

MAYES, D. L.

INTERVIEW

#7964

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Investigator, Grace Kelley,
October 25, 1937.

Interview with D. L. Mayes,
Henryetta, Route 1.
North of Salt Creek Cemetery.

Born November, 1881, Texas.

Parents James Elijah, Illinois.
Sallie King, East Georgia.

Arrival at Ardmore in 1887

When I was six years old I came with my parents from Texas to Ardmore. In July of that year Bob and Frank Sively, white men from Texas, opened the first store there. When we came to Ardmore there were seven tents and the store, all the rest was hay ground.

The Roff boys had a ranch of fifty thousand head on the old JR Ranch. The J and R were joined together to make the brand.

Father was a farmer and we always had plenty to eat. Five months of the year we couldn't buy flour at any price for the store didn't have it. Meat and lard were not handled at the store for everyone had his own. We sold eggs at 5 cents a dozen and chickens were sold for 10 cents apiece regardless of size.

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If one neighbor ran out of something the others helped him out until he could help himself and maybe by that time some of them needed something that he had. If one butchered a beef he would throw a quarter over his horse and take it to a neighbor he thought needed it.

Old Cattle Trail.

When my father, J. E. Mayes, was eighteen years old he helped graze cattle through the Indian Territory from Texas to St. Louis, Missouri, for the Sandburn Brothers.

One Sunday they laid over at a little town and watched a ball game with another bunch of cowboys. The foreman and a Mexican had a fight and the Mexican cut him seventeen times before one of the other cowboys could interfere. He shot the Mexican with his own six-shooter. Billie Pin, from Louisville, was the foreman and his home was in Louisville, Kentucky.

The route went from the east end of the Arbuckle Mountains north near Pauls Valley, missing Holdenville and Wetumka, through Spring Hill south of Okmulgee by their cemetery to Bald Hill past the F. S. Ranch, by Muskogee.

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Here the trail crossed the river and went north close to Joplin to Kansas City and on to St. Louis.

Immigration.

When the Sante Fe came through Oklahoma City my father went to move some people from Arkansas to Ardmore. It took from twelve to twenty-five days to make the trip with horses. If the rivers were up it took longer for they had to ford the streams.

Pioneer Moving.

When we left Ardmore and moved to Mill Creek there were five ox wagons and one horse drawn wagon. There were four wagon loads of corn and the other two contained household goods, including two hundred pounds of pure hog lard and eighteen hundred pounds of meat salted down. Later, three ox wagons and one horse wagon went back and moved the rest of the corn.

Troy, White Settlement. 1890.

There were seven men who farmed a prairie that was three-fourths of a mile wide and four miles long. They had the whole prairie fenced with a stake and rider fence but there was not a cross fence nor any wire fence. The families

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lived within a half mile of each other in the timber. Some of them tried to live on the prairie but had to move or haul water as they could not get water even by digging for it. In the timber there were some creeks which had good springs and each family dug a well in the yard as soon as possible.

The whole country was covered with wild grass as high as the head of a man on a horse. This high grass had stems like cane only it was hollow. The cattle didn't eat the high grass but it offered protection to the better grass. All winter the cattle would feed on the south edges where there was plenty of green grass under the dead grass and snow.

we freighted cotton forty-five miles to Ardmore or twenty-five miles to Davis. The road to Davis went through Sulphur Springs.

Sulphur Springs-1890-1893.

There was one dwelling at Sulphur and it had a store but no post office in it. There was a blacksmith, Joe Hugging, and he and his wife and child rented rooms at this same dwelling.

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There were seven springs which had hollow elm logs sawed off and sunk into the ground; the water boiled up and ran out of these logs. A spring that was walled up was called "gum springs." The grass around there was eight to ten feet high.

I was through there when the old soldiers and their wives had a reunion there in 1893. The place where these springs are was an old soldier's Reservation at that time.

Mail Route.

The mail route went from Sulphur to Dougherty to old Kill Creek where there was one store and an old water mill and gin to an inland store eight miles south on Father's farm or what is now Troy, six miles to Roagan, twelve south and east to Flanomingo the oldest town and the place where the Indian court commenced.

Old Freighter.

When Mart Caps was six or seven years old his Indian mother died and he always went with his father, who was a freighter, out of Fort Smith. They had four wagons and steers and hauled the first lumber to Okmulgee for Captain Severs. Then they hauled the first lumber which went to Guthrie for its first box-house.

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Making Mail Route.

