

INDEX CARDS:

Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation
Bugouts
Schools
Ghost Town - Texmore

Field Worker: Zaidee B. Bland
May 18, 1937.

Interview with Noah B. Gage
305 W. Cypress,
Altus, Oklahoma.

Born April 12, 1867,
Hill County, Texas.

Parents Dr. J. D. M. Gage, father,
Mississippi- Had a tan yard
before Civil War.
Nancy Bradley, mother.

I had a sister who had lived in Custer County for several years. I had made several trips to see her and liked the short grass country very much and was in love with the idea of owning my own home.

I started from Hill County in a covered wagon, driving four horses to the wagon and leading a saddle horse. We took our time, stopping along the way camping and visiting. We were 11 days making the journey from Hill County, Texas, to my sister's. We came by way of Quanah, Eldorado, Mangum and Elk City. My wife would not cross in a wagon any of the streams we had to ford but always rode her

pony across. We never had a really dangerous crossing until we came to Elk creek. That was up and the wagon came so near capsizing that the furniture was very much broken up, and I remember we had one of those old-time tall safes that was smashed to pieces.

Our Home

A big hole dug out on a hillside, boarded up about two feet above the ground and covered with sheet iron. I made two rooms of it and boxed the inside with boxing plank. When I had it all finished I lacked one plank of having enough to make the sides and ceiling solid. My wife told me I had better make a special trip back to town for that plank or some ^{some} day/"varmint" would come tumbling down through the hole and we would be sorry.

I had other things I wanted to do, so thought "never mind." It was not very long after we moved in before we smelled a skunk. My wife called my attention to the odor when I came in and said, "Noah, I am afraid that skunk is behind the wall there and if he is, he will be sure to find that crack where the plank ought to be."

That night my wife put one of the children at the foot of her bed to sleep. I was across the way in another bed with another one of the children. In the night I heard the little girl scream and jumped across to where she was and grabbed at the thing that was snapping at her. She was bitten through one cheek and four or five times on her hands and I was bitten several times before I could get a good hold and choke whatever animal it was to death. When we got a light, sure enough it was Mr. Skunk. We had heard so many stories about them being poison that of course we were frightened. There was a doctor in a dugout not far away and I ran to him as fast as I could. He said there was not a bit of danger unless the cat was mad. I didn't think there was anything wrong with the cat except that he had gotten into the wrong place. We bathed the wounds in carbolic acid water and they never inflamed or left any kind of a scar. Superstitious people try to make us believe that we will both die of hydrophobia some day because of that bite; it has been more than 30 years ago and I am not afraid now.

One night there came up a storm of rain and all at once the whole west roof of our dugout blew away but the wind also carried all the water with it. There was not another drop fell that night and although we could see the sky and stars all the rest of the night, there was not another drop of rain fell. There was a tub hung on a nail not four inches from the roof that was not moved.

The section I filed on was Sec. 24, Twp. 18, R 21. We lived in two states, one territory, and two counties and never moved out of our dugout.

SCHOOL

We hauled the lumber 50 miles to build the first school house. I was on the school board five years. We had a three-months free school every year and always paid a teacher \$100 for teaching it the three months.

There was a creek not far from the school. One day Otto Pestes did not come in when the teacher rang the bell for books. No one knew where he was, so some of the boys were sent to find him. They found that he had tumbled off into the water with his clothes on and

refused to come out until the teacher would promise not to whip him and let him stay at school until his clothes dried so he would not get a whipping when he got home.

Food

There was not much wild things that we ever ate. Wild plums and a few grapes. Gray quail, fish in the streams. We raised plenty of hogs and chickens. Not much garden except along the river. Too dry. We raised good corn but had to go to Elk City or Weatherford to sell it. Our moneyed crop was broom corn.

My wife and Mrs. Dycus, a neighbor, were out gathering wild plums one day when they noticed they were ascending a steep hill. The three little girls they had with them were on a head. My wife called to our little girl to be careful just as she saw her disappear. On running to the spot my wife found that the child had tumbled down a 10 foot embankment. The women had to go away around to get to her, thinking she was possibly crushed. There was a bed of sand that the child had fallen into and she was not hurt. If she had fallen two feet either way she would have fallen on a bed of rocks.

We were not very far from what was called Red Moon Agency No. 2. These Indians amused us in their eating, but some of them were real industfious. I remember once when I had taken a load of corn to Elk City to sell, an old buck drove a wagon just ahead of me on the scales to be weighed. He sure had a wagon full of fine corn. The buyer came out and said to the Indian, "John, you old lazy rascal, where did you get such nice corn, steal it?" The Indian did not like it very well and replied, "Me no more lazy rascal than you, me plant it and great Spirit make it grow."

I have been to see the Indians dance a lot of times but never understood anything about them.

Once when I had been gone several days with a bale of cotton (I had to go fifty miles to get it ginned) my wife heard a galloping horse approaching the home from the north and ran out to see who it was, always afraid of bad news when I would be gone too long. There had been a fight several miles above us and the man who had done the shooting was trying to escape across the border for he was sure he had killed his man, and he had.

Because my wife saw the fleeing man, she was summoned to appear as a witness. The town was Texmore. It is not in existence now. At first I did not want to take my wife, so we were a little late getting started. When we got to the Cimarron River it was frozen over. I was driving a couple of young mules to the buggy and they wouldn't break that ice at all. Just laid down. I had to carry my wife out in my arms, wade in and lead the mules out one at a time. Then I tied a rope on to the tongue of the buggy, went back to bank, hitched rope to mules, then went back into the water and took tongue of buggy to guide it out while my wife drove the mules forward on the land to pull the buggy out. When we finally got out and started again we drove all night. When morning came we were farther from Texmore than when we left home; so they did without my wife as a witness.

Weather

I think that they had more thunder and lightning, rain and hail than they do now. I have seen lightning set the prairie afire in fourteen different places, and if it did not rain enough to put it out (which it

often did) there would surely be a big fire. We had hail so big that it would make holes in the plowed ground that I could put my head in.

There were electrical storms that did not set fire to anything and after we got used to them and were ^{not} afraid, we could enjoy their beauty.

I had been over about six miles from home, cutting some logs, once ^{and} as I was not very far from sister's I trotted by to have supper with her.

I started home a little after night. I saw the storm was coming up pretty fast and the wind was high, so I turned my horse down into a little draw to let the wind blow itself out a little. It looked to me like the whole earth was afire. Every blade of grass was giving off sparks. I wore a long mustache in those days, and sparks were flying from the points of my mustache. My horses ears were giving off sparks, so I decided to hurry on home. I was going north into the wind. Every once in a while I would have to stop my horse and turn him

around to let him get his breath. He would squeal and shake his head and the sparks would just fly. When I got home my wife was trying to put out a fire in some lumber that I had stacked in the yard. There was no fire there and she could not understand it. We watched every point give off sparks for several hours before the rain came. Sparks flew from the corners of the barn, from fence posts, from the horns of the cattle, and the trees and grass sparkled.