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Field Worker Lula Austin
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Interview with Edward Nail,
Rt. 1, Durant, Oklahoma
Born September 28, 1874, -near
Durant, Okla.

Name of father-Edward Nail
Name of mother-Catherine Harkins.

Robert W. Nail, my grandfather, came to Indian Territory from Mississippi in 1835 locating in the Eastern part, later moving farther west to Blue Co. Grandfather's wife was a sister of Peter Pitchlynn.

His first home was built of logs, two rooms with side rooms and hall between. He farmed and raised cattle. The ranches were not fenced, but the cattle had his brand (R.N.), with a "rider" to look after them. The cattle were fat winter and summer; the grass and cane were so plentiful you never had to feed the cattle. He would sell to individuals, but after the Railroad was built in 1872 he would drive his cattle to Caddo, a distance of about twenty-five miles and ship to St. Louis. Lump Atkinson, who looked after his cattle for ten years, now lives in Eufaula, Oklahoma.

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The Comanche Indians would camp near his house, but were peaceful.

The Buffalo and wild game were plentiful.

The old military road passed near his home that came from Ft. Gibson, Ft. Smith, Ft. Townsen to Ft. Washita. Alfred Gardner used to tell me about the large wagons with blue beds drawn by four big horses. Grandfather grew prosperous in the cattle business and built a fine home, hauling the lumber from Jefferson, Texas. I filed on the old home place and remodeled the old building which was partly destroyed by a cyclone. The family graveyard is about 300 yds. from the house where he and members of our family are buried. I have my grandfather's Choctaw Testament, also have a bill of sale conveying a negro slave to grandfather from Israel Folsom. He owned several slaves and some refused to leave him after freed.

Some of his property he never disposed of in Mississippi, as after his death papers were found in his desk describing the property. My mother saved them

and gave them to me in later years and one day I came to town to see a lawyer and hung my coat up in a store and someone took them from my pocket.

My grandfather did n't want me to speak the Choctaw language so would not speak Choctaw before me.

He was a member of the Board of Education of the Choctaw Nation and one of the signers of Rabbit Creek Treaty; also was one of delegation to come to Indian Territory before moving here.

His first wife died when I was five years old and he married a widow (Mrs. Cochnawel) with one child about my age. Grandpa died in 1885 and his wife died the next day.

Some of the Nail and Harkin Slaves' descendents live south of Mead, Oklahoma.

Edward Nail, my father, was an only child of Robert Nail. He had been married before he met my mother, and had a daughter whose name was Ella. She grew to womanhood and married Walter Golsbey, but is now dead.

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My mother was waiting on the table at her mother's home, near old Jones Academy where my father took his meals, when they met. She was only fifteen so they decided to run off and marry. Father was to ring a cow bell at her window at night; he did, and she did n't wake up. Next morning father was very angry, thinking she had fooled him, but she explained. Next night she was awake; they stole away on horse back to Denison, Texas, riding all night on one horse. In those days gaiter shoes were fashionable, and mother had them on and, in passing thru creeks, she got them wet and they were so tight she removed them and lost one so she was married with only one shoe on her foot.

They made their home with my grandfather. Father was crossing Blue river on horseback and was drowned-the horse swam out. Grandpa sent to Caddo and had grappling hooks made to dray the river, but his body was found by Dick Nail, one of the old negro slaves, who dove until he located the body. We still have the grappling hooks made for this occasion. I never knew my father as he was drowned

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four months before I was born. I had one sister, Lorena Nail, who grew to womanhood and married D. Morgan of Durant, Oklahoma.

My mother married Ephran Willis and moved to the vicinity of Wheelock, and my grandfather would keep me with him most of the time. I had my pony and would ride with him to look after the cattle. My father had left a nice bunch of cattle to me and I had my own brand (E.N) on them. One day when I was grown I was gathering my cattle and stopped for a drink of water at Mr. Garland's sheriff of Blue Co. He was setting on the porch with a gun by his chair and Noel Gardner was there with him. He left Noel and brought a bucket of water to the gate. I asked him what the trouble was and the sheriff said Noel had killed Jim Hutchen and he was guarding him. Gardner said he killed Hutchen because he did n't like him. He was tried at Boggy district court under Choctaw laws and was acquitted. An intermarried citizen would be tried under Choctaw law, but a white man living in the Territory

was under Federal Government and could not be tried by Choctaw.

Mr. Willis only lived about a year. He was riding in the pasture, looking for some of his cattle that were missing when he rode upon a cattle thief skinning some of his cattle. When the thief, a Mr. Steatman, saw Mr. Willis he shot him. His horse took him home dead in the saddle. The thief was tried in Ft. Smith, convicted and hanged.

My early school days were spent in Caddo and Bennington; when I was fifteen I attended a Private School in Sherman, Texas, remaining there three years. Capt. J.H. Lattieur, graduate of West Point and General in Lee Army, was my teacher. Holmes Colbert of Colera and Lawyer Randell, an attorney of Denison, Texas, were in school with me.

My mother is the daughter of Geo. Harkins who came with a colony of Indians from Mississippi in 1832 and settled at Doaksville.

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Mr. Harkins was a big cotton farmer owning many slaves. He was quite influential among the Choctaws.

After Mr. Willis' death, mother married John O'Riley who come here from Georgia in the early Territory days. He helped to build the first bridge over Red River and was one of the builders of Durant. Built the first two story house in Durant, which burned in 1911. He was one of the men who organized the Durant National Bank. Was in the cattle business and had accumulated a large amount of property when he was killed in 1904.