Form A-(S-149)

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

201

PEERY, FRANK T. INTERVIEW 4761

Field Worker's name John F. Daugherty

This report made on (date) July 9 1937

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1. Name Frank T. Peery
2. Post Office Address Cushing, Okla.
3. Residence address (or location)
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 21 Year 1868
5. Place of birth Kinneus, Linn County, Missouri

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6. Name of Father J. M. Peery Place of birth Missouri

Other information about father Sawmill, Gristmill man

7. Name of Mother Nancy Keller Place of birth Missouri.

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

John F. Dougherty
Interviewer
July 9, 1937

Interview with
Frank T. Peery
Cushing, Okla.

My father, J. W. Peery, was born in 1839, in Sullivan County, Missouri. He operated a sawmill, gristmill and threshing machine.

My mother, Nancy Kemper, was born in 1841, in Linneus, Linn County, Missouri. There were nine children in our family. I was born in Linneus, Linn County, Missouri, February 21, 1868.

There was need for a sawmill near Coyle, in the Iowa Indian Reservation, so I decided to put in one there. I bought a new sawmill and had it shipped to Orlando and hauled it over to Coyle in March, 1891. I went up and down the Cimarron River looking for a good location and waded from one side of the river to the other. The river was rather shallow at this place.

I finally decided on a location and set the sawmill. I sawed lumber and logs for the settlers on the shares and sold the lumber for one dollar to one dollar twenty-

five cents per one hundred square feet.

One day a negro brought in some hickory logs to be sawed and another man brought in some walnut logs. The negro decided the walnut logs would be more desirable than his hickory, so he said, "Sawmill man, does'nt I get some of the walnut logs?"

I paid the men I hired fifty and seventy-five cents per day and boarded them. After McKinley was elected in 1896 conditions became better and I paid better wages.

One day a man who was helping about the sawmill had the bottom of his overalls caught on the set screw. He would have been killed had he not grabbed for a rafter and clung to it. His clothes were completely torn from his body.

In 1893 there occurred a drouth and the people in this new country were suffering for want of food. The Government issued bacon and beans to help them to live until a crop could be raised.

I moved my sawmill near Stroud and brought father and his threshing machine there. He threshed the first

oats and wheat to be threshed by a machine in Logan County, near Guthrie. I had only twenty-five dollars which I had borrowed to run the thresher with. I borrowed and reborrowed the twenty-five dollars three times before I could pay it back.

I built a house of walnut, four miles north of Stroud, in the early nineties, which still stands today. The logs were sawed and I dressed them by hand. The house is a story and a half high and covered with shingles.

When the Cherokee Strip was opened for settlement in 1893, a boy whom I knew had decided on a location. When the day came to make the race he was ill with typhoid fever, so he told me where the location was and I decided to make a run for it. I secured a cow pony which was a fast runner and started for Stillwater ahead of about three thousand people. People were there in two wheel carts, ox wagons, on foot and on race horses. My horse was standing with his head across the line. When the shot was fired he jumped about twenty feet and was off

like the wind. The saddle girt broke and I knew it would mean death for both of us if I stopped, so I threw the saddle away. That pony saw thirteen miles in thirty-six minutes. I passed several race horses. I got to the place which I wanted to stake, jumped from my pony and began to cut cottonwood bushes for a foundation for a house with my pocket knife. I had these laid when a man with long whiskers rode up on a fine horse. He was a Sooner, for his horse showed no signs of having been run. I was determined to have this fine bottom farm so I said, "Now you go on. I've run my horse to death and yours isn't even sweating, this is my place and I'm going to stay." He said, "Allright boy," and rode off, leaving the claim for me.

I had no food with me and we had to have a number to file, so I went to Pawnee, leaving this sign tacked to a cottonwood tree, "I've gone to file." I had to stay in line for two weeks before they got to my number. When I returned to my treasured claim it was being claimed

by another settler who had built a dugout and was plowing with a team of oxen. My heart sank within me, as I beheld what had happened and I went in search of a lawyer, who told me that possession is nine points in law and I had better hunt another place. I was certainly heartsick over my loss.

I was determined to have a claim, so I got another one near Skeedee, on Black Bear Creek. I built a sod shanty. The sod was plowed up and cut in strips or blocks and laid one on the other until the walls were as high as desired. Then poles were cut and laid across from one wall to the other and these sod blocks were put on them for the roof. When I had this completed I went to Stroud after my wife and brought her to see our new home. There were many rocks on this place, large boulders sticking out of the ground. She said she wouldn't live on such rocky land, so I gave it back to the Government, telling them I didn't like rocks.

Then we returned to Stroud and I started my sawmill again.

