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Nannie Lee Burns
Investigator
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Interview with Harvey L. Wallace
Wyandotte, Oklahoma
THE BOY PREACHER

My father was Eli Wallace; he was born in Kentucky, September 8, 1824, and my mother was Sarah Wallace nee Christie born November 10, 1822, in Indiana. I was born May 8, 1869, near Bloomfield, Indiana, and was the youngest of thirteen children. I was six months old when my family left Indiana for Kansas by wagon. I have heard them say that it was a hard trip and the weather grew very cold before they reached Kansas and they have often mentioned one incident of that trip. When crossing the Mississippi River one of the colts jumped from the boat into the river. A boat was secured and two of my brothers started down stream after the colt which was reached when it was growing tired and they managed to get it to the shore.

When I was twelve years old my parents came from Kansas to McDonald County, Missouri. This trip was also made in the fall and we were five weeks on the way with two teams. One was a team of horses and the other was

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an ox team. Some of us would drive the team of horses and the ox team would follow. The weather was bad and we had much snow on the trip and the roads were bad.

From McDonald County in 1883, we moved to the Indian Territory and settled two miles east of the place where Wyandotte now is and lived that winter in a little log house, the fifteen of us. The following spring my father moved to the Zane place near the Spring River Ford (near the mouth of Spring River). Here, I, like many other lads of that day, spent my days in plenty of work and a little schooling moving often for the next several years and at each place doing some improving such as clearing, building houses, adding chimneys, making rails and fencing fields. At that time there was no Wyandotte and the stop that was east of the present depot was called the "Shawnee Switch" where the trains on the Frisco stopped for water at Grand River west of town. A man named Watson, who tended the water tank, had a little store and a post office called Grand River.

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I have seen as many as five deer on the railroad track at a single time. I have only killed one deer - but during my boyhood days and even after I was married, hunted much at night for coon, opossums etc. I sold the coon hides at Seneca, Missouri, our nearest trading point, to Murdock for 25 cents and ^{an} opossum hide brought from 10 to 15 cents. Turkey, prairie chickens, squirrels etc., were killed for home use.

I remember that in those first years there was a colony of beavers at the Oilstrap Ford at the mouth of Sycamore Creek. I saw one there at work one day before he saw me. The logs cut by the beavers were four to ten feet long and some of them were quiet good-sized trees. The beavers began by gnawing around a tree in a circle and continued to go around. The logs were mostly ash. After these logs were felled, they were rolled into position by the beavers and then sticks, mud and other things were placed between the logs to make the dam waterproof. After they were gone, another boy and I dug back from the opening of one of their

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homes just above the water line to see the inside and in so doing followed a tunnel twelve or fourteen feet when we reached the den which was a square place about three feet high, three feet long and three feet wide. The traps used then were double spring beaver traps.

There were really no roads, only trails which never had any work done on them; if a trail got too bad to pull the wagon through or to ride over you just found another way around the bad place and went on. The only way that could be called a road was between Vinita and Seneca, Missouri. This followed the railroad right-of-way along the Frisco. Farther west through Fairland had been the old Military Road between Baxter Springs, Kansas, and Fort Gibson. Then there were trails leading to points of minor interest.

Racing held most often on Saturday afternoons was another form of amusement. Our tracks were crude affairs in those days. They were straight and many ways were devised to smooth the track. I have seen Father take an old iron wash kettle of Mother's and hitch it to something and drag it along the track. It was mostly

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community racing and the bets were very small and little or no money was bet on the races though sometimes people would bet knives and other personal belongings. There was one track on the prairie between the Modoc settlement and Seneca and another across the river from Turkey Ford.

We had no bridges and only ferries across the streams. Hicks and Audrain had a ferry across the river west of Wyandotte, Tom Angel was killed on this ferry. He had been drinking and was quarrelsome and the river was "up" and was dangerous. Tom Angel tried to throw Ike Swallows, a white man, off the ferry into the river and to save himself Ike Swallows killed Angel, but I do not remember his ever having to serve any time for it. On Angel's land near old Prairie City, Euna and I ran a ferry for a short time.

