

FEEB, ADDIE C.

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

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Field Worker's name Ruth E. Moon

This report made on (date) October 5, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Addie C. Fees

2. Post Office Address Guthrie, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Route 7

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 25 Year 1861

5. Place of birth Near Shawnee, Kansas.

6. Name of Father George Washington Causey Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Mary Crowder Place of birth Ohio

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 13.

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Ruth E. Moon,
Interviewer,
October 5, 1937.

An Interview with Mrs. Addie C. Fees,
Route 7, Guthrie, Oklahoma.

From Iowa in the spring of 1892, Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Fees and their two small children came to Oklahoma.

Oscar Fees and his son, brother and nephew of Edgar, had taken claims about ten miles north of El Reno at the first opening in 1889. Oscar had gone home to Iowa on the death of his father; the estate had been settled and divided and he was shipping his share of livestock and implements back to Oklahoma. So Edgar and his family shipped their goods, too, and came along, expecting to take up land in the Cheyenne and Arapaho country to be opened in April that year.

The new country was a disappointment to Edgar Fees, he thought there was much prairie and not enough timber, and so he didn't even enter the race. The family lived that summer on the nephew's claim.

In the freight car which they shipped from Iowa, Mrs. Fees recalls they loaded their horses, farm implements, buggy, wagon, sulky plow, corn planter, a dozen or so of her Black

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Gochin chickens, the boy's dog, a barrel of sorghum ~~of their own making and~~ when there was still some space left they filled that with potatoes and apples which had been so plentiful in the Iowa home.

The dog was tied to the chicken coop and managed to gnaw or break a hole in it. Oscar Fees came with the car and one morning when he opened the door to look after the stock the chickens were loose and a few of them jumped out and got away--at some town along the route between Iowa and the new territory. The car, as Mrs. Fees remembers, was unloaded at Pond Creek and their things were brought overland from there.

They came in March and were hardly settled in the little shack on the nephew's claim when a blizzard struck. Such cold! There was just a hole in the roof where the stove pipe went out and the storm came in there worse even than through the thin walls.

The spring that year was so nice and promising, but a drouth followed and there was little raised. We planted potatoes, but when we went to dig them," Mrs. Fees recalls

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with a laugh, "we got more centipedes than potatoes. I saw my first tarantula there. Vincent, five years old, found it drinking out of the chicken trough and called me to come look. Later we found others, even in the house, and we could hear centipedes scratching in the wall at night. One evening I was sitting out on the step when the dog came and sniffed and barked at something right under my feet. I still think there was a snake there. Our little girl was three. One night she brought her night-dress to have her Daddy help her put it on. He shook it out and a big centipede dropped from it. A cousin of Edgar's, Dexter Fees, who now lives in El Reno, found so many snakes while plowing his land that he had a whole cupful of rattles saved from them. Once when Mr. Fees was plowing he had to stop and take the singletree off the plow and use it to kill a rattler. Oscar Fees lived in a sort of half dugout. One night he got up in the dark to close a window. It seemed to shut down on something soft, so he made a light and found he had a snake caught, part out and part inside. We drank muddy water all that summer, hauling

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it half a mile from Oscar's place. He had a well, but the water was always muddy. Most of the crops didn't turn out well that year, but I raised a good many chickens. My third child, a boy, was born in August, and in September we moved to Guthrie.

"In Guthrie our first home was in a little rented house on the north side of the street in the 500 block on East Harrison Avenue. It set in a low place and when we had heavy rains the water ran off a neighboring roof and disappeared under our floor. Our little girl had not been well before we came to Guthrie and soon grew worse. I told Mr. Fees to get a doctor, but we didn't know whom to get. He went into a drug store and asked to be directed to a good doctor. A man then standing in the store was a good doctor, according to the clerk, so Mr. Fees sent him out to see our little girl. He treated the child a week without knowing what was the matter with her. She did not improve and finally was so sick that something had to be done. We then got in touch with Dr. H. L. Smith, and when he heard who had been on the case he came willingly enough, telling Mr. Fees, 'That

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man is already under indictment for practicing without a license.' The child had typhoid by this time. We managed to pull her through, but the change in doctors was not made a moment too soon. There was no paving in those days and when the wind blew hard the dust was so heavy that we couldn't see across the street.

