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WALKER, WILLIAM H. INTERVIEW.

Form A-(S-149).

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BIOGRAPHY FORM

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WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Merrill A Nelson.

This report made on (date) June 21, 1937. 1937

1. Name: William H. Walker.

2. Post Office Address Garber, Oklahoma Route #1.

3. Residence address (or location) Fifteen miles east of Enid.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

5. Place of birth: Coshocton County, Ohio.

With the cooperation of Mrs. Walker.

6. Name of Father George Walker. Place of birth Jefferson County, OHIO.

Other information about father Carpenter, Coshocton County, many years.

7. Name of Mother Elizabeth Brown. Place of birth Coshocton County, OHIO.

Other information about mother An early settler as was her husband.

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested questions and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and refer firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached DO

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William H. Nelson,  
Interviewer.

STORY OF MR. AND MRS. WILLIAM  
H. WALTON, GARBER, OKLAHOMA.

My parents were from Ohio. They settled in Coshocton  
County when that section was as much or more of a pioneer  
country than Oklahoma was when we came here. They were  
one of the Indians and the men used to carry guns into the  
country to protect them from their attacks. In 1840  
my father remained in that country until he was  
Deputy of Coshocton County.

After some time, again feeling the western urge, my  
parents moved to a place twenty miles west of Des Moines,  
Iowa. Here they went through some severe winters, with  
the snow piled as high as the fences. The Springs were  
the times of making maple sugar and maple molasses.

Following a slightly different line of migration,  
my wife's people who were formerly the Nathaniel Black  
family of South Carolina and Eliza Crawford who was from  
Ireland came first to Randolph County, Illinois. Eliza  
Crawford was an orphan, her parents dying when she was  
small, and she was brought up by an uncle. Later my wife's  
folks moved to Johnson County, Kansas. Their journeying



Then I made the run in September 1891 in the Iowa, Sac and Fox opening. I made the run from Perkins. I was more fortunate this time and secured a claim eight miles south of Perkins. I relinquished this claim. A lawyer then told me that I had used my homestead right and could not claim another. This was incorrect, so after the opening of the Cherokee Strip, I registered at Pense for the Kiowa Comanche lottery, in 1901.

In making the run into the Cherokee Strip, we shipped a car from Barnard, Lincoln County, Kansas whence we had returned to Orlando again. This was in September, 1893. The car load included our horses and wagons but almost none of our household goods.

Four of us, Jim Ryan, Tipton, Riley and McClane

chartered a car. My brother also made the race. I made the run for a town lot supposing my homestead rights were exhausted while the others tried for claims. McClane was successful, perhaps the others were.

I raced for Perry, starting at a place six miles south of the county line and about ten miles from Perry. My horse was a Hambeltonian. I saw many abandoned horses

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and wagons along the road but I passed most of the home-seekers. We rode pretty fast as we beat the train in the race to Perry, passing it at the first section south of the water tank.

But when we got to the town it was already alive with people. I had driven straight north. I located a lot up by the Catholic church whose spire is a well known landmark. I have a picture that we took in the next day or so, down in a little dry creek bed south of town where a number of people were encamped. I had a dog tent. But some campers merely stretched a straight piece of canvas under the trees. Unless we wanted to wait in line at the railroad water tank, we had to buy water from peddlers on the street who were selling water from barrels. We were liberal therefore with our canteens.

There was a fellow contesting my claim. We both sold out and I went back to Kansas. My brother secured the Northeast quarter of Section Twenty, Township twenty-two, Range four. McClane secured the Southeast quarter of Section twenty, Township twenty-two Range four, so they were close together.

We started by the first of November to come to our claims. We reached our claims on the eighth of November and I went to my brother's claim. One night we camped on Black Bear Creek and we camped the last night about on the line of Lincoln Township. The McClanes were with us.

We settled a short distance west of our present home on my brother's place. This present place was school land and could not be homesteaded but we leased it as soon as possible. We lived on brother's and McClane's place till 1897, then came to this place about fifteen miles east of Enid.

Our first home was a dugout with not even an arched roof. One night or perhaps it was in the early morning it caved in. My wife thought that I was throwing dirt but soon the dirt covered the bed and she realized what was taking place. Later we lived in a ten by sixteen foot shack with one-six's going straight up and down. This shack was swept by a hoe.

