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Nannie Lee Burns
Field Worker
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Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Geo. W. King.
Fairland, Oklahoma.

My parents, Robert King and Lydia King, were born and reared in Illinois. I, George W. King, was born in Shelby County, Illinois, March 12, 1856.

My wife's parents, Sylvester L. Roberts and Leva Ann Roberts, were born and reared in Indiana. My wife, Minnie Lee Roberts King was born in Shelby County, in Illinois, July 7, 1868.

We were married at Independence, Kansas, March 26, 1884.

Mr. King's Early Life.

My father before me was a sawmill man and from the time that I large enough, I helped around the sawmill. His mill was on Becks Creek. The hump on my back was caused from wheeling the sawdust away when I was growing. Outside of the mill, my early life was like that of any other youngster of that day. A little school in the winter and lots of work the rest of the year. In 1875, I came to Saint Louis when they were building the first bridge across the Mississippi and worked there for a while and received

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\$5.00 per day. I returned to Illinois, and left Illinois with my wife's people for Kansas, September 4, 1882.

Mrs. King's Early Life.

I was reared on a farm and mother, being blind, we girls helped raise the geese, the sheep, the chickens, did much of the housework, in addition to working on the farm. Father had a sugar camp that required much work in the spring and the sorghum mill in the fall left little time for school which was only a country school of those days.

Of course, we, like all the other girls of those days had to weave and spin, make our own clothes and knit the socks for the men folks and our own stockings. For my spending money I used to knit a pair of socks for fifteen cents and for this price I would stripe them.

Father made shoes. He made them of bull hides, punched holes in them for the strings which were of groundhog hide.

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I saw my first drunk man at a picnic and thought that he was sick and said to my husband, who was with me, that some one ought to take care of him. I was told that he was drunk. I cannot yet get used to the language that so many people use. The worst thing that I remember saying was to a balky horse once and was "Nasty, to you."

"How long were you and your husband sweethearts?" Here Mrs. King hesitated and smiled and said "He has been my sweetheart since I was eleven years old."

My older sister had gone with her family to Kansas and liked the new country so well that my father decided to move there, so in the fall of 1882 we started.

In our party was my father and mother, and myself, my brother, his wife and three children, my sister, her husband and four children. My husband had said that he was not going, but on the morning of our departure, he came on foot with his clothes in a bundle and came up with a smile and said "Kansas Bound."

We made the trip in covered wagons and our wagon had four yoke of oxen, which were driven with a ~~Go~~

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and a Haw and a black snake whip. We had pleasant weather and a uneventful trip excepting that my sister became ill on the trip and we laid over a week waiting for her to get better. They were driving horses.

We saw our first Indians in eastern Kansas. There were two Indian men and they wanted tobacco and when my husband offered them a plug, one of them took it and cut the plug in two with a tomhawk and gave the rest back to my husband.

After six years in Kansas where my father died, and two years in Missouri, Mr. King moved his family to Indian Territory, his wife's mother accompanying them.

Indian Territory Pioneering.

The first work I had after we came was helping Frank Audrain thresh, four miles east of Fairland. We selected this part of the state because my wife's sister's husband, Bill Watson, was running a restaurant on Main Street in Fairland. I rented a small frame building where the Dick Woodson Cafe is now and my wife opened up a bakery, selling home-baked

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lightbread. At that time Bill Watson was running a blacksmith shop where the Campbell Department store now is. The Meyers Hotel building across the street from the depot is the same and the other buildings were the Leland Hotel, John Cherry's grocery store, where the Keenan Store is now, and Dave Mann had a wooden shack between that and the depot. We had two trains over the Frisco each way each day.

Bee Creek Ferry.

I ran the Bee Creek Ferry where the Bee Creek Bridge is now for eight years for Campbell and also had a sawmill near on Bee Creek. My wife and I have shared everything that I have done--part of the time she ran the ferry, sometimes assisted by our oldest son.

