

INDEX CARDS

Churches--Choctaw Nation  
Game--Choctaw Nation  
Gross--Choctaw Nation  
Schools--Choctaw Nation  
Henry, Hugh  
Race Riots--Henryetta

Biography Form  
Works Progress Administration  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker 's name Grace Kelley

This report made on April 22, 1937

1. Name B.K. McElhannan

2. Post Office Address Henryetta, Okla.

3. Residence Address 16th and Meachem

4. Date of birth Jan. 22, 1881

5. Place of birth Alcorn, Miss.

6. Name of father John McElhannan

7. other information about father born, Macon, Ga.

Methodist Missionary Preacher, on Circuit.

8. Name of mother Mary Elizabeth Honnold

other information about mother

She was born in Jackson, Tenn. Heard guns of

Shiloh.

No. of sheets attached 7

Grace Kelley, Field Worker  
Indian-Pioneer History  
April 23, 1937

90

Southern Parents  
Interview of B.K.McElhannon

My parents were both Southern, mother often told of hearing the Guns of Shiloh, father was a Western-Confederate under Albert Sidney.

First Saw the Indian Territory- 1889

On Jan.1,1889, my father arrived at Poteau with his family, on the Frisco Railway.

Methodist Preacher.

My father was a Methodist preacher, under the Southern Methodist Missionary Board of Nashville, Tenn. His Circuit was from Cameron on the Arkansas line down to the Red River. He had three interpreters. One would go so far and then he would stop and another would start and go a-certain part of the way, then the third one would go the rest of the way. I imagine it was that way because of the different languages spoken in the different parts of the Indian Territory.

He was paid \$1,000.00 a year, and held that circuit for two years.

Grace Kelley, Field Worker  
Indian Pioneer History  
April 23, 1937

page 2

My first experience with Indians.

When I first came to the Indian Territory I was expecting to see Indians like were pictured in story books, no clothing except a blanket, with a tomahawk which they would use on me as soon as they saw me.

John Evans, a lawyer at Tulsa now, was going to show me some Indians, Choctaws, so we went down by the road where they would pass. Pretty soon we saw some coming on horses but I was so surprised, and disappointed. They were dressed about like the cowboys except they had large white hats on, with large red plumes on them. They didn't even look at us.

A short time after that they were having some kind of meeting, I don't know what, but Deputy Coon Raterie found their whiskey and drank all of it. They found out who got it and came after him whooping and making a terrible noise; he left town in a hurry and didn't come back.

#### Game and Fish

There was five years that we were never without venison in the house. Anybody could have turkey and squirrel whenever they wanted it. The creeks were full of fish and you didn't need to be an educated fisherman to catch them, all you need-

Grace Kelley, Field Worker  
Indian-Pioneer History  
April, 22, 1937

page 3

ed was a hook and line and you'd catch all you wanted.

The grass in the woods was waist high; every year it has gotten shorter. There ~~were~~ no thickets, just open woods.

Black bear would come in the summertime about the time the huckleberries were ripe and stay until the blackhaws ~~were~~ gone; then you wouldn't see them until the next spring.

Wolves would howl every night, and cougar lions. I've heard the panther behind me whine and scratch on the trees.

They would scream like a woman, in a trembley voice about ten times as loud. The bobcats were as numerous as rats.

### Hunting Dogs

We had the Tennessee Short Eared hounds, which were black with red underneath, from four to seven all the time, they were cold trailers.

### My Education

I didn't start to school until we moved to Wister in 1896, when I was as large as I am now, and I'm considered a large man. I had nine fights the first day for every boy there teased me about being so large and just starting to school. I was determined to get into the grades

Grace Kelley, Field Worker  
Indian Pioneer History  
April 23, 1937

page 4

with the boys my own age and I don't think anyone ever studied harder than I did. We had the Blueback Speller and McGuffeys reader.

At the end of the 1897 term I had completed all that they could teach there.

Moved to Henryetta, 1901

In the latter part of 1901 we moved to Henryetta, my father and sister came on the train, Ira and Doc rode on horses and I drove the wagon. The population of Henryetta the next year was about three hundred and fifty.

I've always been told that Henryetta was named for Hugh Henry and his daughter, Mrs. Smith. Hugh Henry was a friend to everybody but any person who happened to be a Yankee.

We rented a little building, where the Wise residence is now, 2 is now, 211 North Third. It was so small that we couldn't hardly get out things in.

In the spring we moved in the Butler school on Salt Creek. That fall we moved into a tent on the North side of the school.

Grace Kelley, Field Worker  
Indian-Pioneer History  
April 23, 1937

94

page 5

### Located and ~~made~~ the Dean Spring

That fall I took a hickory switch or fork, in the shape of a "Y". Held the ends of the forks in my hands with the bottom of the Y down. When it started to drawing down toward the ground I stopped and started to digging, for I knew I was over a water vein. When I had dug two and a half feet deep I got good water. That spring is still there and is called Dean Spring. When there is a drou th the farmers haul water from there for it has never gone dry.

### Dr. McElhannan

Dr. M. L. McElhannan <sup>who</sup> was my brother, started doctoring in 1900 and was a good doctor who was loved by everybody. He was a Methodist preacher as well as doctor.

I was a coal miner for several years until Ira and C. C. Nelson rented the Curtis bakery and I drove the wagon for them. I would take bread and pies to the Central mine camp every day. It had several houses but mostly tents.

### 1907, Race Riot.

On Christmas Eve, 1907, a negro went to the Albert Bates wagon yard to hire a rig. Albert told him that all of them

Grace Kelley, Field Worker  
Indian-Pioneer History  
April 23, 1937

6  
had been taken and paid for in weeks in advance, they had some words and the negro left, coming back later and shootin Bates.

I was just getting up from the barber chair when we heard the shot. We all rushed out and looked toward where the shot had come from. The negro ran and we saw him cross the track into the bottoms.

I got to Bates first and Jake Rimberton and some other men carried him to the house. We had to go home and get our guns as we didn't wear them then.

We were all looking for him in the bottoms when a kid of a boy saw him hiding in the creek, Coal Creek, and holding to some tree roots to keep his head out of the water. The boy had an old britch loading shotgun. He got the drop on the negro and called to us to hurry there as he had the negro.

The Sheriff and Deputy Jim Henchee, Jim was cowardly, took him and put him in the jail; of one room, two-by-fours laid flat made the walls, windows eight inch square with bars over them, the door had a great big padlock on it. The Sheriff knew that he couldn't escape and went up town for something.



Grace Kelley, Field Worker  
Indian-Pioneer History  
April 23, 1937

page 7

A crowd came and the streets were covered with a mob of angry whites. The Sheriff came back and wanted them to go home but they said they wanted the negro. He wouldn't let them have him. The second time the crowd gathered at the jail they took 2 twelve inch sledge hammers and knocked the door in, and dragged the negro out by a rope they had tied around his neck.

They had been in such a hurry to get him hanged that they hadn't thought to tie his hands. They threw the rope over the telephone pole, at the alley on Fifth between Main and Broadway. He grabbed the rope to save himself and the guns popped like pop-corn in a pan.

I had a shotgun and a shortgun but my sweetheart, Lula Burroughs, who worked in the variety store, had both my hands and wouldn't let me shoot.

It was a week after the lynching before the negroes were run out of town.

The town was under guard more than a month, in the first part of 1908, by the citizens, without pay. The signal if the negroes came was two shots.

The negroes were congregated at different places and intended to take the town, and would have if we hadn't kept such good watch. The Okmulgee and Muskogee negroes were going to help wipe Henryetta off the map.