

KELTNER, W. H. P.

INTERVIEW

#8162

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

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Field Worker's name John E. Daucherty

This report made on (date) Aug. 10 1937

1. Name W. H. H. Keltner

2. Post Office Address Hickory, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 18 Year 1850

5. Place of birth Five miles south east of present site of
Fugo, Oklahoma.

6. Name of Father J. C. C. Keltner Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about father Cattlemen, Farmer.

7. Name of Mother Nancy E. Davis Place of birth Alabama

Other information about mother _____

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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Daugherty, John F., Sulphur, Okla.
Interviewer
August 10, 1937.

Life of a Pioneer Man
By W. H. Keltner, Hickory, Okla.

Father was J. C. C. Keltner, born April, 1826, in Kentucky. He was a cattleman and farmer.

Mother was Nancy E. Davis, born in Alabama, April 1832.

I was the only child and was born July 18, 1850, five miles southeast of the present site of Hugo, in a hewed log house, with a pine floor. The lumber for this floor was sawed with a whip saw which is similar to a cross-cut saw. There was a pit in the ground and a scaffold above to hold the log up. The men stood in the pit and two men stood above. They put water and copperas in a gourd and made a brown line down the log to follow. This kept the board straight and it could be sawed the thickness desired.

I went to school in a double two-story log house at Spring Chapel. This was hewed of red oak logs and is still standing one and a half miles south of the depot at Hugo. The upper part of this building was used for the Masonic Lodge. The lower part was for school

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and church.

Father moved to Kingston in the Chickasaw Nation, just before the Civil War. In August, 1864, all boys, fourteen years or older, were conscripted for service in the army. They got me and took me to Shreveport, Louisiana. I stayed there until the war ended in 1865. Father was in the Confederate Army and after I left Mother was alone. The Southern Bushwhackers came along and took everything she had. They took her cotton and corn and threw it in the creek. Her bed quilts were stolen, rolled into a bundle and carried off. They took all the food in the house and left her without a morsel to eat. She saddled a pony and rode into Texas, where she remained with friends until the end of the war.

There were five hundred young boys in the camp where I was stationed. We didn't see service. When the war ceased they turned us loose with a good pair of shoes, good clothing and I had an Enfield rifle, six feet long and a six shooter. There were other boys coming this way and we all came together. We walked about twenty miles a day. There was no food to be gotten except wild game. The houses were few and far apart and the people who lived in them were starving, because the

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soldiers had ransacked and taken all their supplies. We killed deer, wild turkeys and prairie chickens and ate them as we went along. We got a forked stick, put the meat on this and held it over a fire, which we started with a flint rock and piece of steel. There were no matches, and each boy carried his flint rock and steel.

Mother, Father and I arrived home about the same time. That was a glorious family reunion. Father and I went to farming after we came back to Kingston. In the meantime, Mother fell heir to an estate in Platt County, Missouri, and it was necessary for Father to be there to settle things. He was notified by mail at Colbert Station and we began to make preparations for the trip. We had a large home-made wagon with the hind wheels higher than a man could reach. It had a wooden axle which we kept greased with tar, and it squeaked noisily as we drove along. The wheels and axle were made of bois d'arc. We bought another wagon quite like this one. We drove five yoke of steers to one, and three yoke to the other. We rounded up about a hundred fifty head of cattle, including about fifty milch cows, and started north. We went by Atoka where at that time

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there was only one store. We travelled on through Lime-
stone Gap and camped near where Leicester now stands.
There was a camp ground near some springs. We got a
bucket and started to the head of the spring for water.
We hadn't gone far when we discovered, to our horror, a
dead man lying in the water. We got a shovel, dug a hole
and buried him, since there was no one near to notify.
The next day at a trading post we ran into a squad of ten
or twelve United States Marshals. We told them what we
had found the day before. About three years later they
found the man who had slain this one, in Illinois.

We forded the Canadian River and went through Che-
cotah and Muskogee. We milked the cows every morning
and poured the milk in a barrel on the wagon. We had
plenty of milk. When we reached Fort Gibson we camped
in a cane break. We were tired and thought perhaps we
would rest here for several days; but we were eager to
move when an officer came and told us that those Creek
Indians were dying with the cholera, and if we stayed
there we would be quarantined along with the Indians.
We moved on and didn't stop until we got to Tahlequah.
We found the line between the Cherokee Nation and Ar-
kansas. It was hexagon shaped iron posts about six feet

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high and six inches at the base, set a mile apart.

We travelled into Missouri on the Wire Road, so called because the Government had telephone wires into Fort Smith along the side of this road during the War. We arrived at our destination in Platt County, Missouri, on the seventh of August, and lived there five years. We then returned to the Territory and settled on Mud Creek in the Chickasaw Nation.

In 1872 I found some engineers surveying for the Katy Railroad near Atoka and they gave me a job of driving stakes for them. I became a surveyor.

The first passenger train on the Katy came to Atoka October 6, 1872. The engine was fired with wood. There were cords of wood and barrels of water at intervals along the right of way. A passenger train consisted of an engine and three coaches, and a freight train had four cars and the engine. When the Katy got to Red River with their road bed, Texas said "Stop!" The laws and treaties stopped the Indian Territory at the south bank of Red River. In 1883 I made a survey from the mouth of Big Wichita to the mouth of Peas River, along the south bank of the Red River. I found nearly all the

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markings made by a surveyor named Sam Green in 1852-53.

When the Railroads were first built across the Territory the fare was five cents per mile and one entering from either side had to stop at the line and buy a ticket. If one were going from Missouri to Texas he must buy a ticket on the north line of the territory to the south line, and then buy his ticket at the south line to his destination. The same was true when going out of the territory. There were no tickets sold past the line.

I married Susie Potter in 1875. We have thirteen children. My parents are buried at Leon, Oklahoma.