One night the river was up when some one called us to come and get them. My wife went with me and on the other side we found a man and a woman in a buggy. We got them on the ferry and the woman became scared and jumped to the bank before the man could drive ashore and then she said, "Thank God, I'll never

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be there again." They were bootleggers on their way from Southwest City, Missouri. When we had started we had taken a skiff and an ax to cut the cable if necessary, as we were not sure that we would not be caught in the driftwood. We never saw them again.

Another time my wife and oldest son were running the ferry when the pulley on the cable burst. The boy had the wheel and she grabbed the guy rope and together they managed to land the boat some distance below the landing. My wife has helped me at the mill as well. She did the offbearing, my daughter Mabel fired the engine and I ran the saw. She offbore all the lumber in the Latter Day Saints Church building here.

In those days I had a hardwood lumber agency at Miami and Afton and I have sawed most of the lumber that has gone into all the earlier buildings in this county. Now I go about the country and see the buildings that I have sawed the lumber for, decaying and falling down in the buildings that have not already been removed.

I sawed the lumber for the Bee Creek Bridge. There was 80,000 feet of it. Among the earlier homes that I sawed the lumber for were the Frank Conner and the King Homes. In those days we had no roads and a team could not pull more than four hundred feet of lumber. Once my wife rode a horse to Miami, where my brother-in-law looked after our lumber business, and the mud was so deep that she got her feet in the mud. I sawed the lumber for both the Methodist and the Baptist Churches here as well as the joists for the bank building. They were twenty-four feet long. My wife hauled the lumber for the coal house at the Aurora School House south of here from across the river. I have set up three new saw mills in this county. The most pine lumber I ever sawed was for a school-house in Missouri. All of our sawing here had been hard lumber. I milled for some time in Wyandotte.

Here Mrs. King, interrupted and said "Yes, I had a runaway one day. One day I had brought a load of lumber to Fairland. We fed our team, bought a box

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of groceries, stopped at the Post Office and I got a letter. My daughter, Minnie, was with me and she was riding on the box of groceries, on the framework of the wagon between the two back wheels. I had long lines and they broke between my hands and the horses when they became scared, and I pulled on them. The box of groceries and Minnie were spilled in the road. I dropped on the tongue and tried to get the lines again and when I could not, I dropped on the ground and got up and started after the horses. They were caught at the Dave Vann place and kept till I came along. After getting my lines spliced again, I turned them round and drove back and didn't I make them go to the place where the child and the groceries were, loaded them on, and started home again."

My Indian Friends.

We had never seen any Indians till we reached Kansas and since that time, especially since coming to the Indian Territory, we have lived among them and they have been our neighbors and friends, and never have we had any differences with them. They have a good memory and

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always remember a favor. Once when living in Kansas, we were taking two loads of wheat to Cherryvale when we overtook an Osage Indian. I spoke to him and he got in the wagon, also, and he rode into Cherryvale with me. He said he was hungry so I gave him fifty cents. Three years later I met him and he knew me and spoke to me.

The Last Sawmill.

My last sawmill was on the old Joe McCullough place, six miles southwest of here. I lived in Fairland and I walked both ways each day and while here I got my right hand mangled, which reminded me that I was not so skillful as I had been. But the thing that caused me to sell was that my daughter, Mabel, was ill and the doctors said she had TB, so I sold out the mill and my stock and with my wife, a grandson and her started to Colorado.

The daughter died in Colorado in 1929, and Mr. and Mrs. King returned to Oklahoma.

Our Family.

We have had eight children. They were: Tom, Mary, Pearl, Belle, George, Minnie, Mabel, and May. All are

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living except Mabel.

We have had twenty-four grandchildren and have seven great-grandchildren.

Conclusion.

Mr. and Mrs. King, growing feeble and neither in good health, are spending their last days together, still happy and devoted to each other in very humble surroundings. It has never been the writer's privilege to witness greater devotion to each other and their old neighbors and friends say that it has always been that way and they have always shared each others work and play. Thus is drawing to a close the life of two noble pioneers who have made the world better for their having lived.