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Interviewer
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Interview with
David O. Gillis
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I was born in Randolph County, Illinois, on November 2, 1872. My father's name was Atwine Gillis and he was born at Kaskaski, Illinois. I don't know the date of the birth of either my father or my mother. My mother, whose name was Martha, was a native of Canada. She died when I was five years old. We, like a lot of others at that time, came into the Territory in a covered wagon. We came through Missouri, of course, and stopped first in Mayes County, in the southern part of the county and about twenty-five miles north of Muskogee. The time was about 1883, as I was eleven years old when we came here. All the schooling I got was in Illinois before I came here. I reached about what is the eighth grade now by "crammin'" and it is very well I did study hard, for I never had a chance later to attend school. We stayed in Mayes county about six months. Our home, there, and later, was a

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tent, which we brought along with us. I, like most boys of the age of eleven, helped out in every way possible. One of my jobs was to go after the mail. We don't think much of that job now, as a step to the front porch does it, but my trip was quite a bit further, it would take all day to make the trip, as I had to go to Muskogee. This was twenty-five miles from where we lived, but being a pretty good town, and on the railroad it had a post office, so I would take any letters and mail them and get our mail, if any, and anything else from the stores, if it was wanted. I was errand boy, but my distance was twenty-five miles. It would take me all day usually, to make the trip, but when on horseback I could "clip" right along, as my father had a couple of good horses. It was blooded stock that he brought with him to the Territory. I claimed one of these horses. They were good saddle stock, much better than mustangs. We stayed in Mayes County about six months, then we came to where Tulsa now is, but it wasn't here then. I might say that I am the only person now living in Tulsa, who located here before it became a town.

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When we got to Tulsa, there were no houses at all, just a few tents, and a lot of prairie. The stakes had been driven in the survey of the Frisco Railroad, but it had not been graded into Tulsa. My father took a contract to do some of the grading, and the part he graded is now in the city of Tulsa. After we came to Tulsa, they decided they needed a post office established in the town. This was probably the year after we reached Tulsa. Anyway, some one got in communication with Washington and they agreed to look into the matter, and would send a man down to see about it. They told us when he would reach Muskogee which was the nearest point then on the railroad. When we got notice that he had come we were to meet him. This job fell to me, so I hitched up the horses to our wagon, and lit out for Muskogee, to get the gentleman from Washington. I felt a little queer and kept trying to decide just how I would approach him and what I would say. I decided the best thing to do would be to see the postmaster at Muskogee. I knew him well, and I asked him what to do and say. "Well," he said, "your man is here in town, I've al-

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ready seen him, and he is waiting for you". So he said he would write out a letter of introduction for me, and I could go down to the hotel where my man was stopping, and present the letter, and everything would be fixed. Down I went, in my wagon, a boy of twelve years of age, and a little bit excited. I drove up, got out of my wagon and walked up on the porch of the hotel, when a man stepped up and said, "Sonny, are you looking for me, I guess I am your man, let's go". I didn't even get to show my letter of introduction. He was a very nice and pleasant man, and we enjoyed our trip back to Tulsa. When he got to Tulsa the next day he officially established a postoffice, which I suppose was the first. On this trip to Muskogee I drove a team of mules. After he finished his business in Tulsa, he was to lay out a route from Tulsa, north to Kansas, and wanted me to drive him there. So I hitched up my mules to the wagon, put in his grips and we started north, laying out the route to be followed by the star mail route. We or he established an office at Skiatook, Bartlesville, and may-

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be another place or two. I got to Kansas; at Caney, where I was paid off and dismissed, he going back to Washington, and I to Tulsa. I don't remember the name of this inspector, but do remember that he was crippled so he slightly limped. I could make pretty fair time with my mule team trotting along most of the way, as we didn't have any load. There were no roads, just tracks or a trail across the prairie; and fords at streams, when we reached them. I traveled quite a bit even at that early age, and never was molested by anyone.

I drove a team when quite young. As I said, my father brought some blooded horses with him into the Territory. He gave one of these to me, and of course I prized it very highly. One night it was stolen, and, of course, I was very much distressed about it and talked of it to everybody who would listen. I was helpless, and no officers being present, I thought my horse was gone for good. One day, Bob Dalton and Emmit Dalton heard me talking of it, and approached me and asked me all about it. I told them all and described the horse, so they said, "don't worry, sonny, we will get your

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horse for you". They were away a day or two, when they returned, bringing the horse with them. An Indian, living in the woods northwest of Tulsa, now, Irving Addition, had stolen my horse, and that is where it was found. Indians, then, seemed to think it not wrong to take things, even a horse. This man, now dead, has relatives living in Tulsa at this time.

