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An interview with John H. Connolly (white)  
415 J NW, Miami, Oklahoma.

By Nannie Lee Burns, Field worker  
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John Henry Connolly was born four miles north of Siloam Springs, Benton County, Arkansas, on Flint Creek on April 17, 1857.

His father, A. C. Connolly, came in 1854 to that section from Cherokee County, North Carolina, and shortly afterwards married Polly Sparks, a resident of the Flint Creek neighborhood, and went to live on the Dr. Powell place, south of Siloam Springs.

#### EARLY MEMORIES.

I remember hearing the cannons one day and we all gathered in the yard listening and afterwards were told that they were at Pea Ridge, which was about thirty miles distant. I had one brother who was in the Confederate army in Mississippi. Father was always a stockman and we tried to keep a few range cattle but had a very hard time to keep any. We lived in a small log house, rail fences around the fields and no stock laws. I have followed in his footsteps and have ridden the range for fifty years.

During the War my father and two brothers farmed and I looked after our cattle. During one drouth, the cattle came to such a state and feed was so scarce that we boiled the corn

for the cattle. We skinned the cattle that died, made shoes of the hides, cured as best we could, and made them into shoes for our family, using wooden pegs that we made ourselves. We wore homemade clothing, for which my mother and sisters had woven the cloth. Calico was selling at one dollar per yard and anyone who had a calico dress was very fortunate. Green coffee was also a dollar per pound. We parched and ground it ourselves.

We had to go either to Fort Gibson or Neosho for supplies. Once Aunt Polly Hilderbrand, Amma and Ellen Powell, Melia Carroll, Ann and Eliza Chandler and my sister Julia took my father's team of Oxen- Loge and Lep the former a big black and brown and the later white, red and black mixed and started after supplies, camping out nights on the trip to and fro. One the trip, they were awakened by a dog raising Cain and Aunt Polly got up and fixed her a torch and began to investigate. Julia awakened asked her what it was and she replied, "I think it was a Hell Cat".

The local opposing officers in the war in our section were Captain John Hargrove and Captain Tom Comstock. They met not far away one day riding up the road and Captain Comstock told Captain Hargrove not to shoot as he was riding

a colt and he might scare him and the nerve displayed by the remark so amused the latter that he took him at his word and years later these same two men were both running for State Representative. Captain Hargrove as a Republican from Benton Co., and Captain Comstock from Crawford Co. Captain Hargrove sent his opponent word that he hoped that he would be elected, as he had always admired him- a man who could be as cool as he was when they met the first time in the road.

#### PROCTOR-BECK REMINISCENCES.

Sut Beck and three others were deputized to aid in arresting Zeke Proctor. My brother had a saloon near. As Beck entered the door he aimed at Proctor knowing that Proctor would try to shoot him, but Johnson Proctor knocked the gun down and he hit Proctor in the hip. He aimed a second time but was himself shot in the shoulder. Beck managed to get to his horse and get way and to a friend's home and after Beck was taken to his home, Dr. Tolliver was called to attend Sut Beck and, after looking him over, and thinking him in a serious condition, decided it best to tell him that the odds were against him and that he did not have much show and he had better arrange his business. Beck replied, "By God, I'll risk it", and he did. Proctor is the only person that the

government ever entered into a compromise with and knowing that under the tribal Indian law he would be freed. After about five years of scouting, though never far from home and supplied with food, etc., by friends, they released him from this.

I worked in a blacksmith shop in Hice now Siloam Springs and knowing that Zeke always wore guns and when he began drinking became quarrelsome, because when he came to town he always came to the shop, I would have him leave his guns with me and I was careful not to return them to him till I was sure that he was ready to go home. He would come by and say "John, I want my guns".

#### EARLY MANHOOD DAYS.

I worked and rode for J. Manwaring on the state line for five years, bringing our cattle from south of us and grazing them in Indian Territory and driving to Baxter Springs to sell. One day I was hunting cattle, and I rode up to a full-blood's home in the timber. A young man came to the door and I began talking Cherokee, asking him if he had seen any black and white cattle and the youth asked me in English if I was looking for cattle. I was talking to Joe Si Byrd. He had spent years at school and spoke English better than Cherokee.

