

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

DEWEES, JOSEPH C. - INTERVIEW.

10388

Field Worker's name Lildred B. McFarland

This report made on (date) March 29, 1938

1. Name Joseph C. Dewees

2. Post Office Address Wellston, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) P. O. Box 263

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 27 Year 1874

5. Place of birth Monroeville, Indiana.

6. Name of Father Samuel E. Dewees Place of birth Ohio

Other information about father Indian Post Trader

7. Name of Mother Eliza Jane Gray Place of birth Ohio

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 6.

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McFarland, Milfred B. - Investigator.
Indian Pioneer History - S-149.
March 29, 1938.

Interview with Joseph C. Dewees.
Wellston, Oklahoma.

I lived on a farm near Monroe³ville, Indiana, until I was fifteen years of age.

My father had fought in the Civil War. His Captain was Benjamin Harrison who was, later, President, and he appointed my father Post Trader for the Kickapoo and Iowa Indian reservation. He was allowed one assistant or clerk so he hired John W. Caldwell to fill this position.

We moved to Wellston in November of 1889. Our quarters and the trading-post, the only buildings within a distance of one-half mile, were set in a grove of trees.

When the reservation was opened for settlement, a colony of people made a rush on the trading-post site; they wanted it for a townsite.

Thomas D. Craddock, who was also a soldier under Captain Harrison, filed a soldier's declaratory on the site but was contested and defeated by this colony. However, he was allowed to prove up on the place, but he was to deed it back to the townsite company.

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It was then surveyed into town lots and one hundred fifty lots were divided among the people of the colony. The town was called Wellston. Twelve lots on the site of the old trading-post were allotted to my father. My sister and I still live on the place, although the old buildings have been torn down.

The trading-post was established in 1840 by J. P. Wells and was always called "The Wellston Trading Post". The first merchandise sold there was freighted in from Arkansas City. In 1890 the Government made the treaty with the Kickapoo Indians on the site where our house now stands.

There were no schools until after the country was settled. We boys would spend our time hunting deer. We could stand in our doorway and see deer most any time.

The Sac and Fox reservation was about thirty miles away and I carried the mail on horseback from the trading-post there.

The train robbers called the Dalton Gang would stop quite frequently at the post for supplies, and to rest their horses, but they never gave us any trouble. About two days after each of their visits, the United States troops would always follow them.

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One day an old Kickapoo Indian came to my father and offered him five ponies in exchange for my sister, Hattie Jewees. Of course he refused and the Indian went away very much disappointed.

We did quite a bit of trading in furs with the Indians, as they never had much money. One day I killed five deer, had a Kickapoo Indian to tan the hides and sold them to the Sac and Fox Indians. I then took the money to the Iowa reservation and bought some clothes.

We could hear the Iowa Indians beating their tom-toms almost seven miles away when they were having their stomp dances.