"Mr. Fees made several trips getting everything moved from El Reno. We brought my chickens and also three fine, big horses. He thought so much of them he didn't want to sell them, but the price of feed was so high we would have been better off if he had. Paying out so much for house rent and horse feed used up the surplus funds we had brought with us and with which we intended to get settled in a new location. We lived next door to the Furrow family. They were just beginning as florists then, with their first little greenhouse in the yard of their home.* Mr. Furrow (John's father) was funny. He borrowed a raincoat from Mr. Fees and kept it all through the rainy season. One time Mr. Furrow and Mr. Fees went several miles southeast of town to haul home

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pole wood for fuel. They could haul a big load of poles and then cut them up into stove length at home. The roads were bad and Mr. Furrow put on too big a load for his team. He got stuck where they were crossing a small bridge over a little stream in a deep ravine. Mr. Fees got across all right, then had to hitch on and help pull the Furrow load out. They finally made it, but one of our horses was strained by the effort, and never was quite right afterward. We eventually traded our horses for a small house in the west part of town, but times got so hard we lost the house when it was sold for taxes. The house was little more than a shack, but I planted morning glories and they grew up over it and made it look nice. We were living there in the summer of 1895, when another son was born. Work was so scarce that summer that about all Mr. Fees could find to do was a little roof repairing and patching of wooden sidewalks. Mr. Fees told Dr. Smith to call, but the doctor had a hard time finding the place. When he came he said, 'That man of yours doesn't know where he lives, does he? He gave me the wrong number.' Then he

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told me the number, and I said; 'Why, that's the one on the house.' 'Well, it's wrong, anyway,' said the doctor. And it was. The house had been moved there from some other location and the number on it was the one it had at its original site. Dr. Smith was a former army surgeon, and a very capable physician. He answered all calls to the poor, even when there was little or no chance that he would ever be paid. Once when Mr. Fees left some money at the house for him the doctor said, 'Now, I don't know that you owe me this much.' But we did, and more, too. Dr. Smith died suddenly of a stroke, when at his barn taking care of his horses. His little dog ran to the house, barked and called the family. He had a very large funeral as so many of the people whom he had helped were there. Ralph V. Smith, a son, also became a doctor here, later moving to Oklahoma City.

"Our first regular church attendance in Guthrie was at the Barnes Chapel, a Methodist meeting house on the west side. The old building has been moved to the north side of the street in the 500-block on west Noble Avenue

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and is now used as a mattress factory. Mrs. C. E. Swan was superintendent of the Sunday School there and Reverend Keller was the minister. Mr. Keller was a fine, spiritual man, but I'm afraid he didn't get much pay. Once the congregation was trying to raise something for him, but he thought it was too great a sacrifice on the part of the people and refused to accept the offering. Mrs. Keller admitted that that was hard to do, when they didn't even have flour in the house at the time. My father and my brother John made the run into the Cherokee Strip. On the way they found a big bacon rind in the grass where some previous and extravagant camper had thrown it. John cooked it with a can of tomatoes and made soup which they both thought was about the best soup they had ever tasted.

"Mr. Blair, one of our neighbors on the west side, used to tell about when he was on his claim and ran out of matches. He walked a mile or more to the nearest house to borrow and the woman there gave him just one match, then he had to walk back home and see if he could make a fire without letting that one match go out.

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"Mr. Fees was a carpenter and cabinet maker. He learned the trade when he was a boy and was considered the best at that kind of work in our Iowa community. In Guthrie he worked for Jake Douglass in building of the first Houghton and Douglass Cotton Gin here; helped build the Douglass home and the first cotton spinning mill in the state, and often worked for Mr. Douglass afterward when there were repairs or changes to be made at the mill. He was active as a carpenter in Guthrie for more than thirty-five years. Some of his last and best work was on the \$2,000,000 Scottish Rite Temple. He died July 29, 1929."

