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Opening-Cherokee Strip  
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Enid

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

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Field Worker's name Elizabeth L. DuncanThis report made on (date) June 10 19371. Name Albert B. Kirk2. Post Office Address Pond Creek, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 18 Year 18645. Place of birth Fairbury, Nebraska6. Name of Father Thomas Kirk Place of birth OhioOther information about father Was sheriff at Fairbury7. Name of Mother Mary Kirk Place of birth Fairbury, Neb.

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 6.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mr. Kirk and his brother-in-law came from Nebraska, where Mr. Kirk's mother and father lived. They came to Kansas to farm and Mr. Kirk located a farm at Ames, which Mr. Kirk and his brother-in-law could lease. The owner leased it to them for five years, on March 1, 1891. They raised three corn crops in succession as partners, but upon learning of the opening of the Cherokee Strip, they thought, perhaps, the owner would release them from their three years remaining under the contract. He said that he would only on one condition, that they pay him the cash value of the contract. The boys did not have the cash, so they talked it over, and Mr. Stull decided to stay and let Mr. Kirk make the "run."

Mr. Kirk made the run in the opening of the Cherokee Strip, September 16, 1893, riding a black Hamiltonian mare (called Coley), staking his claim thirty miles south of the state line, locating on a farm five miles south of Pond Creek, in Garfield County. It was three o'clock P. M. when he staked his claim. He camped all night with Mr. Ewing and Mr. Lewis, and started out for Government Springs, where they could file on the place, but this was Sunday and they could not file until Monday

morning; so they camped all night on the outskirts of Government Springs, and Monday morning they got their filing certificate. Mr. Kirk then returned to Kansas to get what he could get together and dispose of his crops. He loaded an emigrant car bringing with him four horses, three cows, two pigs, five dozen chickens, their household goods, then the farming implements, one plow, one harrow, one cultivator, one drill, one rake, one mower, and also fencing material, wire and posts, and also flour. They started out on February 2, 1894. As soon as he arrived and unloaded, he started to build a frame house 16 x 24, a barn, and chicken house, and as soon as they could, they started to break out sod. On March 1, 1894, Mrs. Kirk and two children arrived to live in their new home.

Wells were dug but to no avail. Twenty wells were dug, but they had to haul water in barrels a distance of five miles. That year was very dry.

October 8, 1894, a son was born to Mr. and Mrs. Kirk. They named him Andrew Thomas Kirk. (In 1918, this son was killed in France in the Argonne Forest. He was the captain of that regiment.) After Mrs. Kirk had recovered so she could make the trip back home, Mr. Kirk sent her and the children back on the train. He and his

brother were to follow up in a wagon, as they planned to shuck corn while there. When they were ready to go, Mr. Kirk picked up a little stool that a neighbor woman had given Mrs. Kirk for the little girl before they left for the "East," he thought it would come in handy to sit on around the camp fire.

The first place they went was to Mrs. Stull's to help shuck corn for him, as Mr. Stull had three hundred acres of corn which made 15,000 bushels and sold 13,000 bushels at 15¢ per bushel. It took six weeks to husk it. After he was through, he bought hay, corn, and other supplies and sent them back to the farm to run them that winter. He and Mrs. Kirk then decided to go back to Nebraska to visit his relatives for a week. He continued to work at what he could while there, until he was ready to return to Oklahoma.

Mr. and Mrs. Kirk were preparing to start back when they found they did not have enough money to run them until they reached home, but just the day before their departure, the children were playing with the little stool, tearing it apart, just as many children do, and in tearing off the cloth covering, Mrs. Kirk saw something in the padding. She took the stool and examined it more closely and found a five dollar bill. That was a God Send,

Mr. Kirk stated, for it helped them back to Oklahoma.

As soon as they returned, they put out a spring crop, but it burned up as there was no rain.

The second year they broke out more sod, also put out another crop, but had no rain, so it burned up.

During the year of 1895, Mr. Kirk started a singing school, which met for two hours each Wednesday. The reason they gathered at Mr. Kirk's home was that he had the largest house in that vicinity. The people that attended were the Corey children and parents, Ewing family; Will Lewis and family, G. W. Webster and family, Charles Exstrom and family, Charley Dempsey and family, Dan Thomas and family, Rev. Cook and family, Joseph Cooper, Throck Martin and family, and others whose names he cannot call to mind. Mr. Kirk played the coronet and Mrs. Kirk the organ. They continued this singing school for three years.

They held a celebration at Enid on the first anniversary of the opening of the Cherokee Strip and have continued this custom up to the present time. The second celebration which Mr. and Mrs. Kirk attended, consisted of a rodeo and a carnival that was brought in. Quite a number of the Cherokee Indians were present too. It was a wonderful sight to them. When they started home, it began to rain. That was the first big rain since the opening.

Mr. Kirk planted his first wheat crop the last of September, but it made only three bushels to the acre. It helped them, however, to get their seed wheat, and enough for flour. In 1896 they planted wheat again, but it did not yield as much as it had the previous year. In 1897, they planted wheat again which produced a bumper crop.

Mr. Kirk farmed this land himself up until 1900 when he was ordained as minister in the Baptist Church. He then moved to Pond Creek. After he was ordained, his time was spent in looking after God's business. He was called upon to preach at many funerals. In 1904, Mr. Kirk moved to Anthony, Kansas, then to Conway Springs, and from Conway Springs to Wichita. Later he took up violin making. He has made seven perfect violins which are rated next to Stradivarius. One of Mr. Kirk's violins was sold for \$2500.00, the highest price ever paid to a violin maker while living.