

1209

INDEX CARDS

Frantz, Frank
openings--Cherokee Strip
Enid
Champlin, N. H.
Railroads--Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe
Railroads--St. Louis and San Francisco
Water--Towns
Railroads--Flackwell, Enid, and Southwestern
Food--Oklahoma Territory
Broom Corn
Bricks--Oklahoma Territory

Field worker: Merrill A. Nelson
 April 8, 1937

1209

62

BIOGRAPHY OF Mr. Edmund Frantz (White)
 108 $\frac{1}{2}$ N. Independence
 Enid, Oklahoma

BORN January 16, 1860 at Roanoke, Ill.

My father and mother were both from Roanoke Co., Virginia. My mother who belonged to a family by the name of Gish came with her parents to Illinois when she was twelve years old. My father's people came when he was twenty-one. They were married in Illinois. I had nine brothers and sisters. One, John died in infancy. All the others except one are still living. Their names in order of their birth are William D., who died just this last September; myself; Edmund H.; John, previously mentioned; Lulu V.; Minnie S.; Frank C. (former Governor of Oklahoma, now in the oil business in Tulsa); Walter P, who is in the brick business with me in Enid; Orville G., also in the oil business in Tulsa; and M.J., in the Insurance business in Enid.

I moved to Wellington, Kansas, June 29, 1883. I came there from Illinois Wesleyan U. at Bloomington, Ill. I lived in Wellington continuously until the opening of the Cherokee Strip. I was cashier in the bank there, in the Wellington National Bank. Then I went into the hardware business, with implements and lumber. All the boys were in the firm and we continued this business when we came to Oklahoma, but the members of the family from that time separated and lived in various places.

I married Miss Murphy in San Diego California, September 1891.

We had two children, Maurine, the eldest who has an ~~ar~~⁶³ studio in the same building where my office is. Also a son, Edmund D. Frantz who was gassed in the World War. He has been affected for about 12 years from the effects of his term of war service. It is said that our family is distantly related to Chief Justice Marshall--most of the male members of the family bearing some resemblance to that character.

Myself and William D. Frantz made the run. We settled at Medford and at Enid, having stores at both places. On Sept. 16, 1893, we chose a place 6 miles W. of Caldwell as starting place to make the run. We were not really in the race in one way as we had a caravan of twenty five wagons loaded with stock with which to start in business. Frank wanted a farm but the rest of us were land poor. Our land on the border going down so low in value due to the proposed opening of Oklahoma that we could not give it away.

The sight of that opening day is a never to be forgotten one. We stood on an elevated section and there we could see in both directions a thick line, which I would estimate at over a hundred thousand all around the strip begin moving forward.

Thousands registered at Orlande and Caldwell. There were 30,000 on the townsite of Enid 6 hours after the run. The streets (if such they might be called as there were crowds of people wandering over them and no road work just prairie) were crowded. Like an invading army we watched the black line until it disappeared across the horizon, thinning or breaking up as it went. Men paid \$1000 for a horse to make that race. There were

a million people in the state almost at once. While ~~older~~ state had taken 50-75 years to reach that figure. It was the same on the south border as on the north. We paid ten cents for a cup of water. To water horses, they charged ten cents a bucket. Men made money digging wells and selling the water. We got a lot for \$155 where the Oklahoma State Bank is now. Later I sold it for \$15,000. I have a lot West of Broadway and Independence about $\frac{1}{2}$ a block. It was worth at one time \$12,500. I got it about the time of the run for \$100.

My father-in-law John Murphy bought a one horse sulky tied a big bag of oats under the seat and started. The ground was rough. He had a race horse, and thereby lost a farm. He could not get horse quiet till someone staked his claim. We saw the horse raring to go, about four or five miles away. He ~~never~~ did get out of that sulky till we came in the wagon. We put him in a wagon and went on to Medford. Old Ben was the name of that horse. He staked a town lot in Medford. Then comin on to Enid, he bought land for \$1000 and formed a partnership with Angus Carroll, Brough King. Later Robinson took his place. This is the Carroll, Brough Robinson wholesale house we have today. Brough had a store at Kingfisher, Carroll at Okla. City and Murphy at Enid by combining they could do wholesale business. Murphy also started a National Bank.

There are not many old timers left. Among them are Charley V. Porter in the real estate business. Porter was formerly in the mercantile hardware business. He bought of us for resale.

