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March 22, 1937

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BIOGRAPHY OF Mr. Jack Florence (white)  
Residence 8 miles northwest of Pauls Valley  
Post Office Paoli, Oklahoma

BORN Dallas County, Texas  
November 27, 1845

PARENTS Father, William Florence, Alabama (deceased)  
Mother, Lucy A. Keely, Texas (deceased)

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Story told by Mr. Jack Florence, born in Texas November 27, 1845. I came to the Indian Territory in 1871, and settled in Pauls Valley, there was several people living here when I came here.

I came to this country on a pinto horse, and he was a good one. I left Texas in a hurry, got into some trouble there and I crossed Red river just thirty minutes ahead of Sheriff Dalton, a sheriff of Dallas county, Texas. That is why I say my horse was a good one, he had to be to stand up under the hard-riding and fast traveling I made him do.

Mr. A. I. Baker, and myself still have our arguments on which one came to Pauls Valley first. I still say I beat him here at least twenty minutes. As there isn't no one living here now that lived here in 1871, but Mr. Baker and myself, I can't prove that I did beat him, here, or he can't prove that I didn't. Anyway we are both able to get around in spite of our many long years and hardships spent in and around Pauls Valley.

As soon as I landed here, I saw that this was a fine place to raise cattle, plenty of grass and water. I dealt in some cattle around Whitehead Hill. I have sold cattle to Mr. Tom Waite, who owned a large ranch on Rush Creek south of where Pauls Valley now stands.

Smith Paul was supposed to be the first white man to settle in this valley, and from the looks of it when I came here I would say he really was. It was a wild looking place the day I rode in to this valley. Grass was high as my horse and there was lots of pole cats, if you didn't watch out would have to be changing clothes all the time. Turkey went in droves. In 1871, a Mr. Blackburn owned the only store about a mile south of where Pauls Valley is now located.

Mr. Blackburn later sold to Miller and Green, there was lots of corn raised in the Pauls Valley community. Smith Paul had a large farm, he also sold lots of corn to the government.

Zach Gardner owned a large farm, and later in years, Mr. Gardner owned several thousand acres of land, joining the Washita river. At that time the river bottom land could be bought for as low as one dollar per acre, now in this day and time the same land is worth around three hundred dollars per acre. I believe it was in 1871 or the first part of 1872, that Mr. Gardner built the first grist mill in this part of the Country, it was an old wooden wheel mill, the wheel was near the bank and a raft of logs on the upper side of it so when the Washita river got on a rampage, this raft would keep the logs coming down the river off, of the wheel. This mill was located at Mr. Gardner's farm on the Washita river just east of where Pauls Valley is now.

Hattie Jenkins, Sam Paul, W. G. Kimberlin and Tom Waite, all were big land owners in this valley. Most of their cultivated land was fenced with rail fences.

I married Mary J. Gardner in 1872; she was the daughter of Zach Gardner and she was part Chickasaw Indian, from her mother's side.

I built my home about eight miles northwest of Lauls Valley, on the north side of the Washita river in 1875. The reason I chose that place was because it joined the river and I knew I would have plenty of water for my cattle.

I owned the Three Stripe ranch on Red river, joining the Comanche Indian Territory. I remember one year with the help of my cowboys we branded two thousand head of yearlings. I have raised and dealt in lots of cattle; my loss was about four percent each year, thieves, wolves and the Indians. That was small according to some of the ranchers. After I built my home on the Washita river in 1875, I was not home very much until in the eighties, it took most of my time on my ranch joining Red river. I finally disposed of that ranch and brought about two thousand head of my cattle to my place northwest of Lauls Valley. Bringing this herd of Three Stripe cattle to my place here, we made our own trail; we tried to keep to the open country all we could. We had most of our trouble crossing Wild Horse Creek, near Hennepin, Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. We had two or three stampedes, the polecats or turkeys would put our cattle on the run, but due to the good judgment and fine managing of the cattle, my cowboys took care of the herd.

I was in a gun fight in Durcell, Oklahoma, one time. It was quite awhile after the railroad came through. A man and I got into an argument over some cattle and he beat me to the draw. I was shot in the neck, I thought I was going to die, but after bleeding like a stuck hog, I so recovered. Another time I was shot off of my horse, I was on my way to my ranch on Red river. I was riding along keeping on the

look out for a polecat or a wolf to take a shot at, when all at once I found my self on the ground. My horse did not get frightened at all. When the reins were dropped on the ground, my horse would have stayed there until he starved to death before he would move. I had him trained to do that, when I <sup>ground</sup> ~~was~~ I thought I was done for, but in a minute I got my mind to working again. I got my pistol out of the holster, and lay still waiting for whoever it was that shot me to come on up, to where I was. I lay there still a while, but no one showed up. My horse was about ten feet from me, so I crawled over to him and raised up next to his horse in case anyone was watching, I could use my horse for a shield. I looked around and could not see any one, only a few stray steers out about a quarter of a mile. I had only gotten a flesh wound I tore my shirt up and made some bandages; then I got on my horse and left there in a hurry.

We all had our good times and Karash's luck in territory days. I know I am a lucky man to have gone through so much and be living to day to tell about some <sup>of</sup> the things.

I saw a group of white men, who lived in the Pauls Valley, community take a negro man who had assaulted a white woman, to a cotton wood tree south of Pauls Valley and hang him to a limb. While the negro was swinging on the end of a rope, several pistols were fired at him and several of the bullets found their mark. They cut the negro down and dug a grave there and buried him.

I do believe there have been more killings in Pauls Valley since 1871 up until a few years ago than any other town in the state of Oklahoma. As I have said I spent the most of my time on my ranch joining Red river.

Therefore, until in the eighties, there were lots of things took place here that I do not know much about. My memory is not very good. I did not think about keeping dates on these things that I have seen happen here.

I was at a dance one time, on the river north of Whitehead Hill, I just can not remember the date, but I know there were several men and women there. A U. S. Marshall, I was well acquainted with, but I can't recall his name, he died several years ago at Lawton Oklahoma, we were all having a good time, drinking and dancing. There was a man there, who though he was smart, He wanted to fight or shoot it out with some one. That was what I heard him say, he was standing next to me, talking to some one. I heard him say, "I wish some one would start something." As I said, I was acquainted with the U. S. Marshal <sup>and</sup> this marshal tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Jack do you want a drink?" I said, "well, I never did refuse a friend!" We went out by the corral fence and two more men came out there. We four took a drink out of a quart bottle. I was the last one to drink, so I handed the bottle to this U. S. Marshal, and we all were talking. About that time this man, who thought he was a near fellow, walked up to where we were standing and grabbed the bottle out of the Marshal's hand, <sup>and</sup> said, "what are you going to do about <sup>it</sup>?" The U. S. Marshal told him to go for his gun, <sup>and</sup> the man started to draw his gun but he never did get it out of its holster. The U. S. Marshal shot him before you could bat an eye and killed him. That broke up the dance.

After the soldiers left Fort Arbuckle, and were stationed at Fort Sill, Mr. Tom Grant bought old Fort Arbuckle for fifty dollars.

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I have all ways dealt in cattle, I have never plowed a furrow of land in my life. I have rented my land out and my tenants have raised lots of corn, oats, wheat and in later years raised lots of cotton. I have sold all my cattle. I raise a few, not many. Most of my land is in cultivation. My wife died in 1936. My recollection of things has been very poor since my wife died.

My father and mother are buried on my place northwest of Pauls Valley, where I now live, and where my home has been since 1875.

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