

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

RAINEY, JOHN LITTLETON.

INTERVIEW

8269.

Field Worker's name Merrill A. NelsonThis report made on (date) July 31, 19371. Name John Littleton Rainey2. Post Office Address 419 E. Spruce, Enid, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

5. Place of birth King City, Missouri6. Name of Father Samuel S. Rainey Place of birth Nashville,Tennessee

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Frances Mathis Place of birth Indiana

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 Eight.

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Field Worker,

Merrill A. Nelson

July 31, 1937.

Interview with

John Littleton Rainey,
Enid, Oklahoma.

My father was a man known for his honesty and integrity. He became a Mason at the age of 21 and continued so until he died at the age of 84. My mother was known for her fine knitting and crocheting. She received a certificate of award signed by Woodrow Wilson for the skill she manifested in this art during the World War. She raised ten children. She would sit up after they went to bed, sewing by hand. There was no machine in our home until I was ten years old, to do this work.

I lived in Gentry County, Missouri, a few years before the Opening of the Cherokee Strip. My father wanted to come to this country and my brother George had been to Oklahoma Territory already, coming back to tell us that we would do better with a claim there than renting land in Missouri.

On the 22nd of March, 1891, we left for King City, Missouri, to take a train to Oklahoma Territory. We had nine miles

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to travel. The road was so muddy that though we had four horses, to lighten the load, I walked the nine miles with snow up to my boot tops. My mother, three sisters and our baggage were in the wagon.

We shipped a team, a cow, household goods and lumber which we had bought at Kansas City, Missouri, in a settler's freight car. When we reached the country just north of Wichita, the wheat was green and having just left a country of snow and ice the region looked almost like a garden in the early morning light. We reached Hennessey at eleven o'clock that day, and we were astonished to behold the men wearing straw hats and the boys walking barefoot. The

flowers were in bloom and though the farms had few improvements, most of them being of sod, the country looked like the garden of Eden to us. The country was too new to have much, if any, crops but it looked good to us. We stayed awhile on a place twelve miles east of Hennessey on Skeleton Creek, waiting for the opening of the Strip.

When the Strip opened, Father and I both got claims.

I received a claim twenty-one miles from the starting point,

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the number of which was the Northeast Quarter of Section Two, Township Twenty-two, Range Five. There was no one there on the place when I put my stake in the ground, but it turned out to be school land so I traded for another piece, giving \$15 and a horse in the trade and came into said Monday and registered to file. I completed my filing September 25, 1893. My father and I had made the run together for twenty miles.

It is true that I was quick to file but this was due to the following circumstance. There was a line of men 500-600 yards long waiting to register. It was noon and the office was closed.

The Land Office boys were resting on the north side of the building. I joked with them a while and just as they went in to start their work again, I backed up into the line close to the door. There were only five or six ahead of me and I registered about one o'clock that day. My homestead was the Northwest quarter, Section Twelve, Township Twenty-two, Range Five.

My father's place was contested by a son of Major General Price, who had served in the Confederate Army but

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Father was. It is something that the men who
 made the run carried on. It is not true that most
 of the people who were sent to the mills to get
 a home. They had to be sent to the mills to
 to protect their children from the mills.

He had a hard time getting started. He never thought
 of asking for assistance.

The first job I secured was helping out at the mill
 in 1900. He had a few men on the mill and
 were willing to work for small wages. This mill is the
 one east of the Rock Island Depot and still stands.

He began hauling stone to the mill and selling it.

He quarried the stone and fed himself and horses out of
 this. 'Nuncy' Campbell was the contractor. He hauled eighteen
 loads and made \$30.00. He started in the mill and worked
 till after dark. This was in 1900.

In February of that same year we were load on wood. I
 never used cow chips for fuel, preferring to haul wood thirty-
 three miles from Columbia. Wood was 25¢ uncut or 50¢ if they
 cut it for you. We never thought of having anyone cut it
 for us.

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I took some kaffir corn to feed the horses and a lump
and started after a few of the horses. I rode about
miles south of the place to get in the place.

In the morning I got up to feed the horses and
feed a calf. I said "What do you pay for calves like that?"
I asked. "I'll pay eight dollars," said Sugar. "I have a bull
calf I will let you have for eight dollars," said "I will
take it," but state "If you will give me the six dollars
now, I'll sell it to you for six and deliver the calf later,
I stated. "I'll give you the six dollars," said Sugar. "I'll
of good corn had 5.75 in the bush."

said that Peil had didn't... her she didn't
have... it would have... this happened as I had
hoped and I delivered the... that summer we had our
first good crop of who... the ground made twenty-seven
bushels to the acre... the acre of wheat.

In 1897 I was in the iron implement business. Anyone
who could put a binder together and make it work was a good
mechanic and as I did this I was known as a binder expert.

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Mr. Johndrow, who runs a grocery store in Enid on East Walnut, was one of those who bought a binder of me, 40 years ago. "I have a notion to steal a pair of pliers from you as 'like your tools,'" he said, as I put his machine together. "You do not need to do that," I said, "as I will give them to you." I met him not long ago and he said he still had those pliers.

One time I had 20 acres of sod to plant. I hired a planter of Lum Jones. When I took the planter home, I didn't have a dime. "I owe you two dollars," I said, "but I can not pay it now." "I've got to get some medicine for my wife, and wonder if you could not let me have a dollar," he replied. "I told you I didn't have a dime." "Give me a half-dollar, as I do have a half-dollar," he asked again. I looked around. I saw something shiny at the wood pile. It was a half dollar. "Here is your other half-dollar," I said, to his amazement.

This incident happened a little later, but it reveals the character of Mr. M.M. Champlin, the oil refiner. I was going west on Main. He was coming north on Second Street. We had a Buick, I had a Nash. He never looked and

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ran headlong into my car. "I'll declare, don't that just beat you?" He said. "Take it and get it fixed and bring me the bill," he went on. Needless to say, though the bill was \$65 or \$70, there was no difficulty in having him settle it at all.

I was at the dedication of the Oklahoma Historical Society building in Oklahoma City. They had given Governor Murray ten minutes. He talked forty. It certainly was a hard job to get him to stop that day.

Dennis T. Flynn was a man whom most of the settlers set store by. One time he was making a campaign, seeking to be a representative. It was on the north side of the square. He was speaking on the needs of his constituents.

"Do you know what this country needs?" "Rain," he said.

The night of the Run a big crowd of people came to Father's place as there was water there. It was a customary drinking place for a band of antelope and three or four antelope were killed that night by the settlers.

The long dry spell between '93-97 without any considerable crop levelled everybody. About the only ones who had any money were Civil War pensioners. Some supplies may have

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been given out but the average settler never heard of them.

My wife sacrificed with me and sometimes tears come to her eyes as she thinks of those days. She has been an invalid for 11 years. But without her help I doubt whether or not I would have pulled through. But with salt meat at ten cents a pound, or three pounds for a quarter, 48 lbs. of flour for 75 cents and other things in proportion, we had it easier in some ways. Raisins, dried apples and similar goods were low.

My first house was built of sod, but in '97 we built a 14 x 24 frame house in which we lived till 1900.

We have four children: Mrs. P. M. Raupp, of Kansas City, Missouri; Mrs. J. M. Veight of Garber; Mrs. L. F.

Williams of Wichita; Julian C. Rainey, a shoe salesman of Los Angeles, and Max M. Rainey in the Laboratory Department of a large university.

I am acquainted with many old timers. Among them Min Nelson of Breckinridge. I made the trip across the Cherokee Strip with him in '91. He knows how to make sour dough biscuits. We worked together in the harvest field in Kansas for \$1.50 a day.