



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

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Field Worker's name Nora Lorrin, El Reno, Oklahoma

This report made on (date) December 17, 1937

1. Name Mr. James W. Fitzgerald

2. Post Office Address Yukon, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 716 West Maple Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 17 Year 1860

5. Place of birth Wayne County, Iowa.

6. Name of Father Edward F. Fitzgerald Place of birth Ohio, about 1832

Other information about father Died July, 1901

7. Name of Mother Margaret(Zentz) Fitzgerald Place of birth Penn. about 1838.

Other information about mother Does not remember the date of her death  
but she died after his father died.

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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Nora Lorrin,  
Investigator.  
12-17-37

An interview with  
James W. Fitzgerald,  
Yukon, Oklahoma.

James W. Fitzgerald was born in Wayne County, Iowa, on April 17, 1860. His father, Edward F. Fitzgerald, was born near Columbus, Ohio, about 1832, and died in July, 1901. His mother, Margaret (Zentz) Fitzgerald, was born in Pennsylvania, about 1836. There were seven of the children, three boys and four girls; the boys are all still living and the girls are dead.

He was fourteen years of age when the family moved from Iowa to Cloud County, Kansas, in a covered wagon. That was the year of the grasshoppers and the old settlers remember it as the year the grasshoppers took everything. They bought a farm close to Scottsville, about half way between Concordia and Leoloit. He lived there with his parents until he was grown. He was married to Miss Mattie M. Barch in 1883. One child, a girl, was born to them while they were living in Kansas. In 1889 they were anxious to get a start in life and so put their bedding and clothing into a prairie schooner and came to Oklahoma, coming through Caldwell. They stopped at Pond Creek and camped. It was after dark and after they had got

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settled down, they heard an awful crash. They went to investigate, to see what had caused the noise, and found that another fellow on the way to klanoma in a covered wagon had upset his wagon and scattered his jars of fruit all down the hill. They helped him straighten it up and no one was hurt.

They stopped at Guthrie and J. R. Fitzgerald carried the mail from Guthrie to Kingfisher until fall. He then filed on a claim seven miles northwest of Al Reno. There was a soldiers "Declaratory" on the claim when he first learned about it and he waited until that ran out and then filed on it. A good many of the soldiers who filed declaratory rights on claims did not do anything with them.

Mr. Fitzgerald built a dug-out in a bank, roofed over with poles, brush and dirt, and they lived in this dug-out for awhile but not long. He dug a well and got lots of good water and there was plenty of wood on the river and they burned that. He used to catch quite a lot of fish. He did it with his hands. He would get in the water and slip his hands in a hole under the

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bank or carefully under a drift, get his fingers in the fishes' gills and get them that way. It can be done if you are gentle enough not to scare the fish.

He broke out some sod and planted sod corn and watermelons and though he raised lots of watermelons he did not sell many of them. He set out an orchard of apples and peaches, and later had plenty of peaches.

One evening he had been away from home and on his way back met a woman who was all excited about a threatened Indian outbreak; she tried to get him not to go on home as she was sure he would meet up with the Indians before he got there. He went on home and they all went to bed and that was the last of that Indian scare.

There was an Indian scare at Frisco, when a man came there all steamed up over a threatened Indian outbreak, and the residents soon had their places of business barricaded with bales of cotton. Nothing came of it.

Mr. Fitzgerald built a house of logs soon after the dug-out was built. It was a log house of two rooms. Later he built a frame house and barn.

The settlers would meet at the "Old Sod School House" for church and various social affairs. They also attended

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dances and parties and would meet at each others homes and they had pretty good times. There was a cyclone that blew their house off of its foundation and did some worse damage in the neighborhood; some of the neighbors did not get off as luckily as the Fitzgerald family did. Some houses were blown away. This happened five or six years after the country opened.

Mr. Fitzgerald has witnessed three runs. He saw the run for the Sac and Fox country. He was there when the Cherokee Strip opened and also saw the Cheyenne country opened but merely as a spectator.

When Mr. Fitzgerald first came to this country all the stock he possessed was his team. He first traded at Reno city with a couple of bachelors who ran a store there. He also traded with Cannons at Frisco and Pettee's in El Reno and later with Allison's.

Lickox was the postmaster here when they went on their farm northwest of El Reno. His first claim joined the Keith Indian allotment on the north. There were not very many Indian allotments in the 1889 opening.

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He rode in a wagon at first and after while got a new top buggy. His implements were plows and a lister. He planted and raised lots of corn and he always used a lister to plant it. They raised lots of cane and kaffir corn and put up considerable wild hay.

He owned this first farm and lived on it seven years and then sold it and bought another farm ten miles northeast of El Reno. It was already improved, with a nice frame house and frame barn, chicken houses and other improvements. They lived on that farm for six or seven years and moved to Richland and then to Yukon in 1923.

Mr. Fitzgerald has been in the real estate business; he was Township Trustee for four years before statehood, and he was a member of the School Board and Township Board a number of times and was County Commissioner for Canadian County for four years, from 1911 to 1915.

He was in El Reno during the registration as an interested spectator, but because of sickness in his home he did not get to see much of it. He was in a drug

store in El Reno one day during the registration, and a fellow bumped against him and when he reached for his pocket book it was gone.

Their children included one girl and three boys. His wife died in 1901. His home is now at Yukon.