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Nannie Lee Burns
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Interview with Mrs. Elizabeth Lee
Miami, Oklahoma.

I, Elizabeth Lee, nee Willson, was born in southern Illinois on the Bumpass River, February 19, 1842, of white parentage. Here we lived till I was fifteen. I went to subscription schools and they taught me arithmetic and grammar, reading and writing, of course.

I was the oldest of twelve children and so was pretty busy helping Mother with the house and the care of the younger children.

We had as comfortable a home as there was there, and rather being a cabinet maker, we had what we needed in the home, though most of it was made by my father.

I was never over ten miles from home, except when we went to visit some of our kinsfolk who lived about twenty-five miles away. I never went to Chicago which was only one hundred and twenty-five miles away.

Here I saw the first brake that was put on a wagon and it was called an air brake. Father took us to Bridgeport to see our first train when it came through. Not like the trains now, the lumber that made the cars was unpainted, just natural; short cars, but they were

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covered. I looked in at the door and saw the seats, and they were made of slats. It made lots of noise when it started and did not travel very fast.

A joke that was often told by one of our neighbors who lived forty miles from the railroad was that whenever his wife heard the train crossing the bridge she would grab her bonnet and start running.

We used candles mostly for light though we have had grease lights. Our first lamp had a flat rock for the bottom and in this rock was a hole into which fitted the stem that held the bowl up.

The Move to Kansas.

Father having such a large family and thinking that he could get more and cheaper land there decided to take his family to the western country. The home was sold and the things that they decided to bring with them were loaded into prairie schooners each drawn by two yolk of oxen, four to a wagon, and together with some neighbors we started.

The thing I remember best on the trip is the crossing of the river. We crossed the Mississippi at Saint Louis. The bridge then did not have any sides to it, and my father walked along on one side with his whip to keep the oxen in the center of it.

We settled first in Lynn County near what is Atehison. Our first home was a pole house, dirt floor and with a chimney made of sticks and clay. The wind would blow the daubing out. We would hang up quilts and they would catch fire; however we only lived in this one winter.

I spent one winter with a sister in Colorado who lived in a sod house, a part of which was down in the ground. You went down steps but the windows were above the ground, and the roof a little higher. They were much nicer than our old pole houses, and they were warm.

Here she laughed and said, "I was just dumb, I guess; why when I was twenty-two years old, I started back to Illinois for a visit. I went on the train and stayed all night in Saint Louis at the Planter's Hotel. The next morning I got my things together and went and told them

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that I was ready to go now; the man laughed and said that he guessed that I would have to wait till the train came.

I was a poor hand to ride. Once Mother and Father went on Saturday to church and I was to come on Sunday and to ride horseback. On the way, my saddle turned with me and I got my foot caught in the stirrup and I found myself lying right under the horse. She was standing on her two hind feet and holding up her two front feet, which were right over my breast. She held them some way till I got out from under them.

The summer I was eighteen I married Jim Lee, a young man who had come to Kansas from Illinois after we did, and whose parents were dead. We were married the first Sunday in June. My wedding dress was of swiss, with satin stripes. One panel was of steel color, and one was white and had pink roses in it. It was made with a full skirt, low neck, and short sleeves, and the dress was trimmed in silk lace. Mother had bought the goods in Kansas City. Jim was batching and the first night we went to his place. I was young but I could cook and keep house. I could do that, but I didn't know much

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In the Civil War we had bean coffee for breakfast. The Jay Hawkers would take our grub.

Sam Scott was a Rebel Se-cess and they hung him for that. He was too old to be in the army, so they just took him and hung him. I went to the funeral; then his folks took him to Missouri and buried him.

My husband had bought a place on Crooked Creek about ten miles from Atchison and about twenty miles from Fort Leavenworth and had hired help to pitch the crop. Then he decided to go freighting and bought another yoke of oxen for which he paid one hundred dollars and hired Frank Gordon to drive one wagon while he took the other. They joined the wagon train and freighted out to Fort Larned, driving three yoke of oxen to each wagon. They got loaded up and started out ahead of the rest, and John A. Funk was the wagon boss of the train. The bodies of Gordon and my husband were found by the mail carrier, their wagons had been driven off. The mail carrier came off and when he met the rest of the wagons told them and they unhitched and corralled and

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waited expecting to be attacked but they were not, and so we never knew who had killed and robbed the men of the wagons and teams.

I had two small children then and as soon as he heard of it, my father came and took us home with him. My husband was killed on the third of July, the third year after we were married.

While living at home both of my children died and four years later I married George Lee, a brother of Jim. George, after leaving Illinois where he was born, had gone to Montana and come to Kansas after my husband's death. We continued to live there till we all decided to come to the Indian Territory. So again we loaded our goods in a wagon and started for a new home. This time we were not drawn by oxen but drove good horses and brought our stock with us. We settled ten miles from Atoka, among the Choctaws, and here we found as many white people as Indians. Atoka had a single store, Ill was the merchant's name who owned it. We drove to Denison

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a distance of one hundred miles for supplies and when we went we would bring home a wagon load. At one time we cleaned out an old log barn and used it to live in; but here I soon had a nice house of hewn logs with an upstairs, and my husband went to Denison and brought lumber home to finish the house and make a paling fence for the garden. My husband had a cattle ranch.

Next we moved up near Melrose, Kansas, then down near Fairland, then down near Echo on Grand River and to this County forty-five years ago. My husband died here in July, 1906, at the age of seventy-five years, and since then I have lived with the children. For the last several years I have lived with Lex and his wife.