In 1895, when the Kickapoo lands were opened, I went to Chandler to make my third run. It was in May and everything was burned up. The leaves were burned from the trees, so I just didn't make the run and again I was without a place.

I went back to Stroud and ran the sawmill for awhile, then moved my mill to Basin (no longer in existence) on the Arkansas River near the present site of Hominy. There was so much demand for lumber that I decided to put in a lumber yard there. The closest railroad was at Shawnee and I had to send teams to haul the lumber. I sold lumber as fast as I could get it.

When the Santa Fe and Katy Railroads were being built in Cushing, about 1903 or 1904, my brother and I put in the first cotton gin at this place where the oil mill now stands. I sold that and went into the dray business and continued in that for many years. I am now on a farm two miles north of Cushing.

I married Annie Lane December 3, 1893, near Stroud. When she started from Missouri she was too proud to have her friends see her riding in an ox wagon, so her father

sent her on the train to Galena, Kansas, and she waited there for them. They experienced many hardships on their trip. Her father had come and built a log house near Stroud and then returned to Missouri with an ox team to bring his family to this new country. They were two weeks coming from Joplin, Missouri to Stroud. The snow was to the hubs of the wagon and it was very cold. When they reached the Verdigris River it was high. Families were camped all along the banks, waiting to get across. Some of them had been there for two weeks. They said nobody had dared cross the river but the mail carrier and he swam his horse across, carrying the mail on his head. Mr. Lane was determined to cross, so he got on one of his oxen to see if they would swim. They swam to the other side and back with only their noses showing above water. When he returned he tied his wagon bed down with blocks so it would float. He had been a cowboy and dared to do anything. Annie was very homesick and cried most of the time, so she said, "Take me with the first load, I don't care if I drown." They had it safely

across and her father returned to get a young married couple and their wagon and team. People begged him to come back for them but he was afraid his team couldn't make another trip, so they traveled on.

Annie rode with the young couple. The country was full of wild hogs and this young couple had a large dog with them. One of them suggested they get a pig, so they crawled out of their wagon and sent the dog after a pig. He brought one and went back after another. By this time the old sow was coming after them, so they got back in the wagon with their two pigs and drove on. When they got to Sapulpa they got some boxes and put their pigs in them. Annie kept her pig tied by the front foot all summer and he made meat for the family that fall. When the Lanes got to Stroud it was spring. The flowers were blooming and it seemed good to be alive after such a hard journey.

They hadn't been there long until a terrible storm came up. They had no place to go for protection, so they crawled under the wagon-bed and the water almost drowned them before it stopped raining.

They had no food, so the next day Mr. Lane went to

Guthrie, some sixty miles away, to lay in a supply. While he was gone, many drunk Indians passed by and nearly frightened Mrs. Lane and the children to death. Annie decided to dig a cellar. When her father returned they had it completed.

They had never lived on a farm. Mr. Lane had always been a livery stable man. They bought a mowing machine, which was the only one in the country and cut hay day and night. Annie learned to stack hay. She stacked hay at night and had chills during the day. One day a young man came by the Lane home and asked if there was someone who would ride a horse and pull a go-devil rake about fourteen feet long. This was used to pull the hay into a stack. Annie said she would do that, so he hired her for fifty cents a day. They stacked corn in bundles, tied a rope around it and pulled it to the crib with a pony.

Mr. Lane was freighting in Guthrie when his wife became ill; so he sold out and came home. He then bought an interest in a store in Stroud and went broke in the

panic of 1897. This was a general merchandise store.

The Indians bought prickly ash bitters which made them drunk.

Outlaws came in the store many times. They had many battles in town. There was a city cave where everyone went for protection during these battles. One day a battle occurred in the Lane's horse lot. They lived on the road which the outlaws traveled north and south to their raids. One day five outlaws drove up and said to Mr. Lane, "We aren't going to harm you. Can your wife cook something for us to eat? We are the Daltons. We started to Jent Smith's, a bachelor, but he isn't home." Mr. Lane asked if they cared to feed their horses and they replied that they had rustled horse feed. Mrs. Lane said she never killed, dressed and fried chickens so fast in her life. Two stood guard while the others ate. They were always nice as long as one didn't molest them and they paid well for what was done for them.

Two of my favorite dishes in those days were wild

onions fried with eggs and sheep sorrel pie.

I met Annie Lane one night at a dance in our new school building near Stroud. This was a dance given to pay for the building. I was playing the fiddle when she walked in. She looked at me and said, "He's going to be my husband."

I had a spotted cow pony and a two wheeled cart with a seat on it just large enough for one, but we both rode in it.

When we decided to marry I bought a yoke of oxen for one hundred bushels of shelled corn.