When they wanted to take the mail from Troy to Reagan on the Sulphur-Tishomingo route they set a course through the woods. I helped on this road as I lived at Troy. The trees were chopped down and rocks were pounded up and put into the road like we use shale now.

Troy Rocks.

Three miles east of Troy on the east side of Rock Creek there was a solid stone of blue-gray granite that covered ten acres of ground, all of it visible. There would be about an acre of smooth rock then some holes that would hold a wash tub of water in the rock. Once in a while you would see a shiny place but it was mostly dull. In 1917 a man from Tulsa paid \$17,000.00 for this stone and put a quarry a half mile from the creek bed. He ships lots of this stone for tombstones.

When we would be plowing we would hit beds of round, white glass rocks that were very pretty. When the sun shone on one of these rocks it looked at least four times as large as it was when you got close to it.

Then we had gravel rocks. They were big rocks that when they were broken looked just like river gravel. When

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making a road we would put a piece of dynamite in and when it exploded there would be a pile of gravel. That is in the northwest part of Johnston County. Lots of this gravel rock is shipped out from Lester for roads.

Wolf Hunting.

There were lots of wolves close to Troy and I used to waylay them. I would ride my horse until I would get as close to them as I thought I could and then turn my horse loose and hide in the grass. When the wolves would come close enough for me to hit them I would shoot and always would get from two to six out of a bunch.

Wild Horses.

There were a great many wild horses and some of them would kill themselves before they would give up. The first years I would help with the plowing and would stay at home until the crops were all in, then would be in the saddle for an Indian named Louis Beally.

He had two horses that had been caught and branded when young but they were eight years old and had not been roped since. They were driven into a corral and it took me all day to rope them. It was fun to watch them fight and dodge to

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keep from being roped. Then I helped Louis break these horses to work and to ride. I guess I have been thrown a thousand times or more but I have never had any bones broken.

I used good seven feet halter reins which were stronger than bridle reins and a good knot was tied in the ends. I have been thrown the full length of the reins and then have landed on my feet, thoroughly shaken but not hurt.

I learned not to tie a horse to anything solid but to tie the reins to the saddle stirrup. Then the wild horse would walk round and round but would not fight like he would if he were tied to a tree or post. If tied solid he would choke, throw and kill himself.

Indian store.

Fosic Harjo had a store eight miles north and one mile west of where Konawa is now. There was a post office in it, too. That was about 1900.

Fence Building in 1898.

When I was seventeen years old I helped build a fence around the largest ranch I know anything about. The fence went four miles east and two miles north of Holdenville; twelve miles east, nearly to Lamar; it went south and

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cornered at the river bridge that goes to Calvin, then it went to the cedar brakes east of Bilby which is east of Holdenville.

Fence Building-1898.

Nicks, a banker in Holdenville now, and a Dallas man named Trout owned the ranch. When we had two strings up, Trout sent eight hundred head of two-year-olds at one time. Another boy and I herded and held them in one corner for twelve days. We saw our boss, Addie Roberts, once a day and never saw another white person. Some colored people named Brunner lived three miles north and we boarded there.

The rest of the boys had a cook and tent and every night they moved the camp a mile or so ahead. After the complete pasture was fenced they made cross fences cutting it into six pastures. Four or five families, white, had their little farms inside the pasture, their farms were fenced and were no bother as we just ignored them and built around them. There were four or five old-time, swing gates. Ten or twelve strands of barbed wire were twisted and fastened to each end of the gate and to a tall pole or post. When we wanted to shut the gate the prop was knocked out and it came to of its own

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power, we did not have to get down from our horses when taking the cattle through.

The cattle of different ages were kept in different pastures. Cows and calves were kept together; one, two, three and four-year-olds were kept separate. The four-year-olds were shipped to St. Louis, Missouri, by rail as the Frisco had just come through.

We made \$1.50 a day but the boss made big money, \$50.00 a month. We had to furnish our own outfit; horse, saddle, etc.

Before that I had always worked for 50 cents a day and then all I had to buy was my clothes so I could save money on those wages. I would just draw what money I needed and sometimes I would have from \$56.00 to \$90.00 coming to me. Some of the boys would go over into Old Oklahoma where there were from one to five saloons and go to dances; when they came back they were broke. There was no trouble at these dances unless someone got drunk and if you stayed sober you could remember everything and not be in the trouble.

I have stood guard when the nights were frosty and the moon was so bright that it was like day. It was really pretty.

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The wolves would be howling, though.

