



FIELD WORKER MERRILL A. NELSON  
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INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT CALVIN DICKENSHEETS  
313 W. Pine St. Enid, Oklahoma  
Born August 21, 1859, St. Mary's, Ohio

Father's name Geo. Dickensheets.  
Mother's name Julia Bushel(D ickensheets).

I was born in St. Mary's, Ohio. I was the oldest in a family of eleven. As a boy I used to think I would go west when I became a man, and my dreams came to pass in later years.

My father was one of the best coopers in his section of the country. His wife, whose maiden name was Julia Bushel, had an uncle by the name of Bushel who at one time was Governor of Ohio.

I first went to Illinois and later to Colorado in my western migrations, but at the time of the opening of the Cherokee Strip I was in Butler County, Missouri, engaged in the restaurant business.

A great many people were talking of the chance to get homesteads, but I decided to go to the Strip and start in the restaurant business.

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I decided to make the race also. I went down through the Strip on the train to Hennessey and was on one of the first, if not the first, trains which came up from Hennessey on September 1893, the day of the run.

Like a great number of other people I jumped off the train at Enid. I saw a girl get off who injured herself when she jumped. Later I saw Joe Meibergen, who broke his leg jumping off, at the land office, and <sup>he</sup> was unable to walk when I went to the land office that same day.

I saw one man open a package containing women's clothes which he slipped on over his own to make it a little easier to hold his lot.

I staked two lots, one for myself and one for my brother, where the Hackney Steel Company's Plant is on east Cherokee. My brother, who was coming with the "stuff", arrived almost at the same time. I put a sign up for my brother, too.

I had carefully thought out <sup>what</sup> I was likely to need and had everything in readiness to start a restaurant.

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At once I dug a trench, made a fire and boiled coffee in a very large coffee pot and started serving. I pitched a big tent for a restaurant. I served cream and sugar with my coffee and served it for ten cents. Without cream and sugar it would cost only five cents. Every one else was serving it straight. I built a rough counter, where the people could eat, out of rough scrap lumber. I only had 75 cents when I arrived in town to get my stock together. My bill of fare:

Sandwiches, Crackers and cheese,	---10 cents.
Other kinds	---15 cents.

I bought some hams for sandwiches but sold these hams for \$1.50 instead. They cost me only eighteen cents apiece. They were the small size cottage hams. Cots rented for \$1.50. One of my first customers was George Todd who built the White House saloon which stood next to the Stephenson Building for a long time.

Knowing the restaurant business, and having the supplies, canned cream, filler for sandwiches, bread and coffee, I did a rushing business. The first day and night I took in \$65.00. I had six cots which I rented out.

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A man wanted to dig a well in our lot and soon after the well was dug he was selling water at ten cents a bucket. It sold for even more than this in other places. There were a number of restaurants but mine was probably the busiest.

The first frame building in Enid was brought into town in sections and set up the first night. The first mayor was said to <sup>have been</sup> appointed by the governor. Others said he was chosen in a pseudo-election.

I bought a lot where the power house now is with a one dollar bill and the promise of burying <sup>a</sup> dead horse, which had dropped in the race. A man came along who wanted to slaughter on my lot or my brother's lot. I told him if he would give me \$2.00 for the lot and bury the horse, he could have it. And he could also bury the offal from his slaughtering operations at the same time. He bought that lot on these terms. Probably the ground now would be worth more than \$2,000.00.

The next day was Sunday. There were four or five preachers exhorting that day in as many places, from boxes or improvised pulpits. I attended a gathering of the

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Presbyterians. This was held northeast of the postoffice or what would be now the middle of the drive to the rear of that building. Some may have preached from stumps.

After staying in the tent for about three weeks or more, I fixed a box and with a rope around my neck I peddled lemonade and coffee to the people standing in line at the land office. ( Later I had a small frame building).

I went back to Missouri and stayed awhile, finally moving to the place where Harry Scott started the old Silver Moon Restaurant. When he started it, he called it the contest restaurant. We fed several prisoners there. Among them was Dick Yeager. We would take the meals over to the jail for these prisoners.

One of the first public meetings I attended was the '0' County (as Garfield was then called) Republican Convention. There were only fifty or sixty in attendance. I still have the badge, a white ribbon, at home. (About the only other relic I have is a buggy blanket I used for bedding at the time of the run), Charlie Hunter

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was the leading man at the convention. He was the chairman. Wittengill was one of the speakers. Hunter later became connected with the Enid Daily Eagle. In fact he started the first paper in Enid (whether by that name or not) the next week after the run there. Charlie Chapman was also connected with that paper in the early days. Wittengill was a speaker at the rally, too.

The religious and moral forces were active but in a different way than now. Hopley represented the prohibition element. He was an editor of the old school. The churches had no paid choir leaders or choirs at first.

Entertainment was provided at the McKay Opera House where the Public Drug store is now. The railroad controversy, including the fight between north Enid and Enid proper, and the Patterson-Eisenburg shooting affair also furnished excitement.

Business was carried on by Godschalk the clothier and F. W. Buttrey who are still in business here in town.

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and by others who have passed away. I ran a restaurant for awhile. The first Telephone office was located over where the Enid Events is now. Later they moved to Independence north of Randolph. Mick Messall and Bonebrake were in charge and started the system.

After returning from Missouri, I moved my location on to Grand Avenue and rented Grey's Restaurant as this was what <sup>the one</sup> Harry Scott had started was called. I had done a little real estate business on the side all the time and kept it up here. After a while I rented an office upstairs for the real estate business. I bought a little gasoline stove and was ready for business. This was in 1898. My office was small. It was next door to my restaurant. There is now a moving picture house where the restaurant was. Thirty years ago I moved to my present location.

The first water system was a hole on Broadway where the city offices are now at the corner of Fourth Street. There were numerous wells in town. One <sup>where</sup> was the land office was in the southeast part of the square and other

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on the square northwest and northeast.

I do not recall who was the first to put in electric lights but Billy McGee was the second proprietor. He made some improvements.

Miss Livingston was one of the first to teach in Enid. She ran a private school almost from the first.

It was not till the summer after the run that the first frame school house was built. Riley was the first superintendent of city schools. Thompson was after him. I was on the school board for many years, usually as chairman. We built a number of schools.

I belonged to the Chamber of Commerce, but not while Edmund Frantz was chairman.

One of the last improvements in Enid was the paving which was put in in 1906-7. H. C. Henry was a member of the Board when it was put in.

How Chisholm Trail passed through Enid.

The Chisholm Trail went northeast from Gensman's store across blocks 9,13,22,29, then it branched. One

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branch went under the Rock Island Railroad (1889) and on over to the stage coach line in the State Hospital grounds. The other branch went on north and probably laid the road for the highways 60-64 and 81, which now go straight north from Enid.

It is sometimes said that it passed between Gensman's Store and the monument of the soldier on the post office lawn, or at Grand and Main Street.

Going south from Gensman's, it went a little to the west of Hackney Steel, about where the light plant is now; and part of it branched and went to the Government Springs and part went south. You see it was not going straight south but made a little curve to the east before righting itself along the railroad. The reason it made this curve to the east was to avoid a hollow right straight south of Gensman's. It made an approach to the trail from the south building a grade up to it, right along Grand Avenue from this hollow. It crossed blocks 32, 36, 34-5 and 57. You see by this that some, not all, watered their stock at Government Springs.

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One old custom that is disappearing is the attendance at literary societies and Chautauquas. Times are changing. I am not sure if they are for the better.