

INDEX CARDS:

Opening- Cherokee Strip  
Pioneer Merchant  
Enid

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

Worker's name Merrill A. Nelson

Report made on (date) April 26, 1937

Name Merimis Godschalk.

Home Office Address 109 N. Grand, Enid, Oklahoma

Residence address (or location) 11<sup>th</sup> Cherokee, Enid, Oklahoma.

DATE OF BIRTH: Month December 29 Day 29 Year 1867

Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Father Jacob Godschalk Place of birth Holland

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Mother Sara Berbergen Place of birth Holland

Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_

For complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Write on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached \_\_\_\_\_.

FIELD WORKER MERRILL A. NELSON  
Indian-Pioneer History S-149  
April 26, 1937.

INTERVIEW WITH MERRILL A. GODSCHALK.  
109 North Grand, Enid, Oklahoma.  
Born Dec. 29, 1867.

MR. GODSCHALK'S STORY

I made the run from Hennessey, Oklahoma. I came in on a cattle train, and there were about forty cars on that train. This was the first and principal train to make the run from the south. A friend, Mr. Leibergen, and myself tried to go together but we were separated so he was in one car and I in another. Men were packed like sardines in the car, in fact I was in the center of the car and when we came to Enid, although we were traveling but twenty five miles an hour, I could not get off even if I had wanted to. Men were on top the cars and hanging on the sides. The train speeded up when we came to Enid so all would stay on and go to North Enid. I really wanted to stop at Enid but was carried along, by the current you might say, to North Enid. Quite a few did jump off, however; among these was Luther Leibergen, my friend, who broke his

leg in the jump.

I picked a lot or two on the east side of North Enid. It turned out to be Indian land, and when I found this out which was shortly after, I started to Enid. There was no fine Highway 81 then, so I walked down the track, and I finally came to town. The land office was in the center and to the south of the post office. I found my partner, and when I saw his condition, I shipped him to Whitewater, Kansas. They put his leg in a cast, but three months later he joined me.

A week before I had landed in Hennessey to make the run, and <sup>it</sup> came about this way. I was a clerk in Cawker City, Kansas. I had clerked for seven years, and was twenty five years old. The man I worked for had a brother who advised me to go to Enid. I knew very little about Enid or Oklahoma, being a rather green young man, but I decided to invest my small earnings there.

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There was not even a tent up when I reached here Sept. 16, the day of the run in the afternoon about two o'clock. I was too late to get a business lot by staking, but might possibly have secured a residence lot. I quickly bought a lot on the west side of the square, and this cost me five hundred dollars. With part of the rest of the two thousand dollars I had, I started building a store and stocking it.

We were on the west side the fourth lot from the corner (Mr. Godschalk's frame building is described elsewhere.) We sold about the same clothes we do now, but most of the men instead of wearing the cowboy hats and long beards they pretend they used to wear, wore just ordinary clothes. There were a few cowboys, but not many, and five gallon hats were rare.

When my partner came back, we started the firm of Leiberger and Godschalk. In fact I had established the business before he returned. At first business was poor. Dollars were as big as cart wheels, and I used

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to exchange them with men for wood; sometimes out of pity and sometimes because I needed the wood. The wood was cut forty miles a way and it took two days to haul it in, and two days to bring it to Enid and sometimes two days to sell. A man would receive a dollar, a sack of flour or some credit on clothes for that.

In locating my store, I followed nature. I got the idea that most of the business would be on the west side of the street, as it would be shady in the afternoon, and I did not take into consideration the fact that the land office door faced the east and a crowd congregated there. From that day to this business has been better on the east side.

Some of the other business in Enid at that time were: The Watrous-Harley Drug Store, where the Central National Bank is now. There was a livery barn on the north side run by a man by the name of J. Anderson, and also one on the east side, where the ladies' stores are now. There were nitching racks all around the square on

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the south side, but the land one half or one fourth block west and north of the square was homesteaded. Ed Weatherly homesteaded the land west. He was fond of fine horses, one of which was Avignon, and he was very fast. He took the horse out of the state for racing purposes and made a lot of money on him.

~~1893, 1894, 1895, 1896 were poor years. I thought of quitting several times. Then I got so poor I could not quit.~~

On the fourth of March 1897, McKinley was elected, and that same day it began to rain. It looked as Pluvius was going to bring prosperity with a Republican Administration, and so it turned out. The people wanted a better grade of suits than we were selling in the lean years so we had to hurriedly change our stock.

