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TROSPER, CLARENCE E. INTERVIEW.

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INTERVIEW WITH CLARENCE E. TROSPER
229-W-8. Born January 18, 1882
Frankfort, Kansas

Name of father Hugh G. Trospen
Born Knox Co. Ky.
Name of mother Susan Jane Trospen
Born Pittsburg, Pa.

Dad read a great deal about the possibilities of Okla., and he became so enthused he thought he would go to Oklahoma to look the situation over. So he bought a new wagon, a tent and all necessary camping supplies, ready to leave early in the morning May 3, 1889.-Dad had talked so much about Oklahoma to the neighbors trying to persuade some of them to come too, they thought they would have a little fun out of him, so the night of May the 2nd, they slipped over to our lot where Dad had the wagon and painted in big black letters "Okla. or bust-I am headed for Oklahoma-Hell, he'll be back in two weeks" and other silly sayings. Dad saw all the black paint but he did not say much, just crawled into the wagon and started for Oklahoma via Orlander. He followed the Santa Fe R.R. on the East into Oklahoma.

When he got to Guthrie, he saw there were ten men to every location, and he decided to go to Oklahoma City to the drawing. He walked up Broadway to W-5th St. and staked two lots on North

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5th. On these lots he built a small room 10 X 12 of boxing and then wrote mother to leave our farm and every thing with my oldest brother and come to Oklahoma which mother did, bringing me along with her. I was 8 years old. We came on the passenger into Arkansas City and here we took a freight train with one passenger coach. There were about 60 people in this coach, all going to Oklahoma -a jolly crowd though many had to stand up. The trip was uneventful until we got with in three miles of Edmond about 9 p.m. when they lost a bolt out of the engine. The train crew got off with lanterns, and started hunting for the bolt. They searched until two o'clock in the morning and about 3 or 4 miles back they found the bolt, put it back into the engine and we sailed right along until we got to Oklahoma City. Dad was there to meet us and took us to the box room on 5th street. Imagine my surprise when we went inside not to see a bit of furniture, in one corner of the room there was a big box like thing filled with hay and some bedding this was Dad's & mother's bed. In an other corner there was a like contraption that was for me. The next morning we went out into the front yard where Dad had

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fixed a grate from an old cooking stove upon some rocks. This was to be our cook stove. We slept and cooked this way for about three weeks, until finally father went to Pettij's hardware (they had a frame building 20 X 30 at their present location on Main St, and asked for the biggest cooking stove they had. Well, he bought it, a wood stove 24 X 24 inches, 4 holes on top and mother cooked on this stove for nine months.

Many amusing things happened. One day I watched two men fight over two lots on the south side of 5th street, and across in front of us. One of them had his shingles stuck up and some blocks on the lots. When he left the other man tore his shingle down and threw his blocks into the street. When the man returned, the fighting and cursing began and some one went after Capt Stiles and his Army. They come and took the two men over to the barracks and placed them under guard. Scenes like that were every day occurrences and we soon got accustomed to them.

Dad sold his big wagon and big horses and bought a light spring wagon and a pair of Indian horses. Every day he would drive out and look the country over for he knew he

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would find some "Sooner" who would want to sell out, and he was determined to have a farm in Oklahoma.

One morning I noticed mother fixed a bigger lunch than usual-very soon Dr. A. C. Scott came down to our cabin, then the four of us got into the spring wagon and we went land hunting. We took a Northeast course from Oklahoma City, and at noon we were looking for a nice shady place to eat when we came across 16 wild turkey hens and a gobbler. Dad never thought to bring his gun and we could only admire them.- We traveled on down to "Deep Fork bottom" when Dr. Scott said "There is a nice place to eat. We stopped and started to get out when three deer jumped up and ran into the timber. After that we always went prepared for game as it was plentiful and we never lacked for wild meat. We finished our meal and started out again, and within about a mile of Bitter creek we came across two sooners who would sell their claim for \$300. -Dad bought it, and took one of them to the Land Office and Dad filed the land in his name. In the meantime, the other man remained on the land to look after it. They had built a small sod house and he was living in it. It was about 4 or 5 days.

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before Dad went back to take possession, when the remaining man claimed the land by prior settlement. Then Dad paid him \$200.00 to leave.

Near this sod house was new red earth that looked like a grave. Dad said nothing but tore the sod house down - and plowed over the ground. Later we tried to find where the grave was - to excavate but we never did.

Dad built a small box house 8 X 10 where we three lived for 3 months. I remember during that time Dave McClure killed Capt. Couch and we came to the funeral. Mr McClure was tried but claimed self defense and came clear. There was very little enforcement of the law those days.

My brother-in-law, G.W. Carrico, bought the adjoining farm west of us but having no house, they moved into our house, while Dad went back to Kansas to sell our farm and move our things to Oklahoma.

