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An Interview with Mary Gillette Engle, Tulsa.

By - W. T. Holland, Investigator.

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Even though I have been in Oklahoma and the Indian Territory for over forty years, I don't feel that I have done anything to speak of; however, I would like to relate a few facts and incidents relating to the activities of my father, Frank Edward Gillette.

Father was a native of Ohio; he was born there in 1850. I know that Father as a boy served in the Union Army for a while near the close of the Civil War. He came West with his parents right after the Civil War and they located or settled at Cottonwood Falls, Kansas. My father's education, while he was not a graduate of any college, was by his own efforts, probably above the average for that time. He was married to Anna Foster in 1868. Anna Foster, who later became my mother, was a native of Lawrence, Kansas. Along about 1870 my parents came to the Indian Territory and to Muskogee. Father's uncle, James Fisk, a railroad contractor, was working on the M. K. & T. Railroad and had a contract to grade a section of the road bed. My father was in charge of the supply store, a grocery owned and operated by this

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uncle and he and mother lived in a portable house furnished by Fisk. This house was built of wood panels that were held together with hooks at the corners and had a dirt floor. While it was wild in Kansas in the early days; the people were mostly white. My mother had heard such awful stories about the Indians that she was not willing to come, but did come; however, she was still uneasy. My parents lived away from any other house and had to carry water from a spring some distance from the house. This spring was in a deep ravine, wooded and cool, where there were, in the Spring and Summer, berries growing in profusion. It was a big spring and it was used by travelers to water their stock or to get a supply of water for themselves. This spring was where, or near where the hospital now stands in Muskogee.

My oldest sister who was Father's and Mother's first child was a baby when they moved to Muskogee. One day as the baby was sleeping, Mother decided to leave her on the bed and go to the spring for water. Upon her return she had the scare of her life. When she got to the door of her house she was met by a herd of wild hogs. The room was full; they

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ran out past her. Mother was frantic about the possible harm that might have been done to the baby, but she found her on the bed unharmed. Because of our living near the spring people sometimes stopped to get food. One day three men came and demanded food. There was not much food in the house and we told them so, and begged them to go away, so the leader finally told the men to come away and they left, not harming me. I learned later that these men were noted outlaws of that section.

After Uncle Jim Fisk had completed his work on the contract with the M. K. & T. Father returned to Hutchinson, Kansas. However, while located near where Durant now is, they knew the Durants, Indians. These were nice people and my parents liked them. The town of Durant was named for this man whom they knew.

On their return to Kansas Father continued in the grocery business at Hutchinson and in the meantime studied law, and was admitted to the Bar and then entered politics. He served in both houses of the Kansas Legislature and while in the legislature, one of the pages was a youth named

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Curtis. Father and Charles Curtis became great friends and later on Mr. Curtis was the one who recommended my father when Father was appointed a Territorial Judge in Old Oklahoma. Curtis, you will remember, was later Vice-President.

In 1890 my parents moved to El Reno where my father opened a law office and began the practice of law. He had a good practice, as there was a lot of claim jumping after the "Run" of 1889 and the litigation growing out of the claims occupied a good deal of the time of the courts. One of the most prominent cases Father had was a case for W. D. Fawcetts of Kingfisher. This case was one in relation to the title of land in the townsite of Kingfisher, claimed by Fawcett.

Later on, after Al Jennings had begun to practice law, and when Father was a Judge, Jennings had a case in Father's court. Before the case opened Jennings came to Father and asked him if his past record as an outlaw would influence Father in the decisions of cases which Jennings tried before him. Of course, Father told him "No" as his

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decision was always determined by the law and evidence in the case. In Jennings book "Beating Back" the "kind judge" spoken of, was my father.

Father's district as Territorial Judge included Hobart, Lawton and Anadarko. He was Territorial Judge in 1907 and ordered the closing of all saloons in his district. At Lawton they were rather slow in obeying the order, which resulted in some trouble there. Father was appointed Territorial Judge by Theodore Roosevelt and was, as I said, endorsed by Charles Curtis, as well as by others. Years later when Mr. Curtis ran for Vice-President, I met him and introduced myself. He remembered my father, of course, and had a great deal to say about the early days in Kansas and about his experiences as page in the Kansas Legislature,

I was born in 1875 and was fifteen years old when we came to live, permanently, in Oklahoma. It was a great life to me, raw pioneer life, which while not lacking in its refinements, was of course, more or less rough. I saw a great deal of the Indians, observed their habits and customs and

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have attended a lot of their dances and participated in some. We, the young people, used to go out to Darlington, near El Reno, when the Government had their "Issue Pens" where beef was issued to the Indians at certain intervals. The Kiowas, Comanches and other tribes in that section were provisioned by the Government. They were given food, clothing, and at these pens, were given cattle.

It was fun to watch the Indians kill the cattle, which were slaughtered right there on the prairie. The cattle were let out of the pens and the Indians would chase them, killing them with bows and arrows as well as rifles. I have seen the Indians kill many cattle with their bows and arrows. The cattle would be cut up, the beef cut in strips and hung up to dry, and no matter how hot the weather the beef would cure because it hung out in the wind.

The beating of the drums would tell us of a dance and many times we have located an Indian dance just by hearing the drums. There were no roads so out we young folks would go until we came to the place where the dance was. I have seen these Indians dance the "Sun Dance" until they were exhausted and the "Sun Dance" was danced with the dancer looking

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directly into the sun at all times. It seems that this would have destroyed their eyesight.

Another dance was the Crow Dance. The leader in this dance had a crow on the end of a pole which he carried as he led the dance. This, like other dances, was continued until the dancers were exhausted. This seemed to be the heroic thing to do - to dance until exhausted.

EL RENO

The first settlement was known as Fort Reno and was located on a hill on the old Santa Fe Trail. Next Reno on the north side of the Canadian River was the location of the town and this was before the railroad came through. It seems that all the people thought the railroad would have to come through this town, so they asked probably too much for the land as a right-of-way; anyhow, the Rock Island Railroad missed the old Reno and later El Reno, on the south side of the river and situated on the railroad, was built, and eventually most of Reno was moved to what is now El Reno.



I was married to Charles L. Engle in 1897 at El Reno. He was a banker for some years and at one time was President of the bank he was in. He had formerly been a member of the famous band of outlaws in Kansas, the Quantrell Gang, but we were not married until years after this and Mr. Engle was then a respected citizen and active in the Presbyterian Church. My son, Frank M. Engle, of Tulsa, married a Miss Hensley, whose parents were pioneer Oklahoma people.

Our social life while we lived in the "horse and buggy" days was interesting and enjoyable. We had our parties and church socials and occasionally a road show would come to El Reno. This was an event we all enjoyed. Outwardly, the people appeared rough, and there was a rough, really rough element here, but the majority of people were sober and reliable.