The trail went from Sasakwa to Konawa to Bowlegs near where the road is now. It crossed Little River south of Bowlegs at the bridge.

There is an old stone house half way between Kewoka and Bowlegs that was there then. The highway passes it now.

Why Fire Guards Were Started.

When we first came here the fences were of rails and nobody thought of plowing the fence rows or corners for it was just a waste of labor. Father had lived on a farm one mile east and two miles south of Hazel for four years and had had no fire.

Later, the grass got on fire and the whole country was burned off including the fence rows and the fences. Several of the neighbors' houses, barns, etc., were burned and the women and children had to get into the middle of the fields. That was in Seminole County, which was the best grass country anywhere and also the worst for fires. The fire would jump over a twenty or thirty foot creek. After that fire everyone plowed the fence rows which were called Fire Guards.

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Indian Story.

In 1902 we moved three quarters of a mile north of the Konawa depot into an Indian log cabin. In September of that year two Indian boys or young men got drunk and killed seven little Indian boys just to see them fall. One was killed in the door of this cabin and whenever it rained the blood stains on the door showed up like fresh. Posic Harjo, an uncle of these two drunken Indians, was rich and kept them paid out. They had been arrested and put under band.

One of them later got into a fight and was killed. The other was put into the Maud calaboose as he was drunk. A woman was hanging out clothes and she noticed that the calaboose was on fire and heard him yelling for someone to come and let him out. He had set fire to it himself. When they got him out of there his back was just like a burned piece of meat rind. We sat up with him and stayed there but he would not let us do anything and for five days and nights he walked the yard with a greasy rag wrapped around him. When he gave up and sat down on the porch he was dead in a few seconds. We figured he had lived that long by will power.

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Railroad through Konawa in 1903.

I worked for W. A. Cook, who had a ranch on the eighty acres owned by Billie Thackle. It had the only wire fence around there, there were only a few fences but the rest were rails. We had to move our feed troughs with teams so that they could grade for the railroad. The troughs were on the first creek north of the Indian cabin three quarters of a mile north of where the depot is now.

Mail Route.

The mail route went from Asher to Sacred Heart to Violet Springs, which was three miles north and one mile west of Konawa and back to Asher.

Court at Newoka^W

Harry Rogers and George Crump were just young lawyers but they have both been successful since this time. George Crump was District Judge a few years ago.

One day they were having a trial and for some reason Harry Rogers got mad at the judge and asked him down from his bench. The judge got down, both took their coats off and they were having a good fight when George Crump hurried around to the Judge's bench and both he and Harry Rogers paid fines for fighting.

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Brown's Store in Wewoka

Governor Brown had a stone store in Wewoka that is still standing. It was called the Wewoka Trading Company.

Munson, Hammer and Darby, Ranchers

Munson, Hammer and Darby owned three ranches and were scattered out for better pastures. The pastures were fenced then, about 1900, but it was about fifteen miles across a pasture so you couldn't tell when you were inside or outside of a pasture.

Their ranches were called the Double Dot Ranches. The largest was at Belton on Big Blue Creek where twenty-five or thirty boys worked.

One ranch was southwest of Tishomingo and these ranches were six or eight miles apart. The one where I worked was four miles north and two miles east of Mill Creek. They raised cattle and had nine hundred head in two pastures.

Recreation

Every Friday evening we had a "Literary" or a spelling bee. The teachers of Troy would choose sides against the ones of Ravia or Mill Creek. They would

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have one extra good speller or trapper. That one was usually the first one called. They used the Blue Back Speller until it gave out, then used Webster's Dictionary. It would be twelve or one o'clock before the last speller was "turned down". Then they would serve a covered dish or basket picnic. In the Fall there would be plenty of lemonade but in Winter coffee was served. At a "Literary" they had programs, dialogues, or debates before the lunch.

Dances

One time I got an invitation to a dance and supper at Ardmore, forty-five miles away. It took me and "Ot" Smith three days to make the trip. We told the boss before we left and he gave us straight time. That was the only vacation we had. It took us one day to go; we danced that night, rested the next day and came home the third day. We didn't go to a dance unless invited and it was an insult to ask a girl to dance unless someone had introduced you to her.

Some parents would not let you take their girls anywhere unless you had your gun on as you would be unable to protect her if trouble arose. Other parents considered you "tough" if you had a gun on and the girl could not go

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with you.

If a gentleman was dancing and got too warm he took his coat and his gun off and gave them to the lady of the house to take care of. He didn't wear a gun in sight without a coat on as that looked "tough".

