the Methvin Institute just south of Anadarko. I worked in this school until Christmas of 1907. I acted as superintendent of this school one year.

Visiting the Indian camps was part of the work of the teachers, for this was real missionary work. We held services and administered to the sick, etc.

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During the summer of 1897, we teachers (there were two of us) were asked to work out among the Indian camps. I was sent to the Mt. Scott district, while Miss Lou Hall was sent to Little Washita. I worked among the Kiowas, Miss Hall among the Comanches.

I lived with a family by the name of Gregory. We met with Andrew Stumbling Bear each day. We had devotional service, then we would sew until noon, and the men would spend the sewing period in conversation.

Every Sunday we met at the church. Some of the Indians would come as far as fifteen miles. I had told them that if each woman would bring enough for her family to eat, we could have dinner at the church and it wouldn't make it hard on any one person. That is what we did. After the morning service we would all spread our dinners on the church floor, for we had no tables, sit tailor fashion, and eat. The Indians enjoyed this. They would come and stay until late evening. Dr. Rowell said; "The Indians will come here and stay all day and never come to a council."

One Sunday morning one of the younger men came in with a little bucket, I guess it held about a half a gallon. He was all smiles, and said: "Miss Swanson, here is some

butter, I made it myself." This was very unusual for a man to have made butter. It was unusual for them even to keep a cow.

Rev. B. F. Cassaway was the preacher at this time for the Indians around Mt. Scott and vicinity. He would hold services at the Mt. Scott Church twice a month. Word would be sent out among the Indians as to when he would be there, and as a rule there was a big congregation.

Every summer there was a Camp Meeting held at the foot of Mt. Scott. Just after the Camp Meeting one Sunday the Indians were talking with much excitement. I couldn't understand what they were saying, so I worked my way to Virginia Stumbling Bear; I asked her what they were so excited about. She said that Sitipato, their blind prophet, had said that the world was coming to an end in a little while, and they were rather excited. I told her that it might and then it might not. I showed her the scripture where it stated that no man knows the day nor the hour wherein the Son Of Man cometh. She read this and passed it on to some of the others who could read. Then she told the rest what I had said. They soon became at ease again.

One Jimmie Quetone came to me and said: "Miss Swanson, what am I going to do. The Cheyennes are coming and I don't know what to do. They are already at Saddle Mt. and they have given them a feast and a lot of horses, calico, ribbons, etc. What am I to do. I don't have things to give them." I told him that nothing was put on us that we couldn't bear, that maybe they wouldn't come. That if he wanted to, I thought that it would be all right to give them a feast. He said: "I've already killed ten beeves this year." Meaning he had no more to spare. "Well," I said: "Maybe they won't come." In a few days I was over at Jimmie's home and there sat Kicking Bird, the Chief, talking to a Cheyenne man. They were talking in sign language, for neither could talk the other's language. He had come alone and taken dinner with them and had a nice visit.

Kicking Bird's sister-in-law was giving a birthday dinner for her son one day and asked me to come. I hesitated about accepting for I would have to stay all night; but I finally accepted. Kicking Bird took me to his sister-in-law's. They were at church, so I went to their church. I went in and took my seat. The Baptist

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mission woman was holding services. Paudlekau got up in the middle of the service, and came and shook hands with me and made the statement that for three years he had gone to the Baptist Church because there was no one from his church holding services there, but now there was a woman working among them and he would have to go to his own church from now on (the Methodist).

That night when time came to sleep, Kicking Bird said: "The women have fixed you a cot in that room and my sister will stay in there with you." The sister brought her pallet in and spread it on the floor. They did this because they either thought I'd be afraid or lonesome.

Miss Bear, the Baptist missionary, asked me what Kicking Bird charged me to take me places. I told her that he didn't expect anything, that he was glad to do it. She said that she had to pay for everything the Indians did for her, even the interpreter. I told her that my interpreter didn't mind talking to his own people.

The Baptist women were piecing quilts and selling them for a dollar each. My women were anxious to do the same. I told them they couldn't do that and make anything, but they wanted to try. They went to town and bought

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enough material to make three quilts. When they were almost completed, Andrew Stumbling Bear came to me and said; "We can't afford to do that, we can't make anything that way." I told him that I had told the women they couldn't, but they wanted to try, and I knew that if I didn't let them they would always believe they could, so I let them. Later we made quilts and sold them, and other things, and made enough to put down a well at the church. Up to this time we had been using creek water to drink when we spent the day at the church. We made the money, gave it to Brother Cassaway and he had the well put down. That has been a good many years ago and still the well is there, affording water to all who need, even in the longest drouth.

Maude Rowell came to me one day and said that she would like for the women to save enough to buy a bell for the church. I suggested that she be made the president of the Missionary Society and ^{WHAT} she manage the making of the money. She did and today the bell stands as a monument to her memory.

During the summer of 1897, James Mooney was sent to make a study of the Indians, by the Smithsonian Institute. He camped at the foot of Mt. Scott, where I met him and his wife.