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

Field Worker's name Ruth Kerbo

This report made on (date) May 10th, 1937

1. Name Mr. W, J. Neal

2. Post Office Address Mangum, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) West Pierce St.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 9 Year 1858

5. Place of birth Alabama.

6. Name of Father Tom Neal Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Laura Walker Place of birth Alabama

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 _____.

INTERVIEW WITH W. J. NEAL
W. Pierce St., Mangum, Oklahoma
Ruth Kerbo, Field worker
May 10, 1937

W. J. Neal was born August 9, 1858, in Alabama. His father, Tom Neal, was born in Kentucky. His mother, Laura Walker, was born in Alabama.

Mr. W. J. Neal came to Greer County when it was still a part of Texas. Mr. Neal left Hawkins County with his father, driving two hundred head of cattle to the new country. A stopover was made in Wilbarger County, where the Balkum, Ainsley and McFarland families joined the expedition.

The emigrants finally located one mile east and one mile south of Altus. Each family settled on a section of land and each farm joined corners. Wiley Balkum established the first store on his land and was later postmaster. Dr. McFarland established a drug store on his land and a school house was constructed on Mr. Neal's land. This was the beginning of Altus.

Mr. Neal is among the few pioneers who recall the events of the flood at Old Frazier, one of the most devastating in the history of this section. Crops and cattle were almost exterminated by the disaster. A dam in the Salt Fork River broke, sending the flood waters down

Turkey and Bitter Creeks, flooding the lowlands in its path. Following the flood, a townsite Company was organized at Old Frazier, although some difficulty in securing the postoffice which had been established near Altus, was encountered. Finally, however, the community got its postoffice.

Mr. Neal made a half dug-out on his farm which served as their abode for the first year. "I broke out one hundred acres of land the first year and planted half of it in wheat, the rest in corn, which made a good yield," Mr. Neal said. The wheat averaged twenty bushels to the acre, and he sold it at his farm for one dollar a bushel. Sold his corn for fifty cents a bushel. The crops began to make a lighter yield every year for the six successive years that I farmed near Altus. Finally the last year I farmed I lost money on my wheat, which yielded only four bushels per acre and I received twenty-five cents per bushel for it, after hauling it to Vernon.

Claim jumpers were active, and Mr. Neal was sent to Mangum to consult Judge J. A. Powers about dealing with them. The jurist advised him that the courts would protect as much land as was fenced in.

Later, Mr. Neal sold his property for \$450.00 and went back to Texas. He had constructed a small house with a

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basement under it. A barn, granary the corrals and fences in this new country near Altus.

In 1902 Mr. Neal came back to Greer County and bought a farm near Vinson and farmed there for five years.

Rattlesnakes were very numerous in this new country but each settler agreed to kill every one he saw and soon the rattlesnakes were all exterminated. "I have seen hundreds of antelope in this country and they would run with the cattle," Mr. Neal said. "And they would not run unless they saw a man coming walking. As long as he was on horseback or in a wagon they would pay no attention."

Mr. Neal moved to Mangum in 1907 so that his children might finish their schooling. He is still very active despite his 79 years.