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Cherokee Nation
Neutral Strip
Subscription School
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Fairland

LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

407⁵⁵¹

Field worker's name Nannie Lee burns

This report made on (date) June 30 1937

1. This legend was secured from (name) Mrs. Samantha Hillen (nee) Lane

Address Fairland, Oklahoma

This person is ~~male~~ or female) ~~white~~, ~~Negro~~, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe Cherokee

2. Origin and history of legend or story _____

Memory

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached six

THE GIRL UNKNOWN

Interview with Mrs. Samantha Hillen (nee) Lane
By Nannie Lee Burns, Field Worker
Indian Pioneer History, 9-149
June 30, 1937

Samantha Hillen, nee Lane, was born December 23, 1846,
near Mayesville on the Cherokee side.

My parents were Jane J. Lane, nee Harlan, daughter of
David M. Harlan, and Garrett Lane, a white man of French and
English descent who came with the Cherokees from North Carolina,
and I think my parents were married soon after we came near
Mayesville and before we moved to the Neutral Strip near Baxter
Springs, Kansas.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Really I do not remember my father as he left my mother and
baby sister, (Mrs. Tennessee James) and myself with our grandfather
in the spring of 1849 and joined with two of my uncles (John Harlan
and Bert Lane) the caravan that was assembling at the fort west of
here to make the trip overland to California in quest of gold.

Both of my uncles died on the way and father was killed by
a fall in the shaft after he had been in California two years.
His partner, a half-breed Cherokee, was with him, Ed Crutchfield
by name and later he came home and their business was sold and
mother received her part of it but sister's and mine was held by the
public administrators till we were eighteen and by that time the
expense had taken most of it.

Grandfather kept lots of cattle around and as only the fields were fenced, some one had to be looking after them all the time and I liked to be out of doors so much of my early life was spent in the saddle. At first mother rode with me a good deal when I was small but later she married my stepfather, John Blythe and we moved from Grandfather's to an adjoining place.

There being only an occasional subscription school, we did not attend school much and I liked best of all to ride after the cattle and have had many experiences and when I was alone I had a small dog that I taught to ride just behind the saddle for I had been told that no wild animal would attack you then. Once I remember I had a small half-brother with me and the dog behind me when I thought I heard a panther but if it saw us it did not attack us.

MOTHER'S DEATH

Mother died in the summer of 1859 and my younger sister, Tennessee, who was considered too small to be of much help, went to live at grandfather's but I was older and needed at home to help with the half-brothers and sisters so I remained with my stepfather, and besides helping with the stock which were my happiest hours, I helped with the spinning and weaving, the cooking, etc. Grandfather had lots of sheep and all of our cloth that went to make our clothes was made at home. Later

my father married a lady that came to the neighborhood to teach school.

CIVIL WAR DAYS

We were near the border and were exposed to the raiders from both Missouri and Kansas. At the beginning we had lots of cattle, sheep, and horses stolen from us, as well as the food from the house and our blankets, etc. Each raid left us worse off than before and we had no protection as we were too far from Fort Gibson to receive any assistance from there and of course not then considered a part of Kansas and each month found us just a little worse off. Our stock was taken which curtailed our farming and even the crops were partially destroyed after they were planted, then too being Indians, we had no status and they seemed to think that they could take anything they wanted and there was no one to say anything.

The latter part of the second year things grew so much worse. Two of our neighbor men were called to the door after dark and were shot. Then all who were Indians were ordered to move up in Kansas for safety and protection, so taking what we had left that we could move in wagons and drive, we went and remained there the last two years of the war.

When we returned the windows were gone from the house, the fields were grown up in sprouts, the fences were destroyed, and

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everything was in a bad way. Some cattle and quite a few hogs had escaped and made their living in the timber so these hogs were shot for meat and some few were captured and penned. Some few cattle had gone wild as well as some of the poultry which had managed to exist and increase, this together with some parts of orchards that had escaped destruction made it possible for the families to exist till they could raise a crop and get straightened out.

MARRIAGE

I married Frank Barnett and continued to live near, just north of the crossing on the Military Road (I think she had reference to Shoal Creek) so we had considerable travel past the home. I raised my children, helped my husband and did the work of the home. We had three children and only Ike is now living.

THE UNKNOWN GIRL

One day when the children were small and the men were in the field, a girl, I should have judged her to be twenty or less, came by and asked for a drink. She was afoot and alone. I insisted that she come in and rest and after much persuasion succeeded in getting her to come in and gave her dinner. She was neatly dressed and had dark hair and wore a plain gold ring.

As she would not remain with us over night, I took one of the horses and took her a couple of miles towards Baxter Springs,

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where she said she was going, and did hate to leave her for at that time the grass was high and few travelers along the road. That night I kept thinking of her and the next morning my husband and two of the neighbors decided that they would go to Baxter and see if she had reached there. They found no trace of her and then began searching for her and found the body a few feet from the roadside in the grass. A doctor was brought from Baxter and nothing could be done for her as she was already dead and the little life was also beyond help. The body was taken to Baxter Springs and when nothing could be learned about who she was or where she came from, she was buried with the small child in a grave in the cemetery there and one of the men placed a stone at the grave and engraved on it "The Unknown Girl."

More than a year after that, an older man with two younger men, stopped at our place over night and in talking of unusual things, the circumstances of this girl's death was told and we could see that the older man was much affected by the tale and asked many questions. From our place they went to Baxter and later they returned with a spring wagon and had the body taken up and later passed our house with it and I am told that they were from Springfield, Missouri, but more than this we never learned and to me this has been the one thing that has stood alone in all my early experiences.

LATER LIFE

We moved from this neighborhood when it was decided that this would be a part of Kansas to about four miles north of Fairland where my husband died and later I married O. Duncan and we had five children of whom James N., Oren and Lee are still living. Here my children and husband and myself took our allotments and lived during their childhood days.

This husband died and on November 12, 1893, I married my present husband, Wesley B. Hillen, whose people had come to this country many years ago from Illinois and his mother was a sister of Frank Conner who is one of the oldest settlers in this county.

CONCLUSION

This week is the first time that I have talked to Mrs. Hillen for more than a year and I could not help but notice how much she has failed in strength since then and was really sorry that I had attempted to interview her. She had a severe fall six weeks ago and fractured a wrist besides other injuries and now her husband tells me that he is giving her heart medicine regularly and it tires her to talk now, so in the telling of this story many of the little details are omitted that would have been emphasized had she not been so easily tired.