

Field Worker: Merrill A. Nelson  
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BIOGRAPHY OF: Mrs. Annie B. Truitt  
(nee Anna Belle Sharkley)  
508 N. Independence Ave.  
Enid, Oklahoma

BORN: Fort Madison, Iowa

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My father was a Union soldier. He enlisted for three years; then reenlisted and served til the end of the war from Fort Madison, Iowa. My mother was a southerner. She was a distant relative of Abraham Lincoln. As a very small girl I can remember the soldiers coming home on a furlough with their glistening bayonets, and blue uniforms.

I had taught school in Iowa a term and went to visit a relative in Kansas on Christmas and they asked me to stay and teach at their school. We had spelling bees when old and young gathered and took part. We also had waht we called lyceum, or literary society. I was eighteen years old when I went to Kansas. Later I married in Winneapolis, Kansas. That was fifty years ago. I had three sons and one daughter. My father died thirty years ago. He was killed when a horse ran away with him. He was an officer in the Odd fellow lodge and helped to organize some large lodges for them.

Mr. Truitt did not take a claim. He had taken one in Kansas when he was twenty and stayed on it five years so the law would not allow him to take up land in Oklahoma, however we did have the right to take town sites.

We were in Hennessey when the Cherokee Strip was opened. We had a map of Enid and planned to secure lots where the

Kress store is. However my husband did get one lot where the  
Corry drug store is. He had preceded me on horseback and  
secured the lot. I was on the train in a cattle car. When  
we got to Enid, the train would not stop, as the Rock Island  
wanted to make N. Enid the town. Some men and women jumped  
off and some were injured, others were caught in the five-  
strand barbed-wire fence. One woman broke her leg in jumping.  
I was going to jump off with the train and out, but a man got  
hold of my shoulders and held me on the train. If I had jum-  
ped we might have got two lots instead of one.

That first night I slept in a wagon and it was the next  
day before my husband found me in North Enid. I rode behind  
him on the horse and we came to Enid. Here he had the lot  
bounded by a twine string tied around tiny stobs to mark off  
our claim. There were three drunk cowboys on the lot next  
to ours and two of them were trying to throw the third one  
out and they kept throwing his things over on our lot.

I stayed with another woman on the square that night.  
There was some trouble about her and some cowboys threatened  
to hang a man who kept hanging around her lot. At two o'clock  
in the morning I went back to my lot. My husband and I sat  
up until four o'clock then he said, "Don't leave the lot and  
I will go and bring the children and the rest of our belongings.  
Do not talk to anyone."

~~There was a man in the next lot called "Tincup" because he~~  
made coffee on an oil stove for fifteen cents a cup and sold it to  
the settlers. The other two men got together and threw the stove  
over on my lot and I threw it back. Then they tried to be nice  
to me. "Lady, we are not trying to take your lot, we are only

trying to get rid of "Tincup". I bought two crackers and  
a cup of coffee from them for twenty-five cents. 173

The people wanted to buy bread from me, so I got a forty-eight pound sack of flour, hired two women to help me and baked the bread at night to sell the next day. I made about three dollars and fifty cents a night.

When we went to register at Hennessey we had to stand in line three days. Some men would edge in and sell their place for five dollars. My husband slept in my place two nights.

Mid, that first night was about half as big as it is now. The Salvation Army held a meeting there and there was so much noise of hammers and saws in buildings going up that no one could get much sleep. Hotels, restaurants and furniture stores were in tents.

There was bitter rivalry between Mid and North Mid. Mr. Truitt and Edmund Frantz were on the committee that patrolled the city limits continuously and everyone entering were compelled to give an account of himself. There was great danger of the other side living in North Mid would try to burn us out and any number of disastrous tricks. All the lumber was taken to North Mid in trains and had to be hauled to Mid in wagons. Several people were attacked, arrested, rotten-egged and maltreated by the inhabitants on both sides.

The man on the corner of Randolph and Grant streets, said, "I take the first lot, whichever way it runs. We were afraid it might run north and south, thus taking in our lot so we moved back about four lots. He offered me something to eat because his brother had come in with supplies including potatoes and had out his hand. I had bound it up for him.

We built a shack with a little half window. My husband left his harness hanging on pegs out side of the back door. "Aren't you afraid that will be stolen?" I asked him. The set had cost seventy-five dollars, and sure enough, the second morning they were gone.

There was a young fellow from Boston who was dressed in a light grey suit and was very dapper. He did not make the run, but he had come into possession of a lot. One day a cloud came up and a sudden downpour came. He piled up his lumber in two piles with boards across the piles to keep the rain out then he wrapped a big comfort around him and crawled into his shelter. The comfort was new and factory-made, with a colorful design of scorpions and red roses all over it. His meager shelter did not keep the rain from blowing in and wetting him. When he came out he had a scorpion plastered on one cheek and red roses all over his new suit. That was before many dyes were fast to washing. This young man left immediately and was never seen in that part of the country again.

All the time the strife between Unid and North Unid grew worse. Finally the whole group of town protectors were arrested. It frightened me to see the men get arms and patrol the city. It looked like eminent war. They did so much mischief, finally they sawed the bridges south of Unid in two and a train hauling several cars of freight plunged into the gap. No one knew who had done that. When the trains were finally compelled to stop at Unid a large group of the leading women of the town built fires to rejoice over the stopping of the trains. A man from Chicago came along and treated them all

to ice-cream.

I have some pictures of the early days, including a picture of our hotel, and of the Irish wreck.

Under Dr. Champlin, I was the 11th woman on the charity welfare board. They notified me when some of the destitute poor people died and had no means of providing funerals and burial services for them. Two or three of the church women solicited funds for the poor. Conditions were so bad that we sometimes had to bury so many in one day. There were unsanitary conditions everywhere. Hog-pens were built around near the square and the weather was hot and sultry.

A number of the more talented members of the church got up plays and presented them for the benefit of the church finances.