

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

EAKINS, J. T.

INTERVIEW.

#9876.

Field Worker's name Robert W. Smail,

This report made on (date) January 31, 1938

1. Name J. T. Eakins,

2. Post Office Address R. F. D. #1, Hardin, Oklahoma,

3. Residence address (or location) One mile north, a half mile east of

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 20 Year 1870, Hardin, Oklahoma.

5. Place of birth Missouri.

6. Name of Father G. W. Eakins Place of birth Tennessee.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Sarah Thomas Eakins Place of birth Iowa.

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 Four.

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Robert W. Small,
Investigator.
January 31, 1938.

Interview with J. T. Eakins,
R. F. D. #1, Nardin, Oklahoma.

On October 20, 1870, J. T. Eakins was born in the state of Missouri. In the year of 1888 Mr. Eakins in company with others made a trip into Oklahoma, following the Chisholm Trail from Caldwell, Kansas, south; near the present site of Pond Creek they camped for the night, crossing the Salt Fork River at a ford. They pursued their travels on southward, camping the next night at a spring near the present site of Enid on Skeleton Creek; from there they went to Hennessey and were camped one night near the grave of Pat Hennessey whose life had been taken by the Indians near that spot; thence to Kingfisher country and on to El Reno's community. From the El Reno country they turned their course eastward and traveled until they came to the Santa Fe Railroad, not far from the present site of Perry; thence northward along the Santa Fe Railroad line to Kansas. They were out sight seeing and looking the country over

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with a view of some day having a home somewhere in the Oklahoma country.

Many of the streams they crossed were somewhat swollen and they led an extra saddle horse to the wagons which they would ride across the streams before attempting to cross with their wagons. After crossing the Salt Fork River near the White Eagle Indian Agency, where they had to ford the river, they camped near the colony of Ponca Indians where the Government had some white men butchering cattle for the Indians; the Indian squaws and children would be seen around each beef carcass cutting it up and allowing no part of the animal to be wasted. The Indians lived in tepees and had a number of dogs around their colony.

At one place where they were camped some strangers passed around their camp and seemed to be eying their big mule teams very closely; later on their travels they observed two men riding horseback about a half mile behind their wagons for nearly a half day. That night when they camped they chained their teams to the wagon

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and fastened them as securely as they could, fearing an attempt would be made to steal them and they had a good watch dog with them which kept up a barking nearly all night; they discovered those two men were trying to approach the teams without being discovered but Mr. Eakins and the dog kept a close watch and were up most all the night before the prowlers who seemed very intent on stealing their teams finally left.

On the day of the opening of the Cherokee Strip Mr. Eakins made the race from about four miles west of Caldwell, Kansas, and staked a claim but since he found four other men besides himself all claiming the land he gave up the idea of trying to hold it as he knew some of the claimants had witnesses whereas he did not.

Mr. Eakins later bought out the relinquishment and filed on the northwest quarter of section 17, township 27N, range 2 West. He paid \$1000.00 for the relinquishment which had included only a small shack upon the land with no fencing or other improvements of value. Mr.

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Eakins moved onto the claim at which time he had two mules, a cow, his wife and a little boy and \$12.00 in money. He went to work on his new claim and at every opportune time he worked out to obtain enough money to tide him over from season to season. He had to use coal for fuel which he hauled from Hunnewell, Kansas.

Mr. Eakins was especially fond of mules and has handled many of them in the early days; he always kept the best mules in the country and has sold spans of them for as much as \$500.00 but in the last fifteen years the demand for mules and horses has dwindled to such an extent that he quit handling them for sale.

School was held in Mr. Eakins' district in the early days at about the same time as in other communities of the country and his district has never had one dollar of bonded indebtedness against it or any other kind of debts; they have always kept money on hand to meet their obligations in running their schools.