Now here is where Dad got even with the neighbors who painted the words on his wagon sheet. This was in the middle of September, Dad had been gone almost six months and they thought Oklahoma must be good or Dad wouldn't have stayed so long and they were anxious to hear all about it, so just as soon as Dad got home, they came over Dad boasted Oklahoma sky high, that it was just another paradise, and he told them if

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they would take their wagons and teams and help move all his things that he would help them get a fine farm too. These men were Marion Cunningham and Jack Bullock and they furnished three wagons and teams and hauled our furniture and some grain. Brother drove 4 cows and 6 horses. Dad shipped his hogs and corn by freight and he, -mother and myself come on the train as Dad wanted to get back to the farm and build another room; for his family would all be together and more room was needed.

It took Mr. Bullock and Cunningham three weeks to drive through with the furniture and stock- and Dad helped them get good farms as he said he would.

That fall Dad traded our six head of fine horses for 10 yoke of oxen which were cheaper to keep and could do more work, and that winter we broke out 60 acres of ground ready for spring planting with these oxen and Dad raised a bumper crop of corn and cotton- and the finest garden we ever had. Mother canned and dried all kinds of vegetables and there were pumpkins and pie melons under every body's bed, we kept them in the house to keep them from freezing.

To keep turnips we dug a shallow pit, put a layer of straw and a layer of turnips until we filled the pit, then rounded it up high with dirt. In this way they would keep all winter with out freezing.

In the fall of 1889 C.A. McCleary , a farmer living one mile east of us, had a story and 1 half high log house-covered with clap -board shingles-he donated the upstairs for a school room and his daughter was the teacher. This was my first school in Oklahoma.

About 2 miles Northeast of our farm was Crooked Oak Creek. This stream was wide in some places-in one place there was a Peninsula which had a log house built on it-(this was the Dalton gang's hideout). Then in the middle of the section line and near this creek was a big brown sand stone rock about 200 ft. long ranging from 4 feet to 30 feet high. It stood on a Peninsula-(or neck) so erosion had taken a great deal of the foundation away; around this rock are thousands of very small rosette Rocks & these rocks looked as if some one had cared each one of them after a rose. I have gathered them by wagon loads to beautify the yard.

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There is a legend that this was a worship place for pre-historic Indians and that they were fond of chewing gum but as they approached their place of worship they spit their gum out and this gum petrified and made rock rosettes. These rock rosettes are there today.

I will tell of some of the happening in 1889 to 1901. In the fall of 1889 there was a saloon in the west part of what is now The Tradesman Nat. Bank and the city was wide open for gambling devices of all kinds and you could buy any kind of liquor from beer to champagne. One day there was a big Poker game going on when two men named Cunningham and Howard got mad at each other and Cunningham said he would get a gun and kill Howard, Cunningham went away and we tried to get Howard to leave but he wouldn't do it, just sat there, Presently Cunningham returned with a shot gun and as he entered the door he took aim and shot Howard through the heart. Howard stuck his finger in the wound to stop the flow of blood, drew his gun on Cunningham and killed him, then he fell over dead. In 1890 the county built a jail house (frame) where our present jail house is today. Every body had hitching posts in front of their stores and board sidewalks. In those days every man wore boots, spurs and a big white

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hat, with a pistol and scabbard hanging around his waist, usually a red or blue "kerchief around his neck, and men were classed as "Northerners", "Southerners" or "Sooners,"

In 1890 some smart real estate fellows conceived the idea of platting a 160 acres joining Grand Ave. on south into town lots and selling them from \$25.00 to \$100.00. They had the 160 acre surveyed and platted and sold a 100 or more lots before they discovered they had laid off the streets wrong according to the north side - hence the jags in all the streets south of Main street.

The Blue front Butcher shop on Main St. always had hanging up on out side three or four deer, and quail by the 100. One day two farmers drove up to the butcher shop in a lumber wagon with a big cat fish they caught at Dead Man's crossing near Council Grove. This cat fish head was against the front end of the wagon and its tail stuck out two feet beyond the wagon bed - I never saw such a big fish in my life. The Blue front Butcher shop bought it, and hoisted it up in front of shop. They just cut it off in chunks and sold it. Hundreds of people came to see the big.

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A man named C. G. Jones came here and organized a company to build factories. First they dug a big canal from the Canadian river to Choctaw Street running parallel with the Frisco Railroad. The Frisco is really built on top of this canal. Their first venture was a grist mill - but the quick sand from the river filled the canal and got into the grist mill. Oklahoma City's canal was a failure and the pipe dream of water power, factories and grist mills faded away. In 1905 Oklahoma City had a "wild eyed" grafting school board, who had built three brick school houses, every one on the out side of the city. The first built was part of the present Washington School, at Washington and Walker; the 2nd was the south part of the present Emerson School at 7th and Walker, and the 3rd High School at Central and 4th. Walker Street was the city limit on the west side, and 7th street on the north side, the river on the south side and Central Street on the east. Capt. Stiles Old Forte, Barracks and Stockade was built where Irvin School now stands. They moved the barracks from Council Grove.

