

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

ENFIELD, O. E.

INTERVIEW

9703

Field Worker's name Linnaeus B. Ranck,

This report made on (date) January 5, 1938

1. Name O. E. Enfield,

2. Post Office Address Arnett, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Arnett, Oklahoma.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August, Day 19, Year 1882.

5. Place of birth McPherson, Kansas.

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

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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Linnaeus B. Ranck,
Investigator,
January 5, 1938.

Interview with O. E. Enfield,
Arnett, Oklahoma.

I was born at McPherson, Kansas, August 19, 1882, and in 1887, with my parents, I left Kansas in a covered wagon bound for the Texas Panhandle. Our journey took us across a section of No Man's Land and this was my first time to set foot on what later became Oklahoma. Though a small boy, I remember that the part of No Man's Land we traversed in 1887 was quite well settled, most of the people living in sod houses, and considerable farming was being done. In 1889 my family returned to Kansas through No Man's Land, I vividly remember that during the intervening two years it appeared that most every settler had abandoned the country and their homes and that the region was in possession of the cattlemen again; severe drouth was the main cause of their abandoning the country. According to my recollection some settlers had improved their claims considerably, good orchards had been started and a few seemed to have made good improvements in the way of

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frame houses, barns, etc. The entire Panhandle was parched with drouth when we left it in 1889 to go back to Kansas and at that time we had nothing left in the line of livestock but two milk cows--our work horses had died. Father hitched these cows to our covered wagon with the harness he had used on the horses, placing the collars and hames upside down on the cows' necks. The load for the cows was such a drag that Father and Mother and the older children walked most of the way on the return journey. Enroute back to Kansas we met people leaving No Man's Land in much the same circumstances as we were leaving the Panhandle of Texas.

Mother had relatives in old Day County and in 1896 we fitted out a covered wagon and team, two cows, put a few chickens and all of our belongings in the wagon and started for Day County. We were about six weeks or two months on the road; on January 28, 1897, we reached the end of our journey--the mouth of Packsaddle Creek in Day County. We spent Christmas of 1896 on the road, I think we were then in the Cherokee Strip. We stopped for a

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few days, including Christmas Day, and my parents sought to observe Christmas as best they could for the benefit of us children. Father procured a small cedar tree from the native timber in the locality where we had camped and he and Mother put it up in the covered wagon. Father shot several prairie chickens and for dinner on Christmas Day we had a real feast.

A severe blizzard struck us while we were still in the Strip country on the way to Day County and we came upon an abandoned claim site where stood two vacant sod houses. We stopped with a view of taking shelter in the sod houses till the storm was over, removed our stove, some bedding and some food supplies from our wagon and put them in one sod house. The team, two cows and the few chickens we had with us were put in the other one, which stood close by. We had just gotten a good fire started and all under shelter when a stranger rode up on a horse and arrogantly demanded of Father what he was doing. Father explained that he was only seeking the shelter of the abandoned soddies for his family and stock till the storm passed but the

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unwelcome stranger demanded that we vacate at once. Father was quick to tell the "horsebecker" that he and his family were not vacating till the severe blizzard broke after which sharp words were exchanged and \$10.00 was demanded of Father for the use of the empty sod buildings "or get out and get out quick". Father then stepped to our wagon and picked up the neckyoke and threatened the intruding stranger in such a manner that he dashed away on his horse and was never seen again.

In Day County we set up in a dugout and I attended the Packsaddle School; it and the school at Grand were the only two schools in old Day County north of the South Canadian River at that time. The Packsaddle Schoolhouse was a small one-room log structure with Mother Earth for a floor. Some of the school children sat on store boxes.

The largest field under cultivation I knew of in Day County at that time comprised ten acres; the cowmen were still supreme.

Our family managed to stay in Day County for about two years, making the greater part of our "grub-stake"

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during the time by gathering buffalo bones and hauling them to Woodward where they were sold. We starved out and went over near El Reno for about two years and made another little stake, then returned to Day County and the Packsaddle community.

The people of the Packsaddle locality were having a community Christmas tree and program at the Packsaddle Schoolhouse, one Christmas Eve during those early days, A large crowd was in attendance and the house was jamb full. To provide needed ventilation a window near where the Christmas tree stood had been opened. Outside, a number of cowpunchers were making merry in the true old western, early-day way. Suddenly one of the intoxicated outsiders was boosted through the open window, boots first, lariat in hand, and proceeded to "rope" the Christmas tree and attempted to drag it out.

I am, at the present time, County Attorney of Ellis County.