

MORGAN, D.

INTERVIEW

9035

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

MORGAN, D. INTERVIEW.

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Field Worker's name Robert F. Small,

This report made on (date) October 16, 1937. 1937

1. Name D. Morgan

2. Post Office Address Durant, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 911 West Cedar Street

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 25, Year 1854

5. Place of birth Virginia

6. Name of Father J. E. Morgan Place of birth Virginia

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Sally Puryear Morgan Place of birth Virginia

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 _____.

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Field Worker, Robert W. Small,
October 16, 1937.

Interview with D. Morgan,
Durant, Oklahoma.

I was born in Virginia, April 25, 1854, and came to Durant, March 18, 1893, and have lived here continuously since.

I was married under the Choctaw tribal law to Lorena Nail, a citizen of the Choctaw Nation, and thus became a citizen of the Choctaw Nation by marriage. I have been unusually successful in most all my undertakings. Soon after my arrival in the Indian Territory and my marriage, I became engaged in buying, raising and selling stock. I acquired control of about 3,800 acres of land, eight miles east of Durant of which amount 1,500 acres were rich farming lands and the remainder of the land was used for pasturing stock and for ranch purposes. On this ranch I placed about \$30,000 in improvements.

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At that time I had no title to the land but the improvements could be sold or moved without any legal interference or hindrance in any way. Out of this ranch property I later took my own allotment of 200 acres and the other members of my family took an additional 1,000 acres in their allotments, making in all 1,200 acres of rich farm lands upon which my valuable improvements had been placed. In addition to farming and stock raising I had considerable interests in the town of Durant which was a village of about 200 people when I went there but grew steadily through the years until it became the most important commercial center in this section.

I contributed the larger part of a fund collected to build the first Methodist Episcopal Church in Durant, which Church was later sold to the Presbyterian denomination for church purposes and the Methodist Episcopal Church bought another lot and built another church in which building I was a liberal benefactor. As the town grew, this church was sold to the Elk's Fraternity

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and again the Methodist Episcopal Church built a new brick building, to the construction of which I contributed liberally. In addition to my several donations to this Church, I also contributed liberally to the erection of the present brick churches of the Baptist and Presbyterian denominations. I also gave \$500 donation to the first educational institution for girls in Durant, the Presbyterian College for Girls, and I helped organize and build the First National Bank in Durant and was Vice President and a director of the institution for twenty-six years. I also promoted the construction of the Durant Cotton Oil Company and was a stockholder in same. I have been a liberal benefactor in most every worthy achievement in the city of Durant from its village days to the present.

I was an intimate friend of Governor Jones during his lifetime and a member of the "Jones faction," a political clan of this section of country. I also was intimately acquainted with several of the notorious outlaw characters of this section, including Lon

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Cardner, Jim Yarber and Tandy Fulson, all of Indian descent and noted bad men of their day.

In the early nineties feuds existed among the different political clans; Willie Jones, a son of the Governor, was killed by Tuck Bench, a member of another clan, and soon afterward Governor Jones moved his family to Sherman, Texas, and established a home there. He died at this home but his body was interred on his old home place east of Caddo. A feud at one time existed between the Jones faction and the Locke faction and a pitched battle took place at Antlers, between these opposing factions when a number of participants were slain. There were also the McCurtain faction and the Duke faction between which the rankest animosity at times prevailed. In the election of Principal Chief or Governor of the Choctaws the Duke faction seized the ballot boxes and took them to the capitol at Tuskahoma, the McCurtain faction called on the United States Government for protection and the Government sent a company of negro soldiers who took charge of the ballot

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boxes and examined the ballots which showed that McCurtain had been selected by a vote of three to one over his opponent.

It was provided by the laws of the Indians that when a murder had been committed the crime was punishable by death and the manner of execution was to shoot the victim; one man being selected to carry out this provision of the law. When an Indian was tried in the tribal courts and found guilty of murder he was usually allowed to return to his home and prepare himself for the execution, the time and place for which had been made known to him. He had no guards over him during the period of time between his trial and the date of his execution, neither was he under any bond requirement of law but solely on his own recognizance. No record exists of any Indian failing to show up at the proper time and place for his execution. Their strong regard for honor of fulfilling their promises, even when certain death awaited them, was an outstanding characteristic of the race.

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During my life in Durant and vicinity I have witnessed some exciting moments. On one occasion a man named Reed killed John Riley, a relative of mine, by marriage; was arrested and placed in jail and a mob had formed to lynch him. I was acquainted with the members of the mob or the leaders at least and I was prevailed upon to use my influence to avert the lynching, which I did and allowed the man to have a trial by court where he was convicted and given a penitentiary sentence.

I have been a leader in every movement for civic improvement as well as a leader in every moral and religious issue that has developed through the years. My comfortable home where I now reside is located at 911 West Cedar Street, Durant.