A big fire was always built in the yard and usually the man of the house stayed out there to see that there was no trouble out there. The reason they needed to use the yard was because the houses were one and two rooms and the only people in the house were the ones dancing. There were more dances in Old Oklahoma than in Seminole County.

There was no cursing at all in front of the ladies. If a relative or good friend made a man behave himself there was less likelihood of any shooting taking place.

One time in 1904 a young man was swearing and an old man undertook to make him shut up. There were seven men with guns, one shot gun and three knives watching to see that no one interfered. The old man took a club and knocked the boy down and another man took the club from him and he proceeded to give the boy a whipping. After they were through the lady brought a pan of water and a towel; they washed their faces and the old man went over to the log where his coat lay, took a bottle from a pocket. They took a

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drink together and were friends again and the boy didn't swear any more in front of the ladies.

Another time a boy was acting up in the same way and we had begged his brothers to do something with him and they wouldn't. I got tired as his remarks were aimed at my girl and I hit him over the head with my gun. When he fell I started backing toward the back door for I expected his brothers to act to my sorrow. One of them came in the front door with his gun drawn but a man at the door with a fire poker relieved him of it as soon as he entered. Just then the Deputy U. S. Marshall, Lige Sanders, came in the front door and asked if I were there. I was glad to hear from him as he was a friend. He told me to get in the back door as he was coming through which meant that he took all guns and weapons as he came to them. By removing the guns he removed all possibility of gun talk.

Bud Ledbetter was United States Marshal on Little River and Perry Pound was Deputy around Holdenville.

Another pastime we had after there were wire fences was to ride down the road and see who could shoot the most

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steeples on the middle wire; as we were riding fast it was difficult but we liked to do impossible things.

Railroaders.

The men who worked on the railroads were from twenty-one to forty years old and cared nothing for their families or they would have been at home instead of working in the Territory and spending their money for carousals. Their dances were rough. "Nice" girls did not go to them or have anything to do with these men.

Holdenville.

E. C. Roberts and wife, Eliza, taught the first High School at Norman and Holdenville. They gave their daughter an expensive musical education and she taught in Holdenville for fifteen years.

Addie Roberts, my foreman, when the big pasture was fenced, was the first Chief of Police there.

I've seen good teams bogged down on Main Street between the banks until one team couldn't move out; they would have to add teams to the one hitched to the wagon until they could get the wagon out.

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The country around Holdenville was a sand country and sometimes when it rained a lot the sand got water logged. I'd be riding along and the ground would start to tremble and the horse would bog down. I'd jump off, for sometimes horses would fall down, then I would help my horse get to solid ground but he would have to jump and flounder around a lot before he would get to a place where his feet could hold. After he got out he would be trembling and scared and tired out. That was harder on the horses than a long trip or run.

Salt Creek--Just South of Wilson School.

On the north side of Salt Creek people have to have cisterns as all the wells have gyp water in them and it isn't fit to use. On the south side of the creek the water is as good as you will find anywhere.

When we first came here, there were lots of dewberries and plums. The ground had never been burned off that anyone knew about and all the neighbors and people from miles around came to pick these berries and plums. We didn't care for there were so many that we didn't need them. One year there were about twenty barrels of dewberries gathered and every year there were from fifty to a hundred quarts of plums gathered.

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Then a neighbor rented his pasture to a new man in this country and the new-comer burned his pasture off. My boy told him about the berries but he thought he knew that it wouldn't hurt them to be burned off. It ruined the patch. Then I was so proud of the plum thicket and the quantity of plums that we got that I went down there and pruned the trees and cleaned the underbrush out from under them. The ones I left alone are as good as ever but the ones I was so good to bear about a quart each. The underbrush must have either protected the roots or else have fed the trees somehow.

Wild Cherry Tonic.

We have some wild cherry trees and when the sap is up I'll go and trim some bark off of the north side then put some dirt or mud on the raw places to make more bark grow back. I never cut it from the south side for the sun might kill the tree.

My wife grinds the inner bark (not the rough outer bark) and to a quart of bark she adds a gallon of water and boils it slowly for three hours or until there is about a quart of liquid. Then she adds three and a half cups of sugar and

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sets it in the ice-box. All children like it and it is a good appetizer and blood tonic so it is good for them. She gives them a little three times a day, about a spoonful.

The berries are dried and put in a jar to keep for winter use as the bark is no good then.