

CROWELL, J. H.

INTERVIEW

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

Field Worker's name Ida A. Merwin

This report made on (date) November 15, 1937

1. Name J. H. Crowell (Colored)

2. Post Office Address Orlando, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Route 1.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 1, Year 1874

5. Place of birth Bedford, Tennessee

6. Name of Father John Crowell Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about father Slave--walked 50 miles to volunteer in Civil War.

7. Name of Mother Mary Frances Crowell Place of birth -

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 5.

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Ida A. Merwin
Investigator

November 15, 1937

Interview with J. H. Crowell
Route 1, Orlando, OklahomaPIONEER DAYS

I was born the son of John and Mary Frances Crowell at Bedford, Tennessee, April 1, 1874.

In 1894 I came by train to Oklahoma from Kentucky. I had been reading Horace Greeley's books and the saying "Young Man Go West," had impressed me to do so, and as my sister and brother-in-law had located in the Cherokee Strip where he had made the run and secured land, I decided to come to their place and see if I could get some land. After arriving at their place I began helping them with their farm work and working wherever I could find work. I worked some at a saw mill for fifty cents a day and boarded myself.

I was quite anxious to get a better education. My parents were slaves and I had never had much of an opportunity so when the first school was organized near my sister's home I went to it for one term. There were white and colored children attending there; later, another school was built and colored children were

separated from the whites.

In the Spring of 1895 I put in eight acres of cotton on my sister's farm and gathered six bales.

There were some contests on the land in this community and on one eighty acre piece the parties were having considerable trouble and I was asked to see if I could help them settle their trouble--one had already shot at the other and had hit him in the leg. After talking with them they agreed to sell the land and offered it for \$150.00. I did not have any money at that time but decided this was worth trying to get. I went to Winfield, Kansas, and secured some work where I made fifty dollars that I used for a first payment, and I went to Stillwater where I borrowed one hundred dollars of E. Good, and finished paying for the land. This was in the Fall of 1895 and I had eighty acres of land. A small house was on this land and I made a dugout. I "bached" here until I was married.

I bought three shoats and traded two of them for a mare. I did not have implements so my brother-in-law

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and I worked together, using my horse with his team and implements until I could get some of my own. I broke sod and planted kaffir corn, cotton, melons and vegetables for my first crop; later cotton was the main crop. Turnips was a very productive crop and they grew so large--often measuring twenty-two inches around them but were only worth ten cents a bushel.

Our crops we had for market were hauled to Guthrie and it took two days to make the trip. On one trip that my brother-in-law and I made with cotton, as we were returning we met a man from Kansas who was on his way to Guthrie with three teams of mules to sell and as we had the money from our cotton we bought one team for \$100.00 each paying \$50.00. This gave us a better team to do our farming with.

There had been a shallow well dug in a low place on this land I bought and I used water from this until I could dig a well.

Wood was used for fuel--this was from timber on this land.

My furniture was all homemade, and I cooked on a small box heater wood stove which had two lids on top.

I got my supplies mostly from Orlando but I did not need much. I had kaffir corn ground for meal, and I hunted and trapped some in the winter, catching rabbits, possum and coons, using them for meats and I sold the furs, the income from which I used to get things I needed.

While living in Kentucky I learned how the ash hoppers were made to make the homemade lye so I built one of these and saved wood ashes, making lye with them, and then I would use this lye to make corn into hominy. Corn was so cheap and one could make hominy with no cost and it was a great help for food.

In 1901 I bought more land giving \$1,000.00 for eighty acres and this is where I now have my home. I now own 240 acres.

A church for colored people was organized and a church was built on the north side of the farm I bought in 1901. A storm blew this church house away

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and in 1912 the one that stands there now was built.

It is a Presbyterian Church and services are held

there each month.