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METZ, GEORGE. INTERVIEW.

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Experiences of a brakeman on the  
railroad as given by George Metz,  
Route 3, Bartlesville, Oklahoma

George Metz was born October 9, 1873, at Buchanan, Michigan. Father--George Metz, Sr., was born in France. He came to the United States when he was a young man and worked in Michigan as a cooper and a lumberman. He married and lived in Michigan until his health failed, then decided to return to France in the hope of regaining his health. He died in France at the age of 50 years. Mother-Sarah Weaver-Metz died at Leavenworth, Kansas, and is buried in South Bend, Indiana. She died at the age of eighty-eight years.

I came to the Indian Territory from Springfield, Missouri, at the time of the A.R.W. strike in 1891. I secured work as a brakeman on the Missouri, Kansas and Texas railroad, my run being from Muskogee, Indian Territory, to Denison, Texas, and our train-master being named Gill. I was brakee on this run for six months.

One night in January, 1892, it was near zero weather and a light rain and sleet were falling. There were three brakees on the freight, and we were going down grade when the engineer whistled for brakes. I was setting the brakes when I slipped and fell between the cars. I caught and hung

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to the slats in the cattle car until the head brakeman came back to see what had happened, when the brakes did not hold. I was in the hospital in Denison for six months.

We would often hear screams and shots along the track at night, and the next day some one would be found dead. We never made investigations for the less we knew, the better off we were.

One night we stopped at a little place, I do not remember the name of the town, for lunch, and while we were eating we heard someone quarreling outside. Two men ran into the lunchroom and on upstairs. We heard shots but they jumped out of the window and escaped. The officers were after them and we learned they were outlaws. The first thing I learned about this outlaw country was to keep out of other people's disputes.

The trains were coupled with pins and links in those days and it was not safe for the brakees. I was reported killed while coupling cars and when three years later I returned to Leavenworth, Kansas, to visit my mother she nearly collapsed when she saw me. She was in the garden when I arrived, and thinking I had been dead for three years, my coming was a terrible shock.

I never made enemies by throwing tramps off the

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train. If they could pay, I collected; and if they could not pay, they rode just the same. One tramp I remember in particular had a boy with him and they had a large trunk they lifted into the box car. When I discovered them, I collected what I could from them and let them ride.

Our run was through the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations but we were not molested by the Indians. They were becoming more civilized then and were more accustomed to the trains.

In 1897 I married Jessie Owsley at Clinton, Missouri. After two years on the farm we moved to Joplin, Missouri, where we lived until 1908; we came to Oklahoma and settled in Bartlesville where I worked in the oil field. We have made our home in Oklahoma and across the line in Kansas since that time.