People were not any more honest then even if we do not have the 'character' loans they used to.

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A man bought an order for twelve dollars and fifty cents worth of goods. He gave me a check, and I rushed to the bank with it but the bank had just closed. A game that has often been played since. A man in the hardware business moved away without paying. I heard recently that he was located in Ferry, Missouri, and I offered to settle for half the note but I never heard from him.

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I used to take second hand clothes for new clothes. Hats, shoes, and suits were left in a big pile from these transactions. "What will you sell the pile for?" someone asked. "Five dollars," was my reply. "I'll take it," he stated. I sold him the whole lot and a few days afterwards a man who was a good customer came to me. "I want my raincoat back," He was used to wearing the old coat, so I had to hunt up the man to whom I had sold the clothes. "I must have that raincoat back," I declared. "It will cost you five dollars," he declared, so I had



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to pay him, as I could not afford to lose a customer.

I knew Mr. Champlin in those days. He was in the banking business, and thought of him with some awe. He never made his great success till he got in the oil business, however, and he is one of our most solid men today.

I soon ran out of money and it was not long until I decided to move to the east side of the square. Here my business has grown until it is five times what it used to be at first. My greatest competitor in those early days were the Kennedys. There were three brothers in the business, William, Thomas, and Richard. Richard was the principal one of the three I think. They had a good conservative business and it was large in volume. One of the earliest racket stores was that of B. T. Thompson, who later got in the oil business.

Our earliest Mayor was John C. Moore, that is, he was the first one to be elected. Another business

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man still living is J. D. . . . . He was in the insurance business then, and is in the insurance business still.

Our town went slowly for a long time, but in 1908 and 1909 we had a little boom. The Frisco built yards and repair shops here, and parks, and streets were improved. One of the early newspapers of that day was the 'Daily Enterprise'. I understand Mr. Hopley on East Main still has copies of this.

When I staked off my lots in North Enid, I did know exactly where the survey marks were. I guessed at that, or you might say staked the lots off myself.

When we reached Enid, water was five cents a cup, but by night a well had been dug. The water that first night was muddy, however we secured better water after that.

I got my lot the thirtieth of September 1893. Lots on the east side were worth about a thousand dollars then but in 1907 I bought a half interest in my present store for six thousand, five hundred dollars.

Here I have a reproduction of my original store.

It was twenty by sixty feet with the back twenty feet cut off for living quarters, making it twenty by forty feet. It had two double windows in front, but none along the sides, and a little light and air came from windows in the rear. It had a peaked roof which started nine feet from the floor. The boards along the sides went straight up and down, and the words, "Clothing Store" were written across the straight topped front. There was hardly room for my name.

In the Enid Daily Enterprise of December 15, 1895, occurred the following ad regarding my store, and business:

#### KICKERS

Kickers are numerous. The army mule, the overloaded shotgun, -the ballet girl, -all are great kickers. But they are not in it with an able-bodied man when once he gets wound up. He gets a pass to a show and he kicks. When he goes to a first class hotel he sits down to a first class meal, but always make up your mind

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that his liver is out of order because a good liver never kicks on a good meal. Clothes kickers

~~are~~

## E S P E C I A L L Y

unreasonable, They go to a swell tailor and stand on a dunce block for twenty minutes to get measured. They wait a week over time for a suit, and if it doesn't suit, they make the tailor fit it over. Let the same man walk into a clothing store, and he kicks before he is hardly in. He bought a ready made suit once ten years ago and paid nine dollars for it, and wore it six months. He knows nobody can fit him, knows this, that and the other. But he does say a suit a friend bought here is good and if he can get a fit like that- You are especially

## I N V I T E D

fellow kickers to come in and kick. You are urged to come in and find fault with things. We've got some suits we think are perfect, and we'd like you to see

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them. You know that here you can try on a suit and see if it fits. At a tailor's you can't do that, and maybe it doesn't fit, but you take it all the same. Meibergen and Godschalk, the Leading clothiers.

I called my firm the leading clothiers but in fact Kennedy's did the larger business.

I have been in business for forty-four years in Enid and think I am the only one of the men in retail business who was here from the first.