I have seen several of the towns and cities around here start; among them are Miami, in 1891, Fairland a year or two before. I also saw Grove established and Anderson in McDonald County, Missouri. My brother

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moved the Audrain store from old Prairie City, now Ogeechee to Fairland. It was the first store in the new location. When they decided to move the town of Prairie City to the present site of Fairland, they were a month moving the frame building a little over two miles. My brother was working for Brown at his sawmill and he let my brother use his ox team to move it. They would drive a stake a short distance ahead and with pulleys pull the building up a short way. The building had small rollers under it and they would lay down planks for the rollers. Engle moved the first blacksmith tools from Miami to Wyandotte for the shop here.

None of us made the run of '89 but I had an uncle living in Kansas, who owned a large tract of land there who said that he was going if he only had a blanket. He was named John Wallace and he went to the run of '89 and none of his family ever heard of him afterwards.

After Mother's death I returned to McDonald County, Missouri, where I married Elizabeth Pinkle

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and we soon returned here and went to housekeeping in a little two-room house just northeast of Wyandotte in the house next to the one occupied by Jerry Hubbard, the Friends' missionary here then. We were married forty-eight years ago at Anderson, Missouri, and both of the witnesses to our wedding are still living there. All I had was an old gray pony, a hound dog, a gun and a fiddle.

It was that year that Jerry Hubbard decided to leave the Wyandotte Mission and to locate north of Afton on the Cherokee side and they did not want to leave their house vacant and so he came to us and said, "Harve, wonder if thee and Lizzie would move into the parsonage if I will leave a camping outfit there?" He had always seemed to think a great deal of me and I liked to whittle and fiddle; in those days, some folks wondered about me whether I would amount to much or not but he was always saying, "Thee is going to make a preacher." I drove one of the wagons that hauled their goods to the new home and Jerry and Aunt Mary went ahead in their buggy. The wagon behind me was drawn by his two ponies, Paddy and Sullivan, and driven by a lad. Sullivan was balky and when he reached the middle

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of the river he lay down, and I went on and on for the
the river. I looked back and saw it and so leaving my
team, I waded back to the wagon that was in the river and
on which their youngest son, Harry Hubbard was riding.
unsnaped the horse and got him up and took Harry out of
my wagon. The weather was cold and I was wet and
Mary fished me out a pair of Jerry's trousers which I got
into in the nearby woods. Jerry was not only a horse man
but a fleshy man as well and I was a straggler of a size,
so I had to draw up the trousers. It was after dark that
night when we reached his new home and that night beside
my plate there was a box containing a new pair of nice
Sunday shoes.

That fall a Methodist preacher was holding a revival
in a brush arbor and it was during this time that I was
converted. I was twenty-three when I began my missionary
work which was evangelistic in type. I had a church and
was referred to as "The Boy Preacher", a name that clung
to me for many years. I continued to farm and got a woman
named Lizzie Carter, to stay with my wife when I was away
from home. My first services were held in caves, hollows,

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and on the front porches of people's homes and if the weather was too bad inside their homes. John Harris had built a house around a cave and it was standing on his front porch with my crowd in his yard facing me that I held my first service.

I have never learned the language of either the Wyandottes or Senecas enough to talk to them, but this was unnecessary in the Wyandotte Nation as scarcely any of them can speak their native language, but a great part of the Senecas understood no English and there are still a very few among them who cannot speak English today, so this situation called for an interpreter. This is difficult as much of our language is backwards to their way of expressing it. Reed Winney was my assistant most of the time. To illustrate the statement, "That belongs to whom?" with them it is "Who belongs to that?" I served most of my time at Council House. For some time I was considered so young that they would not give me a charge so I rode the hills preaching and talking wherever I got a few people together and I tried to establish missions at various places. I accepted a call to hold a meeting

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near Pryor the year of the Galveston flood and stayed in a house where one night the snow covered my bed.

