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

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Field Worker's name Hazel H. HaralsonThis report made on (date) May 26 19371. Name Gee, Frank T.2. Post Office Address Norman, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) 204 W. Johnson4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month Nov. Day 9 Year 18765. Place of birth Wichita, (12 miles S. of Arkansas River) Kansas6. Name of Father Edwin Gee Place of birth Hudson Mo. Andrew Co.Other information about father English and Scotch and German7. Name of Mother Rachel A. Trailkill Place of birth Missouri, Andrew CountyOther information about mother Married 1865 or 1866

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 _____.

Experiences of Mr. Frank T. Gee
204 E. Johnson, Norman, Oklahoma.

My father came from Ashland, Kansas, to make the run in the Cheyenne and Arapahoe opening on April 19, 1892. He studied out the situation and made up his mind as to the most sensible thing to do, and the best place to get in line to make this run.

Soldiers were stationed about a mile apart with guns and flags, and of course the ones nearest the ends of line close to soldiers would hear the gun as well as see the flag go up and would get an earlier start. Each person in line would naturally be a little behind the one nearer the end making the line of participants resemble a huge wave.

starting line



Participants ran in line resembling this red one in start of run.

As a large part of them could not hear the report of the guns, they had to depend on the flag as a signal. My father was fourth in line from the end. He was on horseback and his was considered the first claim staked in the run. He stopped his horse within 20 paces of the starting line and 15 feet or so of the side line. His claim is five and one half miles north of Kingfisher.

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He built a small sod house, possibly 12'x20' in size on this land and came back for the family.

We took all we had with us driving our stock along in Asiatic style. We would make about twenty two miles a day. We spent the first night or two in Kansas, but we were two or three nights in the Cherokee strip. The second night we camped a little earlier than usual and grazed our stock. We had three wagons and teams besides what we were driving along. There were nine children and my parents.

After we had made camp and had our supper around the camp fire we noticed another bunch of travelers coming down the canyon toward us and they camped about one hundred yards from us. There were some trees and underbrush in between our camp and theirs and when everything was quiet and ready for the night my father thought he'd drop over to their camp for a short neighborly call. He chanced to hear them plotting a raid on us before he was in their sight so dropped down and listened until the plans were completed. Then he came back to our camp and told us older boys and mother of their plans. At four A.M. they were going to kill all except my sister Sybil and they were planning to keep her. We

all laid down and slept until near midnight, when my father quietly assigned each of us duties to do. He said "now quiet, we are going". This bunch were all men and from all my father could gather from their looks and conversations belonged to the old Chitwood gang. Numerous instances of people, usually a man by himself or a man and his wife, having disappeared were quite commonly heard. But never had an entire outfit the size of ours been reported missing.

We had plenty of guns and ammunition along, if it had been necessary to use it. This was our only scare however.

We reached our new home without further trouble and immediately began to break sod to put in our crop.

We boys slept in one of the covered wagons which was placed close up against the sod house. We slept with two heads one way and two the other.

While some of us were breaking the sod others of us were digging a cave. We made it about 16'x20' with windows at the top of the wall all around and a door in one end. We used this to sleep in, and the sod house for cooking and eating purposes.

After the cave was finished I decided I'd make us a larger and better sod house.

I started one 24'x28' and worked until I had it pretty well under way, then the rest seeing I really meant business pitched in and helped me. Father put a boxed roof on of boards which were tongued and grooved. Then he put bats over this seam where the boards were put together. It took a very hard blowing rain to make it leak and then it was just a drip here and there. We used sod strips 18'x2' and after it was laid we took corn knives to hew the sides of the walls (inside and out) nice and smooth. We raised the floor about 6" or 8" and mother sewed gunny sacks together and carpeted the floor. Then we put in a heavy layer of straw and my mother had lots of rag carpets so she put down a carpet on top of the straw and we had quite a nice parlor, dining room, and kitchen in our new house. We then used the original sod house for our chicken house. We had feed for the chicken.

We lived pretty hard the first year or two usually having oatmeal and milk as the main stays in food line. We were supplied with ~~manna~~ by the kind Heavenly Father in the form of snow birds. It seems that these birds were just sent to sustain or help sustain the homesteaders; they came in flocks of two or three hundred and we took a three foot wire with a ring on one end and would flip

it in circular motion knocking down or killing from three to twelve birds. Flock would immediately light again and we'd keep this up until we had enough for a bird pot pie.

About three months a year we would use rabbits and about once a week have a good fish fry. There were a few antelope when we came but they didn't last long. Hogs were scarce, on foot they sold for average of one and a half to two cents a pound and smoked were for five cents a pound, oatmeal in bulk ranged from \$1.50 to \$2.50 per 100 lbs. Flour was from 75¢ to \$1 per 100 lbs. If you could engage butter the year around, sometimes the best hotels would pay 10¢ per pound the year around. Some farmers always raised a few sweet potatoes, but before they'd get them gathered, the market would begin to drop and in ten days after digging, they'd be about 15¢ per bushel while 60¢ to 75¢ was the price to start with usually.

This caused people to have a scarcity of clothes. Fully half of the people went barefooted and it was very common to see people with their feet wrapped in gunny sacks, sometimes to supplement the worn out shoes, and other times as the only protection they had. People raised what they ate and if possible some member of the family went to other states to get a job to make enough to get some things such as

clothes, etc. Jobs and wages were unknown here at that time. After we had been here two or three years things were not quite so hard. We had more to eat and there was better market for things that farmers had to sell.

