Form A-(S-149)

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

#9459

FLINT, JOHN HAMFORD. **INTERVIEW.**

Field Worker's name **Anna R. Barry**

This report made on (date) **December 15,** 1937

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1. Name **John Hamford Flint**
2. Post Office Address **El Reno, Oklahoma.**
3. Residence address (or location) **500 North Shepherd St.**
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month **February** Day **10** Year **1870**
5. Place of birth **Glossop, England.**

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6. Name of Father **William Flint** Place of birth **England**

   Other information about father

7. Name of Mother **Sarah Flint** Place of birth **England.**

   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 .

Anna R. Barry,
Journalist,
December 15, 1937.

Interview with John Hamford Flint,
El Reno, Oklahoma.

I was born in Glossop, England, February 10, 1870. My father, William Flint, came to the United States when I was a babe of just a few months, leaving Mother and me in England to come later. My recollection of my native home is very limited but I remember the fine apple tree that stood in our backyard, and how my mother rocked me to sleep when a small tot under the shade of that old apple tree her father planted there. When I was a lad of nine years Mother was making preparations for us to come to the United States to my father, but before we left Mother took sick and died. Several weeks later it was planned for me to make the voyage with an aunt and uncle. In my imagination today I can see our relatives standing near that beautiful old tree, most of them weeping, after the good-byes were said. I remember very little about our trip over except that we were on the water ten days and nights.

It was in the Fall of 1879 that we joined my father who was located in the Western part of Kansas in Greenwood County, working for a cattleman and farming small patches.

In the Spring of 1880, we loaded our wagon with a few farming necessities, a breaking plow, axes, some bedding and enough food to last at least a few months, and after days of hard travel, dodging Indians, crossing creeks and rivers without bridges, braving storms and all kinds of weather, we reached "No Man's Land" and the Panhandle of Texas.

Father settled on land about twenty miles from where Beaver City stands today, but it must be remembered that at this time no one owned a deed to land, we had only a squatter or claim title. Squatters taking land before the survey was made were completely at a loss in the matter of establishing their boundaries. In view of this fact the settler was obliged to draw out a plot of land at random and stake it out, then fence his field as this country was alive with cattle and ranches at this time.

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In the year 1881 the grasshoppers ate up our crop, and I, just a lad a little past eleven years, decided I was going out into the world to become a cowboy. After many weeks of begging and pleading my father sent to Colorado and purchased me a bridle, saddle, spurs and a six-shooter, put these on one of his best riding horses, gave me several hours lecture and started me out into the world to become a cowboy.

My first start was south, and it was at the "Rocking Chair Ranch" I secured my first job as horse wrangler.

The next Spring, or in 1882, it was decided by the foreman of the ranch that I could go along on the trip driving vast herds of cattle to the Northern markets. Nine herds of cattle were started on the old Chisholm Trail, each herd usually consisting of from twenty-five hundred to three thousand five hundred. The first herd had started out from the ranch and I was ordered out to go along with the other nine cowboys with the second herd.

After the first herd had crossed the Red River, the cook on the chuck wagon was killed by the Cheyenne and

Arapaho Indians. They demanded the meat the cook was preparing for dinner; this he refused, and was shot by these Indians.

Our herd had crossed the Pease River, also the Red River, just fine, and had traveled until they were about sixty miles from Woodward. That night after we had bedded down our cattle, a man by the name of Monroe and I were assigned to guard the cattle. Each guard would go around the cattle in opposite directions and when we came together we usually stopped our horses and talked a few minutes. This night between twelve and one o'clock we two men were talking. It was a beautiful moonlight night and as I looked across a small ravine I could see some object moving. As I went to raise my gun a shot rang out which hit me in the forehead. This aroused all the other cowboys who returned fire. No one else was injured in our camp, but next morning at daybreak we found three dead Indians. A cavalry of soldiers from Fort Reno arrived the next day and wanted to know why these cowboys shot at the Indians. We soon let them know we had a right to return

the Indians fire. It was something like three days before I received medical attention and it was necessary to beat out a silver dollar and place this plate on the fractured skull and I will never be found broke, I will always have a silver dollar.

After these nine herds of cattle had reached Kansas City and the cattle were sold, it was then the duty of the boss to get his cowboys rounded up and started home. In our bunch were eighty cowboys to return. The cowboys naturally caused some trouble in the little villages and small towns on their way home; sometimes a cowboy crazed with drink went wild and shot up the town. We placed tin cans on the hitching posts along the street and shot them full of holes regardless of the danger to passersby.

For several years I had placed on my bridle a string of human thumb bones; these bones were not hard to find in those early days.

The next Spring on my second trip helping drive cattle to the northern market, as we reached the South Canadian River with our herd, the river was running bank full. After

many instructions from the foreman, we decided to try and cross this treacherous river and what an exciting time it was. The cook, driving the chuck wagon, became frightened and had it not been for the good work of some of the cowboys, would have drowned and drowned the horses. However, we quickly cut the harness and saved the cook but we lost all our food and clothing. A company of soldiers who were camped on the north side of the river at this time divided clothes as well as food with us. Being a very small man, it was a problem for me to wear any of these clothes, but I finally found some about two sizes too large for me.

