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Zaldee B. Bland
Field Worker
May 12, 1937

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Interview with Joseph W. Gee
1 mile east, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south, Martha, Oklahoma.

Born 1874. Missouri.

Father-Isaah Gee
Mother- Elvarie Gee

The Experience of a Pioneer of Oklahoma.

I came with my father and mother on a train to Vernon, Texas in 1888. Father squatted on a section of land, plowed around it, built a half dugout and mother went to home making. This section of land is still owned by us children and I am living on my inherited part at this time.

My mother was born in England. This country as well as the people were strange to her. The country was filled with wild cattle which were our greatest danger for there were no fences. It was dangerous to go out across the farm afoot for there were no trees big enough to climb if these cattle got after you. So we always rode a horse and were really afraid to camp at night for fear of the wild cattle.

We had to haul all our wood from over in the Nation across Red river and Otter creek to the east of us. We always had to make camp somewhere on the trips for it took two days.

Our home in the dugout had dirt walls and floors,

was planked up about two feet above the ground and had little half windows for light. We went to school in a dugout.

There were Indian fights in the mountains east of us but I never engaged in one.

My mother did not know anything about cotton and did not like it. The first cotton she ever saw growing she thought was Irish potatoes.

We hauled our cotton to Vernon to be ginned and took five cents per pound for it and never thought a thing about it. We could also get a pair of shoes for fifty cents, so why worry. If we didn't raise enough corn to fatten our hogs there was always wild turkey, quail, fish; we didn't need to go hungry unless for bread.

The drouths were bad as they are now and we were often discouraged. We boys would get out and hire as a cowboy, sometimes going back to Texas.

I was in Texas one year and Dad wrote me not to come home as he was selling out and going to Arkansas. Before I got the letter there came a good rain and all was well again.

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We drove four head of oxen to Vernon for supplies and then sometimes we would get stuck and have to tote everything out on our backs before we could get our wagon out. Father got mules as soon as he could. We always used the mules to go for our wood because we could make the trip faster.

We had a man that stayed with us sometimes for months at a time. He said he had a girl over close to the Navajo mountains whose dugout was not far from where we crossed the river into the Nation.

He, two other men, and I started to the Nation for a load of wood. We got to the river a little before sundown. There had been a rise I could plainly see. I said, "River is up, we had better not try to cross." There had been no rain. They laughed at me and said, "Them mules can pull anything, swim if necessary." I wouldn't go in with them but the other boys drove in. Now you can trust a horse or an ox to have sense enough to get you out of a river any old time unless he bogs down with the load and cannot. When bogged down, if you will loosen them from their load they will usually get out safely themselves, but a durn mule ain't got no water

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sense and you have to guide them out or they will lay down and drown. Well, they drove into the water with an empty wagon and the first thing they knew they were up against a sand bar and down went both mules on their knees. There they floundered around until dark. I had to wade out to them, get the mules loose and hitch them to the back of the wagon and lead them out to the bank we had started from. It was dark, we were all cold and wet, so we made a fire to dry our clothes and decided to camp right there till morning.

Jim said, "Well, my girl lives somewhere around here and I am going to find the dugout, have a nice supper dry out and have a nice evening, "Ok", the rest of us said as we prepared our own supper and tried to get warm and dry.

Jim wandered around four or five hours before he gave up and came to our fire about midnight. When daylight came we were less than two hundred yards from his girl's home.