Speaking of the Daltons for a while: They were respected citizens, and all at one time were Deputy United State Marshalls, and crack shots. They got to doing things, as officers, contrary to the rules and regulations, and their commissions were taken from them. After that they turned outlaws with records known to all.

I remember an amusing incident in connection with Bob Dalton. It happened in Tulsa, on Main Street, in 1883. (We were here in 1881 when the railroad was built to Tulsa, and some time before). I was standing out in front of a store, when Bob Dalton walked up. He was talking to some men when he spied a negro boy walking down the other side of the street, eating an apple.

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Thinking it would be funny to scare the negro, Dalton called to the negro to halt, which he did and quickly. Dalton said, "put that apple on your head, and I will show you some fancy shooting". The negro hesitated, of course, and told Dalton he was afraid he would miss the apple and hit him. Dalton told him if he didn't do as he was told, he would shoot him anyway, so the negro, trembling with fear, placed the apple on his head, and I imagine, with a prayer on his lips awaited his execution. Dalton raised his pistol and fired away, knocking the apple off and not killing the negro. A "William Tell" trick, although they had never heard of that incident. So much for that. *As* I said before, there were no houses in Tulsa when we came here, just tents and we lived in one. In fact, we lived in a tent for a year before we got a house. This country was prairie, with some wooded hills about. There were a few Indian huts scattered about, but they were not very numerous.

When I was eighteen years old, I went to work on the *H*Holsel ranch. At that time here all was open range and Holsel had cattle grazing from the Verdigris

Holsel

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River to the Arkansas, and I have seen as high as 20,000 head on this ranch. These were all Texas long horn cattle, and I was a cowhand. There was always something to do, and especially at round-up time.

Along in the Spring, or early summer we would have our first roundup. This was to separate the calves from the cows. These calves would be cut out, put into pens, and shipped to market. The cows would again be turned loose to graze until fall. When the general roundup would take place. ~~Half~~ I would have about forty hands in the round-up. The other ranches; in fact, any and everybody who had cattle, took part in this, and all furnished hands to look out for their brands. All cattle were rounded up and separated, according to brands. Then we would cut out all fat enough for market and drive them to the pens, which were located where north Lewis Street now crosses the Frisco Railroad. I remember one day we had a very stubborn steer that refused to be driven into the pen. Several had tried to bring him in and had failed, when someone suggested I try it. I was a good rider, but had never thought myself an

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expert. However they insisted that I try my hand. This steer had a pair of the longest horns I have ever seen, twenty-four to thirty inches long and probably six feet from tip to tip. I got on my pony and lit out after this steer, rode up beside him, got hold of one of his horns and got it across the horses neck, in front of my saddle horn. My horse leaned toward the steer, and in this way I piloted him up to and into the pen. Mr. Halsell and others bought their cattle in from Texas. They would be shipped from Denison, Texas, over the M. K. & T. to Muskogee, and driven across the county to the ranch here. There were no fences then, so all we had to do was to drive right along. I well remember one time when we were bringing 10,000 head from Muskogee. When we had reached a point between Broken Arrow and Tulsa, the cattle being dry and restless, smelled the water of **Hingo** Creek, ahead, and stampeded. One of our riders got caught in the stampede, and when we got to the poor fellow, there was hardly enough of him to bury. The riders finally circled the cattle shooting their pistols until they were finally quieted and rounded up. When they reached

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water there was no more trouble. These cattle were usually brought up here in the Spring, and a lot of them were very thin, in fact so thin that they would fall out on the drives. These were killed and skinned. The skin was all we got out of these.

Ewing Ho¹sell, son of the man I worked for, now owns several thousand acres of land northeast of Tulsa, and is still in the cattle business.. However not on the scale of his father, and too, not the same grade. of cattle, as the catt¹e now grazed here are white faced Herefords, and all are "muleys".

It was a great life, we cowhands lived. Chuck wagon, camp fires, music and a good time, especially at night on the round-up. I worked, off and on, five years on the Ho¹sel¹ ranch, where Jim Crutchfield was foreman.