

HAAS, GEORGE J.

INTERVIEW

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

HAAS, GEORGE J. INTERVIEW#.

10072

Field Worker's name Don Moon, Jr.,

This report made on (date) February 26, 1938

1. Name George J. Haas

2. Post Office Address Cuthrie

3. Residence address (or location) 224¹/₂ West Oklahoma

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 13, Year 1863

5. Place of birth Syracuse, New York

6. Name of Father Charles B. Place of birth Geneva,

New York

7. Name of Mother Louise 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 _____.

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Investigator, Don Moon Jr.,
February 26, 1933.

Interview with George J. Haas,
Cuthrie.

Early Days of Santa Fe in Oklahoma

When the track had been completed from Arkansas City to Purcell, Mr. Haas was the engineer who made the first run. This was on June 12, 1887. At that time this was a very barren country. The first train was a freight and for many years the principal freight was cattle and lumber. It took from forty to sixty hours to make the trip. The only rest the men would get would be when they were sidetracked to let other trains get by.

Mr. Haas's father was a sailor on the United States Constitution or "Old Ironsides." He quit in 1846 and moved to Syracuse, New York, where he worked as a machinist for the New York Central.

In 1872 the Haas family, along with numerous other families, migrated to Kansas. They rode on a Santa Fe train and at that time the Santa Fe ran from Atchison

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to the eastern border of Colorado. They founded a town and named it Syracuse after Syracuse, New York. A few years ago Mr. Haas happened to be riding in that vicinity and someone told him they were going to have an old timer's reunion at Syracuse. When the date arrived Mr. Haas attended the reunion and found out he was the Number One citizen of that country. He is the only living person who made this migration.

On the night before the Run, April 21, Mr. Haas came through Guthrie and there wasn't anything here. When he got to White Eagle he had to side-track for eighteen passenger trains bound for the Run. The next morning when he returned he saw a man plowing his garden with an ox team, a great number of tents, and more people than he could imagine would ever come to such a place.

While the track was being laid in this country, two section-men had a fight. About two miles south of Edmond on the west side of the track and in the right-of-way there are two graves bearing mute testimony as to the outcome of this fight. Years later a priest happened along and found out that one of these men was

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his brother so he had an iron cross placed on this grave. Section men keep these two graves well flowered and also take good care of them.

When the trains first started running through Oklahoma the stations or places where telegraph operators were located were south from Arkansas City as follows:

White Eagle, Red Rock, Horton, Mulhall, Guthrie, Edmond,

Oklahoma City, Norman and Purcell. Of these, Edmond was the most important as it was the only place besides Arkansas City and Purcell where people could get something to eat. Train loads were usually light in those days as trains did not have much air. Later as they put air on every car the loads increased. Deer and wild turkey were plentiful. One fellow stopped his train and shot several turkeys. He was suspended for thirty days. From then on they all called this man "Old Buzz," as they said these were buzzards which he had shot.

The original railroad track was made of very light rails and consisted of a dirt bed.

Mr. Haas moved to Guthrie in 1902. At the present time he is retired. He worked for the Santa Fe Railroad

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Company for fifty years from 1879 to 1929, and forty-six years of this time he was an engineer. When he was retired the railroad company sent a special car from Arkansas City with a bunch of his friends and the city of Guthrie let them have a park and they had a big picnic celebrating Mr. Haas' fifty years of service without an accident. The period since his retirement has been spent in traveling.
