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INTERVIEW WITH MRS. MARY DERRICK,

FIELD WORKER LAWRENCE D. HIBBS.

April 23, 1937

EARLY COAL MINES IN THE CHOCTAW NATION AT KREBS, INDIAN
TERRITORY.

My father was born in England in about 1857 and came to the United States when just a boy settling in Indian Territory at a little town by the name of Krebs, which was in the Choctaw Nation.

My mother was born at Bunker Hill, Illinois, and came to Krebs, Indian Territory, when just a small girl. Her maiden name was Jane Forester. They were married when my mother was seventeen years and my father twenty.

About forty two years ago or in about 1895 was the time of the big strike at the coal mines at Krebs. My father was very much in favor of the Unions and was sort of a leader in getting the men to join the Union. About this time the miners struck for more money and there was quite a disturbance created and finally the mine owners had to call for the soldiers to come and take charge of the mines. The soldiers arrived along late in the afternoon and camped on top of the hill overlooking Krebs; and a man by the name of Dick Howard came to my father, knowing of his activities, and told him he could come to his house and hide as they would not think of looking for him there,

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but my father refused, saying that he had not done anything wrong and that he would stand on his own feet. But the next morning the soldiers came down to Krebs and rounded up the leaders and my father was among them. The soldiers were horseback and herded them just like cattle took them to the Rock Island depot and loaded them on some flat cars and shipped them to the Arkansas State Line where they unloaded them and told them not to come back.

The miners all owned their own homes and had made their gardens and after the soldiers had taken these men out of Indian Territory over into Arkansas their wives and families were ordered to follow within ten days, so the rest of the miners got together and brought about a settlement with the coal company. But even then my father and a few of the ring leaders were not permitted to come back, but they did come back and set up camp in what is known as Happy Hollow which was just across the hill from Krebs. My father sent word to my mother by Miss. Margurite McConville that he wanted her to come to Happy Hollow as he wanted to see her. My mother went to see father and while she was there she told father that she would not go back without him, so my father came home. But just as soon as he arrived they put him under

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arrest and took him to McAlester and put him in jail. He remained in jail about three or four months before he was brought to trial. Finally he was tried, was acquitted and came back to Krebs, but he could not get work due, of course, to his past activities.

He went to Wilburton which was just a short distance away and went to work for James Degland (I am not sure about how he spelled his name) and a Mr. McConnell; the firm was known as Degland and McConnell and later became the largest Coal Company in that country. He worked here about one year and then moved back to Krebs. He then went to work at Buck which was close to Krebs and right away he contracted pneumonia fever and died.

While we were at Wilburton my mother ran the Company boarding house. After my father died my mother moved with her family back to Wilburton and took over the boarding house again and she remained there until 1929 at which time she moved in with me here in Tulsa. My father died in 1896 and my mother died in April 1936.

My father when first married worked for awhile at Krebs and then with his family left the State and went to Iowa, Wyoming and Colorado and I don't know just how long he was

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gone; but he came back to Krebs not such a long time before the big strike.

My uncle, Richard Atkins, was a miner and was in this same strike with my father but he had been crippled in a cyclone a few years before, had his shoulder and one leg broken so on the morning the soldiers were marching them to the train, my uncle was not able to keep up with the rest of the men and the soldiers told him to go on back home.

There were nine children of my father's family and they are all living today.

I was married to Newt Derrick at Wilburton thirty nine years ago. He also was a miner and followed that trade until we moved to Tulsa nineteen years ago. After coming to Tulsa he went to work in the Oil fields and followed that work until he died in 1933. We had nine children also and they are all living.

If you can get in touch with Dick Howard at Wilburton he will be able to give a better history of the coal mines and of the people of interest connected with them than I can.

(Typist's note: I personally knew the man called "Degland" mentioned by Mr. Lawrence D. Hibbs, the Field worker. His name is James Degnan. Laura L. Palmer, typist.)