At another time I attempted to establish a mission at Bethany, not far from Grove. Here I had good crowds for Sunday School and church but I had no means of support and I could not ^{make} enough money by the farming I took time from the work to do. I worked for 50 cents a day. I have gone at all hours of the day and night to answer the calls of the sick and when I could not reach them by buggy I have gone on foot and horseback. One night I was called to see an old Indian lady who had a cancer and could not recover. She had already insisted that they get her grave clothes and let her see them. As I was getting ready to start, my wife gave me a new handkerchief tied up nicely and when I reached there this Indian woman seemed so pleased with the little gift. She had decided that they should buy her coffin and bring it to the house and this was what they wanted me to talk to her about and I was able to persuade her that she might live a long time and they had no room to keep the coffin in the house.

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In those days we had to get permits to do things and I had to get two permits to perform marriage ceremonies. My first was a Federal license obtained from Muskogee which cost me \$2.50 and later a State license from Miami which cost me 50 cents. I charged \$2.00 for marriage ceremonies and with few exceptions have been paid. When Ed Turkey came to my house to be married one snowy day, after the ceremony he said to me, "Have got no money, license costs like hell." Another man obtained his marriage license and lost them and a year later found them in the lining of his coat and brought them to me and asked me if they were any good then? I replied that I thought not but he had not troubled to get any others and the couple had already established a home. I married my brother and his wife and went with them all the way to Miami in a wagon to do it.

My salary even after I was given a charge was small and I always farmed and did other work outside. My salary for years was \$30.00 a month but as preacher I have had everything given me from pumpkins to a red rooster. When we were at Bethany we lived in an old one-room log house and the rats were very bad. One night my wife was awakened by a sliding noise and on investigation found

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that it was a rat dragging one of our son Russel's shoes across the room. When I received my first assignment, that was at Council House, I had leased a farm from Alphas Brown and had with him the only written lease that I had ever had. He had come to me the year before and wanted to lease me his place but he was not of age and when he was he came back and told me that he wanted me to have the place and that to make me safe he would get Jerry Hubbard to do the writing. I took a running lease and was to have the land that I cleared free of rent each year. It was to be a three years lease but when I was appointed to take charge of the Council House meeting, I asked him to release me and to accept in return the work that I had already completed. He did so and I moved to the Council House where in all I served thirty-two years among the Senecas.

COUNCIL HOUSE

Council House, located in the southeast part of this county near the county line, was first called the Seneca Mission but the confusion of names with Seneca, Missouri, caused them to change the name to Council House. For many years there was a regular council house there and we paid

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our permits or taxes as we called it there. Council House Mission was not established until 1883 after the four missions that comprised the Grand River Monthly Meeting of the Friends. The original were, Ottawa, Modoc, Seneca and Wyandotte. Quapaw Mission school continued for some years and had many Friends or Quakers among the instructors and they established, south of Lincolnville, the mission that was later sold to the Catholics. Most of the Quapaws were Catholics. The foundation of this mission was of rock and was laid by John Winney on forty acres of land, given by the Senecas. The Friends Committee furnished the money for the building. Then the building was out in the thick woods and I began to work to get them to clear up the land, but the Indians were superstitious and not interested, so I began to cut the wood around the church and had some wood cuttings, and the second year when we had a wood-cutting John Mingo, who was the Seneca Chief, came and looked on a while and after looking around, said, "I guess I was wrong, that looks a heap better." Next, I succeeded in getting the land fenced and after that it was not so hard and then I suggested that they let me have the care of the cemetery.

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They did and I remained here three years and then my wife and I came to the Ottawa Mission one year but our friends, the Senecas, wanted us to return to Council House, which we did. This time we purchased for \$400.00 thirty-six of the forty acres and they reserved four acres for the church and cemetery.

I farmed some each year, my wife raised chickens and kept several cows and on this, with our small salary, we have managed to live there until two years ago when my health failed so much that we thought it best to leave as I could not longer act as pastor. They wanted to build another house for the new pastor and let us stay there to look after things, but we felt that this would be a hardship on the new pastor, so we came to Wyandotte and even yet the people will insist on bringing their affairs to me here for advice, which is not fair to their present pastor. When I purchased the land I paid \$100.00 down and had to borrow the greater part of that.

