

KENNEDY, WILLIAM

INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name Merrill A. Nelson

This report made on (date) October 13, 1937

1. Name William Kennedy

2. Post Office Address Enid, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 511 West Broadway,

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 16 Year 1886

5. Place of birth Herman Township, Dodge County, Wisconsin.

6. Name of Father Thomas Kennedy Place of birth Wexford,

Other information about father Ireland

7. Name of Mother Maria Rader Place of birth Near Cologne,

Other information about mother Germany

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 _____.

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Merrill A. Nelson

October 13, 1937

Investigator

Interview with William Kennedy
511 West Broadway
Enid, Oklahoma.

My parents landed in Wisconsin in 1842, where they settled before Wisconsin became a state. I was born in a log house in that state in 1866. I lived in Wisconsin for twenty-seven years and came to Kingfisher in 1890. It was unusual to come so far then.

I was like a good many other fellows who wanted to drift West. The first impression of the country was that it looked so barren. This was because I came from timber country in the north. However, I liked the looks of the country and have always liked the people. There are not many foreigners in this section but a few miles north of Kingfisher there was a German settlement named Kiel, where there were quite a few German people. As I could talk six or seven dialects of German, I found this an advantage in any business I went into. There are some of the German dialects that I cannot speak. I do not know the dialect of the Pummer people around Berlin nor of the people in my mother's district on the French border. The

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Pummer section is all Protestant while Mother was raised in a Catholic district and I am a Catholic myself.

My mother's father was not permitted to speak French when his province was conquered by Germany, so he wanted to go to Brazil. They went to Antwerp with a group of others who did not like any restrictions on what they spoke. There was no boat going to Brazil but there was one coming to America so they took that.

I came down to Kingfisher in 1890 and went with my brother into the dry goods business. At that time my brother was working for a fellow named S. H. Logan who had started a store in Kingfisher when Old Oklahoma was opened in 1889. My brother and I started another store in Hennessey. They decided to move this store to Enid, which they did the year after the Cherokee Strip opened.

In 1896 we bought out the Logan interests and were incorporated in 1901. We incorporated as Kennedy Brothers. In the beginning we had a frame shack 25 X 25 feet. A little later the Logan and Kennedy firm had a store 25 X 50 feet. In 1891 they opened a store in Hennessey.

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When they moved to Enid in the 100 block on East Broadway, they had a sheet iron building. In 1895 they bought a lot on Grand Avenue where Newman's Mercantile Establishment is now. They put up a store and stayed there till 1922, when Newman bought their stock out.

While here I proved up on a claim. I do not recall the exact number but it was two miles over the line in Grant County, and two miles west from Highway 81. I would stay out there a while and go back and forth while working in my store.

In one case two men divided a claim. They were Dan Thomas from Michigan and a man named Quint from Kingfisher and they were about to have a contest but instead they split their claim.

Among the merchants or business men who came to Enid, practically penniless, were Mr. Rogers and Mr. Cannon of the firm of Rogers and Cannon. Mr. Rogers' brother had a livery barn in Kingfisher and Fred Rogers, who later formed the firm of Rogers and Cannon, was a clerk in the county offices in Kingfisher.

Later, the firm of Cannon, Gauding and Rogers

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was formed. They owned a lot of business blocks. They dealt almost exclusively in city property, especially Mr. Cannon. One of their projects was the dividing of land into city additions. In this way Cannon added the Marshall Addition to Enid and later several others including the Waverly Addition. Neither of these men had anything when they came to town.

W. B. Johnston, who died recently, was another prosperous man who started in Enid without any money. He always said he came to Enid with a typewriter and 15 cents. He used to buy grain on the streets of Enid. He got a car and scooped wheat into this. He collected a few hogs and got them in a hog lot where he fed them. Soon he was buying grain and stock by the car load and had a string of elevators.

In those days Walt and Fred Brown had the local hack business. It would cost you 50 cents to \$1.00 to drive over to North Enid. Glen Walters put in the first cabs (horse taxis) for town use. This was in 1893.

The Blackwell, Enid, and Southwestern was promoted mainly by John Linden and Edmund Frantz. Later this

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road became the 'Frisco. Nearly all the merchants, including myself, contributed to get this road started. Mr. Peckham and his son had something to do to making the change. The son was timekeeper. Mr. Rogers(mentioned above) was book-keeper. When they ran out of money, they made coupons. This railroad became the 'Frisco, after the rails were laid, when they put on the rolling stock.

The way they started off, you would have thought the Denver, Enid & Gulf Railroad intended to bridge the Pacific and land in Japan. They did get as far as Avarad, and then quit. The Orient was another ambitious line. It was hoped that it would go through Enid; instead it went west of here. Stilwell was connected with this line. I do not know what railroad absorbed it; perhaps the Rock Island.

One of the Indians whom I met in Kingfisher was "Dutch" Jigg. He was a Squaw-man. His wife was a niece of Sitting Bull. When Sitting Bull was killed they were living west of Ki Reno at the time, on the Washita. This was in 1890-1891 that they had the outbreak in the Black Hills.

Among the Deputy United States Marshals I knew in this country were, Chris Madsen, still living in Enid; Bill Ryan and Forsett.

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Among the old towns I remember was Concordia; this was seven or eight miles south of Drummond in Garfield County almost on the line. It is not shown on maps of Oklahoma.

We sold in our early store, dry goods exclusively. Evening gowns and dress suits were in our stock. The men bought silk hats occasionally and we sold some jewelry. There were no class distinctions in buying our fine clothes; a gambler might make a purchase or perhaps members of a congregation would go together and get the minister a new suit. We sold Dunlap hats and Manhattan shirts.

There were a few of the old high wheel bicycles in town in those days. Herman Bass rode one of this type. Richard Messall brought a lot of money into town when he secured a brewery agency here.

One of the achievements of one of our state representatives was that of Pat Goulding of the Goulding, Cannon, Rogers firm who brought back the State Hospital for the Feeble Minded to our city. The men about town laughed at him for this but there the State Hospital stands, a show place and a credit to the city. Some wanted the penitentiary located here instead.

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They talk about the outlaws in those days. You were safer then than you are now if you had money on you and people knew it. There were a few outlaws, however. There was Dick Yeager and Black; Black was out West in the Glass Mountains. He was 'mooching' out there and the farmers shot him. He died in Enid.

I have ten children. One is with the Benfield Packing Company in Tulsa. Another is in Ardmore.