Some of the people lived on regular hog corn (nubbins) parched, then grated and cooked into a porridge.

There were no bridges and nearly all wood for fuel came from across the Cimarron River. Often the teams as well as loads were lost in quicksand.

Amusements in those days were dances, literary societies, Sunday school and Church and occasionally a party. Dances were the most widely attended. At first they danced barefooted on dirt floors and later they had square dances in someones house. A Mr. Gauntt who had a seven room, two story house, eight miles northwest of Kingfisher gave weekly dances at his home and charged ten to twenty five cents for men, this fee paid the fiddler and bought a sack of flour. The flour being the main motive in giving the dance in lots of instances. People came from ten to fifteen miles to attend these dances. There was a dance hall built at what was then Keal (now known at Loyal, Okla.) and several times some of the tough characters would take over the dance, at least until they'd danced as much as they wanted to and then they would leave.

On one occasion Charles Waters and Zip Watt took over a dance and after putting guards at doors, Waters made Della Chance (his sweetheart before he joined the gangsters) dance with him until the dance was over and then took her home.

There were only three or four houses large enough to have a good square dance in, at the time the dance hall was built. A large percentage of the citizenry there were of a poor class. They would sell out and in lots of instances rent the land they had sold.

Several railroads wanted to go through Kingfisher (after the Rock Island was already there) but the Chamber of Commerce, whose president's name was Logan, opposed granting a right of way to them. These men were enjoying a very prosperous growth as it were, with their mills and elevators. The Railroad seeking a right of way offered \$75,000 for it, but Logan made the statement that they (Kingfisher) had rather give \$75,000 for the railroad to stay out than that amount for it to go through. This proved a blow to Kingfisher later on.

The Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians had tepees pitched along the creeks west of Kingfisher and north for a distance of fifteen miles or more. I attended some of their gatherings, one of which was an heirship hearing.

At this meeting some of the officials from Washington presided, and they used an interpreter. The Indians were sharply criticised for naming their children such names as Running Dog, Crazy Wolf, etc. I was well acquainted with Short Tooth and often had business dealings with him.

These Indians seldom spoke in English (although many of them were well educated) unless they would get very angry with a white person or unless they knew him well enough to know that he knew whether or not they could speak English.

When they had a death they would go to town, and get a goods box. They would come back home and unjoint the body of the dead one, fold him up, and put him in the box, and bury him.

Kingfisher was quite a political center until the Capital was moved to Oklahoma City so it got its share of the political pie. There was a ~~fifty thousand~~ democratic majority in the county and Republican Grimes and others seeking to make a strong Republican county of it, appropriated one hundred twenty acres, four and a half miles west of Kingfisher, and ~~established a town called Cimarron City. They went to Memphis,~~ Tennessee, and brought two box cars, loaded to full capacity, of negroes to Cimarron City and maintained them. Their plan failed in time, however, and as time passed the huts, dugouts, etc., and even Cimarron City, became extinct. The land was then homesteaded. These negroes were very "high tone"

and they had negro dances regularly. At one of these, a negro wench walked up to a young white man (who had driven some of Kingfisher's high toned colored folks out to dance and who had stepped in to warm a minute or two) and said, "please mister, step outside, you smell too much of the hoss", (he was employed by livery stable owner).

In 1896 J.Y. Calahan who was a Methodist Preacher, and a Democrat and who lived two miles from us on his homestead ran against Dennis T. Flynn, Republican. He had asked my father to support him and Father promised his support, before election, however, Calahan got up at school election and made a motion for the colored in the district to attend school along with the white children. Father, though a board member, was absent, but heard of it; he just did this to carry the Republicans vote there. He made a speech at Arapahoe and other places making his campaign speeches fit the sentiment of his audiences. My father was so angry about the way he did that he turned against him and for ten days prior to election he spoke against him in several different counties. This cut his vote in one county to three votes, one to eleven votes, one to sixteen votes and the others from one half to one third. Flynn had a pretty good record but he was a heavy drinker at times and lots of people held this against him. He served his third term as delegate to congress though after Calahan had one term

1896-98. I was well acquainted with Governor Seay, and worked for him at various times. I was the last Oklahoman (other than relative) to visit him in California before his death.

The Dalton family had a homestead near ours and we had business dealings with them at times.

There were the girls -Hannah and Irene: Boys, Ben, Simon, Lett, Bill, Emmitt and Cole and their mother.

We rented land from the mother at one time and later bought or traded some with them. Ben Dalton, a big two hundred and thirty pounder came over to "settle" with us because he said we were cheating his old mother. After several minutes of straight talk on both sides the contracts were read and Ben said "Well, that's different," as they usually did when pinned down to the facts in black and white. They were bad characters alright but they were the Daltons and had plenty of bluff which they worked on most people with whom they dealt. ^{They}SOON found that bluff didn't scare us as we'd shoot just as quickly as they when we were in the right, so after several pretty hot verbal skirmishes they became very good friends of ours. We exchanged visits in neighborly fashion. Bill Dalton borrowed money at the bank and started to Coffeyville to get the bodies of his brothers who were killed and injured there.

He met the gang coming home and stopped and was drinking coffee with them when the posse overtook them. I think he went bad there because he knew he'd be killed if he didn't stay with the gang. Prior to that time he was not a member of their gang on their raids. Cole was a good machinist, and they were all industrious. They were better fixed than most of their neighbors.