I have become familiar with the lore of the Senecas and I think they liked me because I tried to be a friend

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to them by sharing with them. I have even lighted the fire for them at night on the graves. It was this way; it was customary that a fire be kindled each night for three nights after the funeral. I lived adjoining the graveyard and did not know this until one day I was approached by one of them and asked if I would light a fire at a grave that evening just after dark. They said the woman who had been doing it could not, for some reason, do it that night. I told them that if it would help any I would do so. So that evening I gathered some kindling and went to the grave and raked together some leaves, sticks and small wood and soon had a good fire going. Afterwards, I learned that the Senecas were watching me from across the valley to see if I would build the fire. Also, I learned that they took only a few leaves and it was not the size of the fire but the tiny spiral of smoke ascending that was supposed to keep the evil spirits away and their fires had been so small that I had never discovered them. Some of them still insist that the coffin be notched to allow the spirit to come and go easily. I have assisted at most of the funerals and have even taken the part of their chief a few times in his absence.

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At the beginning of the funeral service, the chief stands at the head of the casket which is always open and looks directly at the occupant and talks to it and tells him or her that he or she has made a good start and to go on and not be afraid, etc., then after a pause, he addresses himself to the relatives and tells them that it is well with their deceased relative and that they should help him or her and not to fuss among themselves about any inheritances etc.

At first, before the cemeteries were protected by fences, they built covered pens over and around the grave but now they are marked by a stake or a rock at first. If it is a husband who passes the wife is dressed in a black dress for the funeral and her hair is left hanging down unplaited, sometimes tied with a black ribbon. She is dressed by her nearest woman relative and she wears this dress until the ninth day, the night of the death supper, then the same woman comes and combs her hair and dresses her, takes off the black dress for the supper to be given that night at the home of the departed. Relatives and friends prepare the food for the supper and no salt

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is used in any of the food and if you do not like to eat it that way you take your salt along with you and you are allowed to salt it before you eat the food. Sometimes if one person forgets his or her salt they will borrow from another. Besides the supper, they give presents away including the things that belong to the deceased, his clothing etc. I have attended many of these suppers and have also conducted them in the absence of their chief. Once I was given the baby's blanket when I conducted the dead supper. After this supper the wife can resume her ordinary life.

I know of nothing different in their way of marrying, but as my church and home was on the county line, many persons would get their marriage licenses in Delaware County south of me and come to my home to be married. Across the ^{road} south of the church was a large rock that I named the marrying rock, and to this would take the couples and there perform the ceremony and I have even ~~taken my congregation with me for the ceremony.~~

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When a baby is born it is not dressed in clothing at first, but with its hands at its sides is wrapped securely in a blanket which covers the body to the chin and it wears this for two or three weeks.

The Senecas have continued to observe their old tribal customs more closely than any other tribe in this part of the state. They have many dances and feasts through the year. All of these are still conducted in their native tongue. It is about time now for their War Dance which is really a prayer for growing crops and thanks for the seed time. This will be followed by the Strawberry Dance, the Blackberry Dance, etc., and the main observance will be the Green Corn feast held at the full moon in August. The musical instruments used by them are the turtle shell rattle, the drum which is covered with skins, the leg bells also the turtle shells which are fastened around the leg between the knee and ankle. The Senecas held their first feasts and ceremonies at the old grounds near Tiff City, Missouri.

We spent thirty-two years at Council House and it was with regret that we sold our home and came to Wyandotte

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to live. During the time that we were there I made trips elsewhere and assisted other pastors. Once when I was near Shawnee and among the Shawnees, the minister there was having no success with his charge and I was talking in his place, one night in December, and it was cold when I noticed an Indian standing out in front of the church in the yard listening and later I learned that it was Joe Billie and he said after that, "I like that preacher. He is a brave man. He got scar on his face." One other time they brought the body of a Seneca Indian who had died in the Osage County home to bury him. It was in December and the snow was deep and this body had an overcoat on in the casket and they buried this Indian's body with the overcoat still on.