

KERR, G. F.

INTERVIEW

#8898

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Interviewer, Ida A. Merwin,
October 12, 1937.

Interview with G. F. Kerr,
Morrison, Oklahoma.

Born December 25, 1854,
Dearborn County, Indiana.

Parents Alias Kerr, Indiana.
Jane Ann (Sparks) Kerr, Indiana.

In 1889, I came from Kansas to Oklahoma, arriving too late to enter the race in the opening of Old Oklahoma and as we did not care to return to Kansas we leased some land near Perkins and planned to farm and await another opening.

The trip from Kansas was made in covered wagons. My brother and two friends and I were each driving a wagon, having with us the four teams which were mules and horses.

I was a widower and with my son and parents was seeking a location for a home. My brother and I, with the aid of two friends, were bringing the teams and necessary things, but our parents being old were to come later on the train. Our move required several trips to Kansas to move all our property.

On one trip we were bringing about twenty head of cattle and near Stillwater we crossed some land where there

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had been some Texas fever among cattle and we did not know this land was under quarantine until we were nearly across. We put the cattle in a pen there and the next day several head of cattle were sick and we lost all but one cow and five calves.

We farmed the land near Perkins until the opening of the Cherokee Strip.

In September, 1893, my brother and I entered the race starting at a point northeast of Stillwater. We were on horseback and I rode to the mouth of Long Branch Creek in thirty-five minutes. I set a stake but soon found there were "Sooners" on the same land and I did not get to keep it. My brother staked land in Section 31-21-3 East in Noble County and as Father was sick and not able to make the race, my brother let Father file on it and that winter we moved from the farm near Perkins to this claim and after Father's death in 1898, I bought out the other heirs and have made my home here. My wife having died several years ago, I live alone here now. My son, who lives near, farms the land.

Our first home here was a dugout in the hillside, facing the east. We lived in it the first winter, and in the Spring

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of 1894, we built a one-room, twelve by fourteen, box house. locating it near the door of the dugout and this with the dugout made the home for several years. Then, we built the house as it now stands, moving the small house away. We built adjoining the dugout and used it as a cave. We are still using it now, and we can go into it from the west room of the house.

We hauled water from Long Branch Creek, a distance of about two and a half miles, until we could dig a well which supplied us with plenty of water. This well also furnished plenty of water last year during the drouth. The neighbors helped to clean it out and then used water from it.

We used wood for fuel.

The first crop was kaffir corn and corn, which we planted on the overturned sod with a hand planter.

We raised good crops during those days. Corn was our main crop and about the third year I made a planter to pull with the wagon and the turn of the wagon wheel tripped it so that the corn would drop through a forked runner or shoe into the furrow made by the runner. When I raised corn for the market

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I hauled it to Perry. Oftentimes it would take two days to make the trip. There were several good camp yards in Perry where one could stay for the night when necessary.

I bought what supplies we needed at home, in Perry.

During the early days while living near Perkins I killed a good many wild turkeys and several deer. I also killed one deer north of where the town of Morrison is now.

I also killed lots of quail and prairie chickens and these with the wild turkey and deer were of much help in furnishing food for the family.

During the early days we experienced some terribly hard times but we worked hard and made the best of the situation and were contented with what we had. We never did suffer for want of food, but always had something to eat but sometimes did not have much food.

I have a muzzle loading rifle and shot gun that I used to kill the deer and turkeys with and this is a cap and ball revolver that my Uncle took from a soldier in the Civil War. This razor is one which my grandfather, Jesse Sparks, owned during his life time.

This razor has the date, 1776, stamped on it.