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Chauncey O. Moore, Supervisor
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149

April 6, 1937

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Research Field Worker

Interview: Lula (Poole) Kelley
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Vinita, Okla.

My name is Lula (Poole) Kelley. I was born March 20, 1862, Delaware District, Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory. I received my education in the Cherokee public schools and the Female Seminary. I was married at Vinita, Indian Territory, August 27, 1887, to Frederick Lincoln Kelley. He died at Vinita, November 2, 1911. To this union were born three children, as follows: Pauline Gazelle, who married Charles W. Flint; Frederick Lincoln and George Samuel, who married Maver Landrum, daughter of Judge and Mrs. E. M. Landrum.

My parents were John and Callie Matilda (Harlan) Poole. They were the parents of three children: Fannie, who married James Henry Akin, and one brother, Charles Walton Poole and myself.

My maternal grandparents were Ellis Sanders Harlan and Nannie (Barnett) Harlan. Ellis Sanders Harlan was the son of George and Nannie (Sanders) Harlan. My grandfather, Ellis Sanders Harlan, was very prominent in politics in the old Cherokee Nation, in North Carolina. He was also elected to the council, after moving to Flint District, Indian Territory. He died December 7th, 1866.

My parents settled east of Prairie City, near the old Audrain place in Delaware District before the Civil War. My father joined the Southern Army near the beginning of the war and was bushwhacked and killed in 1862.

Married a Yankee

At the close of the Civil War my mother married George Lane, master of transportation and a "New York Yankee". They moved to Little Rock in 1865, where they lived until September 1872 at which time they came to

Flint District in the Cherokee Nation and settled one mile west of Evansville 168
Arkansas on the Territory side where my mother re-established her rights as a
Cherokee. My grandmother, Nancy Harlan, was living in Flint District where we
settled after coming back to the Territory.

George Lane Drops Dead

In 1872, shortly after we had moved to Flint District, my step-
father, George Lane, made a trip to Memphis, Tennessee on some business and
dropped dead on the streets of Memphis, from a heart attack.

After Mr. Lane's death my mother and a sister, Mrs. Emma Finley,
decided to pay a visit to another one of their sisters, Mrs. Ruth Hunt, in Dela-
ware District and equipped with two good side saddles and a saddle pony each,
they set out on the long trip of about 150 miles, and made the trip without ac-
cident.

Moves to Delaware District

When my mother and aunt returned from Delaware District, my
mother took her three children and moved to Delaware District in with her sis-
ter, Ruth, (Mrs. Joseph Hunt). Joe Hunt and Lewis R. Kell had a saw mill on
Mustang Creek, sawing walnut logs and on Saturday would grind grist. Mr. Kell
was a widower and my mother married him in 1873. Mr. Kell owned a very famous
old house, which I deem worthy of going down in history.

An Old Army Post

How long Lewis Ross Kell had been in possession of this famous
old house, I do not know, but I do know that it was built before the war and was
used by the United States government as an army post. These posts were sta-
tioned every thirty miles apart and a commissary was established at each post
and was about the only place provisions could be bought. This post became
famous because it was located on Cabin Creek at the site where the Cabin Creek
battle was fought during the Civil War. I have a picture of the old house,
framed, and I still look upon it as the home of my girlhood days, as we lived

there all the time we children were growing up. The old house was made with two large hued log rooms with a space between that had been boxed up, making the house three rooms long, running east and west, with an L running south. There was a chimney at each end of the house and a dug well of fine water out back. The old Military Trail road ran right in front of the house and hundreds of people stopped there on their way from Texas to Fort Scott. The army post was abandoned after the war but the road continued in use for many years after the war and hundreds of people traveled the road before the M. K. & T. passed through the Indian Territory in 1871, and I know this to be the exact year in which the Katy railroad passed through the territory. I have seen as high as five thousand head of cattle driven over this trail, on their way from Texas to Fort Scott, Kansas, after we moved to the place.

An Old Camp Site

The place had become so well known, that travelers were directed from Fort Gibson, on the south and from Baxter Springs, Kansas; or the north, that it became the camping ground for all travelers and we kept many people over night, who were not equipped to camp and this continued, I am told by people who occupied the place long after we left the place.