At twenty-one, I went to Leadville, Colorado, and spent a year and returned with \$500.00 and, as I had always been with cattle, decided to go into the cattle business so I bought a pony and, with Gus Carroll as a partner, we went down below Fort Smith and bought ninety head between us paying \$3.00 to \$4.00 for calves, \$6.00 to \$8.00 for yearlings, \$8.00 to \$10.00 for two year olds and \$10.00 to \$12.00 for cows. We spent the summer on the range in this state. One night in a storm the cattle stampeded; on my pony, I took after them but I could only see them by the lighting and soon I could see that I had only a few, so I got off my horse and lay down on a hill in the rain and went to sleep. This was a mile west of what is now Grove at the old Bill Cheek's place.

At one time, I worked for J. C. Nailer, southwest of Baxter Springs, for two years. They had a tract four miles square fenced with posts and wire and divided into different pastures and they took many cattle to pasture during the summer and at first it was my duty to keep track of the different brands, how many of each died, etc. I began to skin the dead cattle as they would bring me from \$2.00 to \$3.00 per head at Baxter. I soon learned to cut the skin

underneath and, with a helper to watch, to cut around the hoofs, to pull skin off with a rope attached to my saddle. My business soon became so profitable that Nailor suggested that he furnish me two helpers as I was using his wagons anyway and divide the profits 50-50. We did and usually sold two loads a week.

One time on the way up with a drove of cattle at the Harlan Ferry below the mouth of Cowskin River, the river was up and we waited a week. Then I hired two Indian Men, Sutton and Randolph Ballard to help me across. My horse wouldn't swim and one of them had a large white horse which did, so I hired the ferry-man to take over one load for me and we pushed the rest of the cattle into the river just behind the ferry and got the bunch across. Ferrying cost five cents per head. Usually I sold to Lew Goodner at Baxter Springs, Kansas.

#### MARRIAGE.

October 17, 1886, at Mayesville, I married Dixie Dumas, a white woman who came from Grayson County, Texas. We had two children, Frank and Sybil, both now living in this city (Miami). Disposing of my grocery store which I was operating at the time of my marriage, about a year later, I moved to Southwest City, Mo., where I engaged in the Hardware business. I sold

that to Smith and Seaborn and in the fall of 1890 located in Fairland, Indian Territory.

#### EARLY FAIRLAND ACTIVITIES.

On Main Street, where Lall Kelly's poolhall now stands, my partner, Nat Peery, and I erected a frame store building 25x 80 feet with a 12 foot shed on the north. Bought the lumber on Spavinaw from Sam Fields who hauled it to Fairland and sold it at \$1.00 per hundred. In this building we opened a hardware and implement business. Business was good one year in the Nineties, we sold 29 binders. In addition to this, I have always handled cattle. Mr. Peery managed the store while I spent much time outside.

I assisted in building Masonic Hall, Frisco #24, at Aurora which later in 1891 was moved to Fairland. In order to give them a home, Mr. Hamilton and myself built the lower story of the present Masonic Building and the Masons were to erect the second story. Neither my partner nor I knew much about building but we submitted a bid on the second story and found that we were \$200.00 lower than the others, so Hamilton looked after the materials and I superintended the work and on its completion (we found we had made a little money), I gave them a 99 year lease on the building, which I still own.

#### MOVING.

Shortly before statehood, I moved to Miami where we

lived a few years and where I served one term as Sheriff; then back to Fairland and, when the M. O. & G Railroad was built, I located at Bernice where I became interested in business again and built some buildings. Here on Sept. 29, 1931, my wife died and so my daughter and I moved back to our present home in Miami.

## CONCLUSION.

Mr. Connolly is still very active, driving his car each day and still looking after his various properties, though not in the cattle business any longer as he suffered severe losses in this while at Bernice during recent years.

His memory is very clear, and he takes pleasure in recalling early days, and it is his boast that he spent fifty years in the saddle. When the writer called at his home yesterday, he was hoeing in his large garden.