H.H. Champlin came right at the first. His original business was banking then he went into lumber finally into oil.

His brother Robert is still in the lumber business. Fred's other brother died. He was cashier in the 1st National Bank.

About 1900, in the early days of the town, the Frantz boys built a hotel. This was the biggest in the state. It had 40 rooms. All six of us boys were in on it.

About the same time we got interested in railroads, something that never brought us in any money. We built a road from here to Guthrie. We secured the charter, sold stock, contracted and built the line. We were undecided whether to run the road to Guthrie or Oklahoma City. Oklahoma City men and others thought it moonshine. Later a road was built from here to Kiowa which with connections reaches Denver. This was financed by the Mississippi Valley and Trust Co. One road The Blackwell road N.L. Peck of Blackwell, Oklahoma, organized, secured the right of way, owned the townsites, had the subsidies. To connect with the road we had to pay the M.V. Trust Co. 500 a mile or \$35,000, besides what we lost. We made on the property we owned. Now we had an in and out road to Enid. It was our ambition therefore to make Enid a railroad town. We organized the Ark Valley Railroad. I went in with Col. H.E. Havens, also J.B. Lindon, County Treasurer and we organized in connection the Ar. Valley townsite Co.

We also organized here in connection the Enid Right of Way and Townsite Co. in connection with the Denver, Enid, and Gulf. The Arkansas Valley townsite Co., was headed by "Grist Mill Jones of Oklahoma City. It went from Blackwell to Enid. Now we wanted a line from Tulsa to Enid. Then on west to Avard. The Frisco has it now. The Union Trust Co. of St. Louis financed and we let the contract to Johnson Bros., of Quincy, Ill.

When we were to build the Guthrie line Mr. J. B. Lincoln, ⁶⁶ County Treasurer and I went to St. Louis. We were green boys from the country, but we went to see Mr. Yoakum, President of the Frisco. He was son-in-law to the widow King, who had \$1,000,000 acres in Texas. "Would you operate a line to Enid if we build it?" we asked. "I will show you something if you want to gaze behind the scenes", he said. He pulled back another map or curtain and there before our eyes was a map with a red line, straight from Tulsa to Enid, showing he had already planned a route that way. Mr. Yoakum called up Mr. West of the St. Louis Union Trust Co. and caught the president before he left. We went over to the Trust Co. He loaned us the money on condition we let the contract to Johnson Bros. of Quincy, Ill. We boys were set on fire. Now we had

connections to Perry and Pawnee as well as in the other directions. The Rock Island was up in the air.

My father-in-law who did considerable shipping over the Rock Island was met by Mr. Lowe, solicitor for the Rock Island and H. Thompson another representative and they tried to persuade him to get me to drop it. "He's already building it", said my father-in-law. This was the line to Oklahoma City with which we connected at Guthrie. I was in truth going ahead and that only on the verbal word of the M.V.&T. Co. Later I got the contract. I had promised them I would build also and did not want to go back on my word. Thompson could get considerable money had we stopped. But we were going too far to stop. We had been without a depot too long. We had to get off in the mud. I tried to make money for the railroads but never consented to become an official of them or of any political post.

As I said N.L. Peckham was promoting a line at Blackwell. This line had already gone from Winfield, Kans., to Blackwell. Where next! Many wanted it to go to Perry. We went to St. Louis, promised \$25,000 cash out right the Mississippi Valley and Trust Co., and the road was brought to Enid. This was done by making a bond issue of \$40,000 and by vote diverting twenty five thousand dollars of it to railroad purposes. We might all have been put in the penitentiary for this but it came out all right.

We gave the water works contract to a friendly man by the name of Mueller. He put down a well, turned over twenty five thousand dollars worth of bonds to us, we turned them over to Peckham of Blackwell. The money was deposited in the First National Bank of Winfield, the night before the election. This was the Blackwell, Enid and Southwestern, which is still operated. The money got into proper hands just as the engine whistled inside the city limits.

"Dick" a gambler, with a big stone in his cravat that looked like a thousand dollars but may have only been paste, threatened to arrest. He said he would put us all in the pen. "Here's a man you can send to the pen for the good of the town I shouted!"

Quickly I had gone around to all the business men and got 50 to 60 signatures that they would stand with me if worst came to worst.