An Old School

There was an old school, called the "Rogers Springs School" located about a half mile northeast of the old Army post place, which was established by Sampson Rogers, a Shawnee Indian, who had come here from Kansas with the Shawnee tribe. It was established in the early 70's and my mother sent us children to school there. It was one of the national schools, run by the Cherokee Nation, free to the Cherokees, but a white student was required to pay tuition. There was no other school near us and we boarded many from a distance who attended school there. Two girls I remember who stayed with us were Susie and Jennie Woodall, the daughters of Isaac Woodall, and half-sisters of James M.

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Carselowey, which family had moved to the neighborhood in 1870. Susie Woodall later married Thomas M. Buffington, who later climbed to the top of the ladder, by being elected chief of the Cherokee Nation. Jennie Woodall married Fred W. Charlesworth, who came here from St. Charles, Mo. and they later moved to California, where he died and where his wife and children still live. Some of the early day teachers at the Rogers Springs School that I can remember were Mr. Winschel, Miss Ann Putman of Fayetteville, Arkansas who later taught at the Female Seminary, under Miss Florence Wilson; Miss Lizzie Lindsey, who married Fox Dannenburg, a Chelsea banker, now deceased, but whose wife still lives at Chelsea; Rollin Adair, deceased and my mother, Sallie Kell, now deceased.

In 1885 the Carselowey school was established by the Cherokee Nation about three miles northeast where the country had become more thickly settled and this old school was discontinued.

An Old Grave Yard

Lewis Kell died in the late 70's and was buried about a quarter of a mile north of the old army post. This became a public burying ground and at statehood the plat was deeded to the State of Oklahoma. Lewis Ross Kell's grave was marked by a monument but sometime in the 90's a neighbor man by the name of James Connelly had become mentally deranged and carried off this tombstone and others in this grave yard but I have been told that some of them were found and returned. I do not know whether this one has been returned or not. Connelly was taken in charge of by the Cherokee officials and sent to the Cherokee Insane Asylum, a few miles south of Tahlequah. He would stay a short time and would seek to recover his mind and was allowed to return home. This was kept up several different times when he finally disappeared and no one knew what became of him.

Old Army Post Sold

After the death of Lewis Ross Kell my mother married James Blythe and soon afterward sold the "Old Army Post" place to John Peter Woodall, and moved to Vinita. Mr. Woodall took his and his family's allotment at this place. I

think my mother sold the place in 1895 after we had lived there for twenty-two years and all of her children had grown up there and were married.

In 1908, John Peter Woodall sold the old place to Henry Hill and while he owned the place the famous "Old Army Post House" burned to the ground. Mr. Hill lost the place to a loan company where the title still stands.

Note by Research Worker

I was born and raised within two miles of the "Old Army Post" place mentioned by Mrs. Kelley, also the "Old Battle Ground and Grave Yard" and expect to cover them in due time and now I want to say a word about Mrs. Kelley and her husband, whom I have known always. Naturally she is timid about saying anything about her own affairs but having grown up in the same neighborhood, I know a lot about the family. Her mother was my second school teacher.

Fred L. Kelley.

Fred L. Kelley was a white man and started in buying wild prairie hay back in Territorial days, on a small scale. The hay business was the chief occupation of the people here for many years and when Fred L. Kelley began to find a market for the people's hay, his business began to expand and in a few years he became the greatest known hay man in the United States. He not only shipped hundreds of tons during the summer but had large hay barns up and down the two railroads that ran through Vinita where he had his headquarters. His business got so large that he pulled one of the Frisco's leading traffic men off his job and placed him in his office to route hay to all points in the United States.

His brother, George Kelley, was associated with him for a number of years but after Fred L. Kelley's death, George sold out, settled up the estate and went west. George said Fred had built up too big a business for him to attempt to keep up and just quit.

Fred L. Kelley left a large estate, including farm land and town property and his widow who has never married has not had to worry about financial

atters. She spends her winters in Corpus Christi, Texas and her summers in Colorado and being a great lover of flowers has gathered many strange plants from different parts of the country and has them re-set in her yard. She lives at 114 South Smith Street, Vinita, Oklahoma.