Soon after arriving on my brother's place we went one day to Enid for supplies. There were no roads, not even where the present cement highway is. We, therefore, had

difficulty in crossing the draws, so we unhitched one of our wagons, leaving lumber in it and took our load of hay on in horse.

We had difficulties at first. Some people say they cannot eat our fish, but we found them in the creek and enjoyed them. As for kaffir corn, it tastes good and cooked as a cereal, then fried or steamed like hominy. We bought flour only occasionally and we bought the cheaper grades.

We had a good chicken house at first. Also on my brother's place a small stable was constructed, later in line with this another building erected and these two were finally joined with a shed. A stable on the side of a barn was another early building.

We built here in 1897 and have the same buildings now that we did then. The house has had the same cypress roof and the rest of the structure and the outbuildings are almost as we had them forty years ago. Houses were built to stay in those days.

I bought the first wheat in Marshall. It was seed wheat and I paid thirty-five cents a bushel for it.



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Wheat did no good till 1895. When I secured a heavy crop. In fact, I think I made nearly thirty-five bushels to the acre on some of the uplands.

When we came, there was not the beautiful timber you see now along the creek for the country was burned off every year. After the country was settled up, this practice was stopped.

The summer after our arrival we got a star of cattle. We had brought horses and three dozen chickens with us, and one of the first years I broke a hundred acres of land.

We were among the first to haul wheat and cattle to Enid. There was of course no railroad at Garber. I had quite a few cattle in those early days and I raised corn and hogs. I used to haul these fat hogs to Oklahoma City. I went to the Fanny postoffice for mail and we sometimes traded one mile north of our place at Porter's store.

Some wonder why we do not raise a larger variety of crops in this section. The reason is that the wheat draws moisture and heat from the air and soil.

One of our earliest improvements was a pipe from the milk house to the horse tank three hundred feet away.

There was quite a lot of game here at first. I shot an antelope shortly after coming here and also shot a deer out in Dewey County.

It is true that the country looked a little wild at first. The prairie fires had burned all the timber and you did not see the nice trees you now see along the creek. There were a few Indians going through but they never bothered us here. There were pests too. I know a man who when he woke up one morning and put on his clothes felt something and shook a tarantula out of his pants which scared him considerably. This man's name was Duncan.

Jennie Porter was the school teacher at the school nearby. I doubt if she had more than an eight grade education. I know that the school had no bought furniture. It had just plank benches and the seats were made out of sawed lumber. At first the school was in Jennie Porter's own home.

The seasons even have changed. When we came here I raised so much better fruit than I do now. We had fine peaches, apricots, gooseberries, raspberries and grapes.

After a storm the fruit and berries would roll for two or three hundred feet from the orchard to the hog lot. We had so much fruit we could not sell it. Nowadays we eat green tomatoes ripened by electricity. Nothing like the big tomatoes I used to see in the Red River Valley where I worked for the Akron Harvesting Company for eight years.

There was an old fence trail four or five miles east of here, just east of the Garber-Covington paving. About where the Sinclair Refining Company camp is now.

People are not as sociable now as they were then. The ladies used to have quiltings and they would tack rags—that is, they would cut them into narrow rags strips for rugs or carpets. We old settlers felt ourselves to be relatives and not merely neighbors. Renters came later like blackbirds. They took much and left little. We used to have a church and school one mile east. Recently a man bought this building for a barn.

Of course there were inconveniences. It was five miles to a doctor, but as we only had one child, we were fortunate in seldom having any sickness. Our child is Frank H. Walker now living in Garber.

We have the furniture we had at the time of the run. This includes an old weight clock, over one hundred years old, a chair made long before 1882, the canteen we used in the run, a cupboard with screen doors and other antiques. The clock was my grandfather's, and with a little repair would keep good time.

We would sometimes trade at the old Fanny postoffice, one mile north of here or at Lewella, a half mile east and a mile south. John Riley was the proprietor. Sometimes we went to Harry's store, which was two miles south and one mile west of our home.

My parents are buried in Garber; my wife's parents in Clay County, Kansas.

This year my wheat made twenty-three bushels to the acre, which was about the best for twenty years. We cut it early too.

I am now doing road work and not much farming.