

HAWKINS, ANDREW J.

INTERVIEW. 13501.

198

HAWKINS, ANDREW J.

INTERVIEW.

13501.

Hannie Lee Burns,
Investigator,
March 31, 1938.

An Interview With Andrew J. Hawkins,
Commerce, Oklahoma.

My father was Tom Hawkins, a native of North Carolina,
and my mother was Rebecca Hawkins nee Linder, born in Tennessee. After their marriage they started west and when they were traveling through the country where Memphis, Tennessee, now stands, Father was offered one hundred and sixty acres of land there for an Indian pony. They traveled on southward and settled in Marshall County, Mississippi. Here Father purchased three sections of land for 25 cents per acre. Later he sold the east and the west section keeping the middle section for our home and here I, the next to the youngest of the family, was born April 5, 1849. Grandfather Hawkins who lived in Raleigh, Mississippi, was the owner of a large number of slaves but my father did not have so many. Our home was built of logs and had a clapboard roof and here in the upper room where we boys slept, we could see the great rafters overhead. Our slaves had small log houses in the back yard and they had the same

HAWKINS, ANDREW J.

INTERVIEW.

13501.

-2-

food to eat that we did and the same clothing and we boys worked along side of them. We lived well; Father would kill twenty or more hogs at a single time.

In addition to our cotton, corn, barley, etc., we raised much wheat and the surplus crop ^{that} was not sold or was not saved for seed the coming year was taken to the merchant mill and ground and the flour, shorts and bran were hauled home for family use. We had good schools in those days and I was started to school before I was large enough to go alone so one of the darkies was sent along with me each day. We had what would be called a plantation. We had large orchards and lived very comfortably. Our clothes were made largely at home as much spinning and weaving was done in the homes in those days. Our shoes were made by the local shoemakers. They were comfortable but during the war, we had some shoes made of leather ^{that} had not been tanned just right and when we wore these shoes and they got wet, they began to stretch and became very big. I was fortunate in my instructors as at one time I was a pupil of the famous educator, Dan Brown, from Illinois,

HANKINS, ANDREW J.

INTERVIEW.

13501.

-3-

and at another time of Jim Cox and even today I am a good speller and many of these around me ask me how to spell words. My father died when I was nine years old and soon after his death we moved to North Louisiana where we grew up in the pine woods. Here we purchased six hundred acres which we farmed.

We were prosperous and the wealth of the South was in its cotton, mules and negroes. When the War broke out gins were full of cotton. No more cotton was sold and what was raised during the War was stored and after the close of the War was sold for \$1.00 a pound. As far South as we lived we did not suffer the raids that they did elsewhere and were able to resume our farming though we were minus our darkies. Three darkies still remained with us and helped on the farm or plantation as we called it there.

I enlisted in the Civil War when I was fifteen years old in the Eighth Cavalry of Louisiana. My seven older brothers were all in service. I was a Courier or you would understand it better to say a Messenger Boy and I saw more service at the battle of Mansfield than elsewhere.

HAWKINS, ANDREW J.

INTERVIEW.

13501.

-4-

I carried a message to the wagon trains to retreat to a place four to six miles westward as it looked as though our army would be forced to retreat and they began to move rapidly but our army was saved when General Banks after being told by a negro that the river was going down so rapidly that soon the boats in which his men had been brought up the river would be cut off and stranded ordered a fast retreat to save his supplies. Before this move was observed however, our commander General Mutton had posted a white flag to confer with him and surrender and as his men went forward with him they were fired upon and the Southern soldiers returned the fire and so sudden and unexpected was this fire that they captured twenty-five hundred blue-coats that by their general's orders to retreat knew not what to expect. Our defense here was behind a rail barricade. There were several rail fences running east and west and as the Federals were coming from the west, these fences were quickly moved in front of our men and were our breastworks. I went along when these prisoners were taken to Tyler, Texas, to a prison camp and here the prisoners met many of their

HAWKINS, ANDREW J.

INTERVIEW.

13501.

-5-

old friends and comrades and all seemed glad to see each other again. Here the camp was clean and neat and consisted of little houses built over twenty acres of ground; there was a big spring there.

We remained in Louisiana until Mother's death in 1872 when I came to Texas. After the War closed, we went back home and considered the War over, but the South was to be harassed farther by the carpet bagger. These men who came into our country would go about the country talking to the negroes and on information obtained from them would search the homes of persons unjustly and thus cause much bitterness that might have been avoided by a just course.

Not so many years ago, I was visiting in Iowa and an old man came to the dinner given ^{me} wearing the blue coat of the Union Army and during the dinner he turned to me and said, "Hawkins, don't you go to shooting off your head". I looked at him in astonishment as I replied, "I thought that the war was over, but if you want to meet heroines and heroes go South. If the cornbread had held out we would still be fighting".

HAWKINS, ANDREW J.

INTERVIEW.

13501.

-6-

After I went to Texas, I was a photographer and in this same year, 1872, I married Sallie P. Percy a native of Virginia at Paris, Texas. Soon we turned our attention to farming to which I gave my entire attention until 1896 when I was elected sheriff of San Saba County. At this time there were two factions in this county, the Mob and the Anti-Mob Faction. The election was bitterly fought and a man who had driven from Red River with barrels of water in his wagon was shot and killed by the Mob-faction and this caused the District Judge to call the Texas Rangers there. This was the state of affairs when I took office and I said, "Whatever the cause maybe during my term of office I shall endeavor to see that no one is killed in this county." My attitude aroused the Rangers so much that I was defeated only by the skin of my teeth in the next election. It was during my term of office that Dode Means had gotten into bad company and stolen some cattle and come to the Indian country and I came after him. He was at Paoli about four miles from Ardmore. The United States Marshal accompanied by two other men went with me and when

HAWKINS, ANDREW J.

INTERVIEW.

13501.

-7-

we reached the small house where Dode was staying it was dark and one man was placed at each side of the house and the marshal and myself entered a small room where there were fourteen persons. Tragedy was narrowly averted for after we had entered in the dark, the marshal struck a match and in the light, Dode recognized me and sprang quickly to shake hands with me and the marshal misunderstanding drew his gun but it was wet and it stuck. Only last summer I visited San Saba County and was surprised to be so well remembered. Among those who came to shake hands with me at a picnic was Dode. I did not remember him and he reminded me that I should remember him as I had had him in jail seven times when I was sheriff. During my life in Texas, I had but one experience with the Indians and that was at Garrett's Bluff on Red River. An Indian came to the river riding a fine pony followed by a colt and when they reached the bank the pony drank thirstily and a few minutes later fell dead. The Indian came across the river in a boat swimming the colt over and I traded him a bottle of whiskey which was what he wanted for the colt. Also

HAWKINS, ANDREW J.

INTERVIEW.

13501.

-8-

while I was sheriff, I went to Tombstone, Arizona for Lee Wright and lived on peaches a part of the way out. I brought him back and he repaid me afterwards by preventing a jail break by placing himself in the break and sending me word while he held the others back. He was killed later in Arizona while chasing outlaws.

Leaving Texas in 1901 we drove through to Arizona with mule teams and later while traveling for a land company made our home in Fort Madison, Iowa. Coming to this state in 1906, we settled in Johnston County and farmed until I came with my son to Commerce, twenty-one years of age. My wife having died, I made my home with one of my seven children; we ran a hotel for a while and then we entered the grocery business on North Main Street here where we continued for fifteen years but the depression hit us and then we opened this place here for used furniture.