The old cemetery was where River Side Park is now. On the banks of the Canadian as we came into town we would see ends of Coffins sticking out, caused by high water and the river changing

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its channel. Most of these were dug up and buried else where.

Our first Postoffice was a log house. Capt. G. A. Breeder (an aristocratic looking man grey beard trimmed to a Vandyke) was our first Postmaster.

Dad and A.C. Scott built first Presbyterian church in the 200 block on the north side of Grand Ave. -they sold this building and bought two lots where the Terminal is now. They then sold these to the Steel Railway Co. and built a brick on 6th and Broadway, sold this building to a realstate man. J. W. Gilispie, and they bought lots and built a brick church on the corner of 9th and Robinson where The First Presbyterian church is to day. Dr. Scott played the organ for the church the kind you pedal with your feet. A. C. Scott and myself are the oldest living members of this church.

No, we were never bothered with the Indians, the Cheyenne and Arapaho some times went on a war path and the Government would send troops to quell them. They were usually clad in buckskin heech clovt with bright colored shawels, and blankets

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drawn around them and they wore beaded moccasins. The tents of this tribe of Indians were always round with a high pole in the center with numerous side poles. Their tents are too complicated for me to put up.- The five civilized tribes and the Potts and Creeks' mode of dressing was similar to the white people, except the women. They always wore bright colored dresses. I never saw a full blood Indian with a black dress on.

In 1900 there was a large grove of cotton wood and elm about two blocks from the Katy Depot. This was head quarters for the Pottawatomies and Creeks. Every summer they would come here and trade off their ponies, sell all kinds of beaded work, moccasins, mens buckskin jackets and numerous things. They were shrewd traders. Marian Cunningham, a farmer who lived 5 miles south of Oklahoma City, did some trading with them. He had a small black dog with him- he was real fat. These Indians tried to buy this dog-but Marion thought so much of his dog he didn't want to part with it. Nothing more was said about the dog and he finished trading with the Indians and went on home but when he got home, he missed the dog. He immediately went back to the

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Indians's camp they had killed, cleaned and dressed the dog and it was in a big pot stewing.

Men would put money in the side walk cracks and the little Indian boys from these camps would take their bow and arrow and hit the money. They rarely missed, they picked up lots of pennies this way.

A laughable incident happened to Dad while he was in the legislature and the Capitol still was in Guthrie. He was a member of the first legislature and C.G. Jones, Representative was Speaker of the House. The bill to move the Capitol to Oklahoma City had passed the House and the Citizens of Guthrie were up in arms. They were fighting mad. Dad and Jones were appointed to take this bill to the Senate. The citizens chased Dad up one street and Jones down the other-they knew one of them had the bill, and they were getting so close to him that he threw the bill into an outside toilet. When they caught him they nearly tore all of his clothes off searching for this bill. He told them he didn't have it, that Jones had it, and they left him and started after Jones. While they were gone

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he went into the toilet got it-took it to the senate and they immediately passed the bill.

Dad always wore a stiff bosom white shirt and standing collar but never a tie. He had long beard. I guess that was the reason he never wore a tie. When the citizens of Guthrie got through with him that day, they took his stiff shirt front with them.

Oklahoma City gave a big banquet and ball in the Masonic Temple at the N.W. corner of Masin and Broadway. We reserved two rooms at the Planters Hotel - on N.E. corner of Robinson and Reno for our families for this big event. This was a grand site-every thing you could think of to eat. It was the only banquet I ever went to where they served wine and champagne so lavishly, then they cleared the tables off and moved them back and started the ball. The first thing on the program was a grand march. Then a Virginia Reel, Schottishes, waltz and a square dance or two. The Elite of the Town was there; usually when there was a "big to do" we always had it at Whit Grant's. He owned a fine two story home

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on the banks of the Canadian River, about two blocks north of the present Viaduct facing Walker. That part of town was the center of the social elite. Mr. Grant was one time Mayor. He was a prominent lawyer and prosperous business man, and the old home is still standing, but has not been socially prominent for years.

There was nothing south of the Rock Island and east of the SanteFe Railroad and they built a fair ground and race track there, this would be where the whole sale district is now. Every body attended these fairs. Cassius M. Barnes was Governor of Oklahoma Territory. In 1905 there was a big celebration and military parade and Theodore Roosevelt was the honored guest as a rough Rider Hero. Governor Barnes had a fine horse and saddle all equipped for the parade, and some one of the crowd thought it would be a fitting horse for the guest of honor, ~~I knew~~ so they had Col. Roosevelt get on the horse and all lined up for the parade, when Governor Barnes heard about it and ~~be~~ became so incensed he sent an officer and had the Colonel arrested.

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The officer apologized to the Colonel but he said he would have to carry out the Governor's orders. Col. Roosevelt just laughed and said he must obey orders. Immediately another horse was provided and the Colonel led the parade.