It was while on this trip that the Rocking Chair Ranch changed hands and on the return trip back from the North, I secured work as a cowboy on the Sixty-six Ranch located on Turkey Creek about thirty-six miles southwest of Woodward. It was while working on the ranch that Frank and Jesse James and Red Buck spent many nights on this ranch. I have played cards all night many times with these outlaws. It was while working on this ranch that I decided to return to my native home - England. I hired to

a man to help drive a herd of cattle to Dodge City. When I reached Dodge City, I took my saddle, bridle and spurs and shipped them to Philadelphia. But soon after I had shipped these things I hired to a man going south, so here in Dodge City I purchased another saddle, bridle and spurs and on the Spur Ranch, located near the Pease River in Texas, I went to work as a cowboy again.

I know many interesting stories about the Indians, as to their customs and dress. It was very common for the Indians to own from two to ten wives each. A daughter was often traded to a man for a number of ponies, and she had to go with the man and be his wife whether she liked it or not. But sometimes a wife was taken in a real love-match, when a man and girl would steal away and become man and wife without any trade being made. Very soon the parents went to the home or camp of the young man's parents and took possession of horses or anything until they were satisfied as to the price of their daughter. This was an Indian custom and was not to be resented by the family of the young man thus being robbed.

Death among the Indians was the occasion of great mourning and many superstitious acts. In addition to the kin, many friends and Indian mourners took part with their weird cries and wild wail on the tom-toms. The things that belonged to the dead person were piled up and burned and many of the things were broken up at the grave and some put in the grave with the body. Often the tepee in which the Indian died was burned, and sometimes, if the person was of much importance, a horse was killed at the grave and the saddle and bridle buried with the owner. I have seen many valuable articles destroyed on these occasions. On several occasions I have seen the Indian women (as soon as their loved one had died) take a butcher knife and cut their arms, chop and cut their fingers, also hack their faces, which caused an awful sight. The mourning for the dead was usually kept up at certain periods for some weeks or months. Many times to prevent the burning of the tepee the dying person was removed to some place outside prepared for that purpose. Often the dying person was dressed in his best clothes before death occurred.

The Medicine Men were generally called in to drive

away the evil spirit of disease and would apply suction with the mouth to the throat and chest of the patient and get down over him and blow and grunt. They also rattled a kind of charm, consisting of a string of little bells, beads or deer toes; all of this just hurried the patient on to his end. Sometimes a real remedy was used as the application of a certain weed in the case of snake bite. They chewed the root of this weed and applied the saliva to the bite. A sweat bath was often used, and in the case of malaria, it was a real benefit, but in many diseases such as smallpox or measles it was sure death. When taking a sweat bath the patient was shut in closely in what was called a "sweat house". This sweat-house was usually a small tent made almost air-tight by being covered with heavy blankets and robes. In the center was a hole in which were red hot stones upon which water was poured causing a steam to arise, covering the naked person causing heavy perspiration. After the patient had gone through a thorough sweat, he then would take a cold bath either in the creek or river close by or have water poured on him.

Another custom was the use of the peace pipe which was made of tobacco and dried sumach wrapped in a leaf. They would sit in a circle upon the ground either on the outside or in the tepee. One would fill and light a pipe and the first whiff he would blow up toward the sun or sky, which was the Great Spirit, the Father. The second whiff went to the earth, which was the great Mother from which they received the necessities of life, and the third whiff went straight out from the mouth to each other to show their love. After this the pipe was passed to the next man in the circle who went through the same ceremony as the first, and so on around till all in the circle had smoked this pipe. This was kept up till the tobacco in the pipe was exhausted and the pipe was then put away. During this ceremony no words were passed. Another custom I recall was that when the Indians came to the Agency for their monthly issue of rations, they brought with them all their belongings, tepees, robes, blankets, cooking utensils. In early years these were packed upon their ponies, but in later years the Indians came in their covered wagons. It was won-

derful how much these Indians could pack and carry upon their ponies. In taking up their tepees, the poles were fastened in equal numbers on each side of the pony to a kind of collar at the neck, the rear end resting upon the ground. In this way they were dragged along by the struggling pony. During these early years, if there was a sick person not able to walk, a bed was made upon these poles. At these issues the Indians camped near the Agency for several days and engaged in racing, various games and medicine making. One of their greatest sports was chasing wild over the prairie the beef cattle that were issued to them, and shooting them as they ran.

It was at the Cheyenne and Arapaho Opening on April 19, 1892, that I made the run south from Woodward and staked a claim on Trail Creek. On this claim I built a cedar log house, 10 X 12 ft. In a few months I became discouraged. One reason was that it was impossible to get a days work. So one day that Fall I sold out to a man with a large family that was looking for a place to settle on.

It was January 18, 1902, that I married Gertrude Wildman, who was a widow at this time with three children.

We are the parents of nine children, all living except one who was killed in France during the World War.