Mr. Fees built a home for his family in the extreme southeast part of Guthrie, where Mrs. Fees still lives. They had six children. One son is a geologist, one a master carpenter, one an electrician. The youngest is dead. One of the two daughters is employed in the Indian agency at Muskogee and one is in nursing service among the Tennessee Mountain people.

First at the old Barnes Chapel and then at the First

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Methodist Church, Mrs. Fees has been interested in church work here for more than forty years, serving part of that time as a Sunday School teacher.

Mrs. Fees was born near Shawnee, Kansas, September 25, 1861. Her father was George Washington Causey of Tennessee. Her mother was Mary Crowder of Ohio. They moved soon from Kansas to Illinois, and Mrs. Fees' first recollections are of life there during the Civil War. The family moved often during her girlhood, so that Mrs. Fees lived in Missouri and Iowa as well as in Kansas and Illinois before coming to Oklahoma.

After her father moved to the Cherokee Strip and Mrs. Fees to Guthrie, she used to visit him sometimes on his claim somewhere near Enid. His post office was Luella, no longer shown on the maps. Usually they drove through, going by way of Crescent and then north, but one trip was made partly by train and partly by stage. About twenty-five years ago Mrs. Fees wrote a little account of this stage journey, in semi-fiction form, and it is appended here. She had the three children along, the youngest

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two years old. The other passengers were several druggists going to a convention at Enid. They were nice, but one seemed a little drunk and the others accused him of having had a stick in his lemonade. Here is the story:

A Lonely Ride

It was in the year 1894 that I had the loneliest ride of my life. I wished to visit a family at Luella and there was no train running near there so I went to Perry and got passage on a stage coach from there. The stage was a rather shabby affair drawn by two animals which had small resemblance to horses. One was a gray with a blind eye and drooping ears. He looked as if he had never seen a curry-comb and never heard of oats. The other looked as bad or perhaps a little worse, and limped in his left leg. Now and then I imagined I saw a buzzard swoop down above them, and except for the driver's whip they might have been carried away.

The driver was a man of possibly forty years, dressed in a suit of greasy corduroy. His hair resembled that of the horses in that it would have looked better had a curry

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comb been used upon it. He had a bristly beard, and his hands looked as if they might have been washed by the last shower, three weeks before.

It was the third of July and as the sun climbed upward I could see the waves of heat across the vast prairies which were covered with dry buffalo grass. For miles and miles no tree was in sight. We passed two or three sod houses and a dugout, but they seemed to have been long deserted. Not even a chicken showed itself. I thought I should have been delighted if occasionally a little dog had run out and barked. Even the ropes were gone from the wells. And the one small window in the dugout which the owner could boast of was boarded up. For the drouth had driven nearly all the settlers to more pleasant quarters.

We passed through what was called Black Bear Creek but not a drop of water or even a little mud was in sight. It was certainly bare. I wondered how long I would stand the heat, the glare of the sun and the loneliness of that dreadful ride. Would it never end? The driver halted long enough at Garber to get a lunch, then started on, but we had

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only gone two or three miles when a wheel came off and I had to get out and sit under my umbrella while the driver went back to hunt the tap which he had lost. While waiting I amused myself by counting the ribs of the horses. I counted fifty, but it might have been the glare of the sun that caused me to multiply the number. When we got under way again the driver started to take a chew of "Good Old Granger Twist", but his hand resembled the tobacco so much in color that he made a mistake and got a bite of thumb. This "riled" his temper and he took out his spite on the poor old horses.

Finally, as the hot sun slowly descended to the western horizon, the grass grew green and a tree here and there gladdened my eyes and I knew that I was nearing my journey's end.

That country is a very prosperous part of the state now, but I have no desire to ride over it again in a stage coach.

Note:

* Furrow and Company was founded by John W. Furrow, when just a boy and his mother and is still operated here by Mr. Furrow. It is probably the largest floral company in the state and this house was perhaps the first greenhouse in the Territory.