

NEAL, R. D. (MRS.) INTERVIEW

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

NEAL, R. D. (MRS.)

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Field Worker's name Amelia F. Harris,

This report made on (date) January 11, 1938

1. Name Mrs. R. D. Neal,

2. Post Office Address Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 400 East 10th Street,

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 10 Year 1860

5. Place of birth Pottisville, Pennsylvania.

6. Name of Father J. C. Cuppy, Place of birth Pennsylvania

Other information about father Came to Oklahoma in 1889.

7. Name of Mother Margaret Cuppy 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 5

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Amelia F. Harris,
Journalist,
January 11, 1938.

An Interview with Mrs. R. D. Neal,
400 East 10th Street,
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Our family came to Oklahoma in 1889. The children were grown and I was married but when Father decided to come to Oklahoma every one in the family decided to come, too. Father had pioneered in Kansas and pioneering in Oklahoma would not be new to him. We all moved from the small town of Lake City, Kansas. Father owned a grocery store and a lumber yard there and when we decided to come to Oklahoma he had the men at the lumber yard to design and cut out all the lumber necessary to put up a store building and two two-room houses. We chartered a car and loaded it with lumber and general merchandise and all started for Oklahoma, to be ready for the Opening.

Father filed on town lots and my brother and I filed claims on homesteads. Father's lots were just north of the Skirvin Hotel and where the old Rock Island depot once stood and in a few days he had erected a two-

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story frame building and was operating a general merchandise business; the upstairs was used by the Masons, the first Masonic Temple in Oklahoma City.

Father also bought cattle in Texas and fattened them in Oklahoma. He drove them over the famous Chisholm Trail from Texas to Wichita, Kansas. He often referred to Oklahoma in those days as the cattlemen's paradise, as grass then was so high that it was a task to keep from losing cattle.

My father had a good general merchandise but the growth of the city and the coming of the railroad forced Father to give up his property, it was used to build a depot on. However, he did not give a deed, he only gave a quitclaim deed, with a reversionary clause, whereby the property was to be used for railroad purposes only and when the railroad ceased to be, it would then revert back to the original owners. This property is now in litigation, as the Rock Island no longer uses it.

When we first came to Oklahoma there were practically

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no laws. The only officers were United States Commissioners and United States Marshals and there were no public roads, schools, churches and not many towns. People made their own laws and enforced them with their guns, as most everybody carried one.

My husband and I took up our claim one and one-half miles west of May Avenue, Oklahoma City, and for a year we enjoyed the free life of our claim but the work was too heavy for my husband and he was forced to work for Father in the store and hire an able-bodied man to assist me on the farm. He drove to and from the store every day with a single horse hitched to a buckboard.

We built a two-room house from the lumber we shipped from Kansas and also build a big dairy barn. We started out with thirty-five cows and the hired man and I ran the dairy.

We allotted where the Cheyennes and Arapahoes had made a trail coming to the City and we built our house near this trail. The Indians passed two or three times a week, six or eight at a time, single file.

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Among the things we brought from Kansas was a barrel of vinegar. We build a low platform and put the barrel upon it and one morning when the hired man was drawing some vinegar these Indians happened to be passing by. They came over to the barrel and pointed to the barrel then their mouth and smacked their lips. They thought it was liquor. The hired boy gave them a cupful and the leader took a big swallow, then began to halloo and spit. However, they each took a taste before they left. After that they were friendly; some could speak English and they would stop and chat awhile.

Our first school was a one-room box house, with long benches made of boxing. This was a subscription school taught by Mrs. Crozier. There were very few children of school age when the school was first started. In the hot weather she taught under a hay-shed with bales of hay for seats and desks, later one of the homesteaders, Mr. Osmond, gave an acre of ground for a school and the men folks put up a large one-room frame building which is still standing today. There is also a brick school

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building built by the side of the frame. Prior to the brick we used the frame for all kinds of gatherings, Sunday School and church. We had traveling preachers then and literary and debating societies and about twice a month we would dance to the tunes of some Arkansas fiddler, all in all, we had a great deal of pleasure along with our hard times.

My husband and I spent all we made from our dairy improving our claim and making it modern in every way. We had eighty acres plowed and planted this in feed stuff for our dairy cows. Deep Fork Creek ran through eighty acres and we reserved this for pasture. My husband died in 1923 but I continued to run our dairy, known as the "Sunset Jersey Dairy", until 1935. My children were all married, no one at home with me, I was seventy-five and my sons insisted that I sell the dairy and rent the farm and move to town and board. They thought I had worked long enough and could afford to take a rest, which I did. I still own my homestead clear of any mortgage.