"We the undersigned authorized the city council to spend \$25,000 of the water works bonds to divert to the best line" said the paper they all signed. I was just a country boy and maybe I ought to have stayed there; anyway we got the roads in to Enid.

We had a store where Athey's bank is now and we lived in a shack behind the store. My brother was the Osage agent at

Pawhuska. Later he became territorial governor. We sold hardware and implements. One thing we sold by the barrels was shoe lasts so that people could repair their own shoes. They would get a couple of dollars for a load of wood or cut it into two for a dollar and a half a load. Then they would take it out in hardware.

The natives lived on Kafir Corn out on the claims. They made it into hot cakes and corn cakes. Times were hard. Nevertheless when this state came into the union it was free of debt. You have heard of Dennis Flynn and his securing free homes. Today, the State Chamber of Commerce estimates the indebtedness at \$225,000,000. 4 per cent of the people have the money, and 80 per cent owe the debt.

Thousands of farmers and business men are losing out now but with a good crop and a good price things may be better soon. Another report shows 5,000,800 college and high school men out of jobs. Machinery is doing the work. That is why there are so many strikes and lockouts. The total debts of the United States are \$250,000,000,000. Four percent of the people have the money and eighty percent are owing this debt.

We started a broom factory. This is the way it started.

~~Most of the town was east of the square. I saw some loads~~
of hay-like looking stuff on wagons. "What is this?" I asked. "Broom Corn", said the owner. "What do you get for it?" I asked. Twenty dollars a ton is all they will pay. Gillespie on the east side of the square (there was a little rivalry between the sides), who made an offer, was watching me. "Well drive across the square and I'll give you more for it." Before I set a price, I found out that it was worth eighty dollars a ton. "I'll give you twenty-five dollars a ton for it." "That's a deal!" said the owner.

So I found myself with forty tons of broom corn which I stored in a livery barn. The other members of my family⁶⁹ backed me up in my purchase, father and my partner said, "Buy all you can in Enid and Medford." I held that broom corn two years and doubled. If I had held it one month longer I would have made a one hundred percent profit.

Here is how I started a brick plant. This was in 1894. It is still operating. I think it is about our best business now, because nearly all the money goes for labor. I had no experience in the brick business but as the President of the Chamber of Commerce, I was anxious to bring in new businesses. I sent samples to the various companies and they said that our clay would make bricks. They even sent me sample bricks, and estimate the cost of a brick plant. Now we have a plant turning out 25,000 to ~~3,000~~ 30,000 bricks a day. We buy the gas, electricity and oil here in Enid to run our plant. I have run it continuously for forty years.

One of the first brick buildings was a bank built by Murphy on the north corner of Broadway and Independence Sts. ~~This was the American National Bank. The Post Office was in~~ and all building around this bank. The Post Office was formerly in 1895-96 on the south side of the square but it was moved about five or six times. Finally we got it located on the square. The first Court House was a little to the North of the present structure.

We had named our store Frantz Mammoth Hardware Store. It was just a sheet iron building where the Athey Bank is now. The Garfield County bank was a lot or two west of the N. E.

ized from some other bank. The present Central National Bank is the Bank of Enid reorganized. The Bank of Enid used to occupy the same site.

Kress brought the first real racket store in Enid, in 1910, coming later Woolworth paid \$1200.00 per year for twenty years for their present site. L. A. Faubain had a grocery store on the northeast corner of the square where Montgomery Ward is now. He was elected Mayor and devoted his time to politics so that his business went broke.

On the Southwest corner of the square on Main is Gensem Brothers. They were George, Billy and Fred. They are all dead now. There were many saloons here then. I have shown the location of some of these buildings on a map. We had nineteen saloons here at one time.

The first man to be buried in Enid was a Chinaman. He was killed by an officer. It is not certain whether or not he was guilty of anything ~~crimes~~ as he could not talk English well enough to be thoroughly understood. There were two cemeteries then, one three-fourths of a mile from town, Southwest and the other one mile southeast of town.. All the bodies were later removed to the cemetery north of town.

We belong to the Presbyterian Church. We were among the earliest members, bringing our letters from Wellington, Kans. I have two nephews, Frank Rarey, and Walty Frantz in the government service in Washington.

Walter and Orville, my brothers are both baseball players and both have made remarkable records in the game.

THE END