

MINTON, JACOB D. . INTERVIEW.

#1282

359

BIOGRAPHY FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

360

Field Worker's name Merrill A. NelsonThis report made on (date) May 5, 1937 1937Insurance business1. Name Jacob D. Minton2. Post Office Address 311 Stevenson Building, Enid, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) P.O. Box 866.1223 W. Broadway, St.,4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 13 Year 18635. Place of birth Wood County, Ohio.Halfway between Tontogany and Bowling Green, Ohio.6. Name of Father William H. Minton Place of birth Morristown,Other information about father 100 day service, Civil War. ^{N.J.} See Story7. Name of Mother Sallie Woodbury Place of birth Falmouth, Mass.Other information about mother See Story.

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 15.

MR. J. E. MINTON'S STORY

My father, William H. Minton, settled near Bowling Green, in 1833. He homesteaded a piece of school land. The only thing put on the record of the deed to him was a patent from the state.

My mother's father was a Congregational man. All my people were radical prohibitionists. Mother's father established the First Congregational Church of Plain, Ohio. Mother was very religious and her people were early settlers locating about the same place. The family burying lot is near this old church.

I was the sixth of seven children, there being two brothers, B. H. Minton, eleven years older, and Henry M., three years older, both of whom are dead.

My sisters were Alice J., now dead; Lillie C., now living and Charlotte, who lives in Evanston, Illinois. Another sister, Mabel, lives in Los Angeles. I came to Erie Wednesday after the run. I saw the soldier at Caldwell fire the ^{an} gun that started it. I had illness of lung trouble at the time of which I have since recovered in this climate. Otherwise I would have made the run. I also purchased a bicycle which helped me.

2

On the day of the run, I went down to the state line from Caldwell, a short distance, about 2 miles. There were at least five thousand people at that point. It was a hot day. My brother-in-law, H. A. Ross, made the run. He stuck his spurs into his pony's ribs and went a mile down the line. He got a fine claim. His horse was a dun Indian pony and it led the gang down the trail. (The Chisholm Trail.) A Rock Island train group followed right along.

I had spent some years in the insurance and loan business at Caldwell, S.P.G. Lewis (Known as Alphabet Lewis), and I ran the business. I was his assistant. I came to Enid and started my own business. I was about thirty years of age at the time.

I had represented the Springfield Fire and Marine Insurance business in Caldwell and here in Enid I was their first agent. Mr. Lininger, state agent for Kansas, and now Vice President of the company and a life member of the Oklahoma Historical Society aided me. His office is now in Chicago.

3

The first office I had was with an attorney, Mr. Cotton. It was a frame office east of the Land office on Grand, near where the Silver Moon Cafe is now. I rented desk room for eight dollars a month. Now my office is modernly equipped and rents for several times that amount. I had a space six feet square with two plain chairs, not swivels. I had a spool case filled with supplies, which I brought with me from Caldwell.

I knew a lot of people from Caldwell. They took claims. When they made an entry on land there was too big a crowd around the office for them to wait. Finally they put a tent on the back of a lot near the land office where Broadway tower is now. Any one wanting their number in the line paid ten cents, and they would then come to me and for a consideration, I would watch for the time when it was their turn to file and would wire them to appear at the land office.

I would also make out filing papers. I received \$2.50 for this. . . . As I was right across from

4

the land office, this business, with a little insurance - I was the only agent for a while - kept me going.

The rush to the land office continued for some time. The Registrar of the land office, Patterson, was appointed from Atlanta. He was a high stepping fellow and had a fine span of serrel or bay horses hitched to a coach or buggy. He was quite a fellow to drink.

J. L. Eisenburg, editor of the Enid Daily Wave, became displeased with him on account of the way the printing of the homestead entries was managed (though formerly friendly), and made remarks about Patterson. Eisenburg liked liquid refreshments also. Patterson ran after Eisenburg, threatening to kill him. The city marshal undertook to prevent him. Patterson shot him in the lungs, and ran out the back door of a saloon. The marshal, Williams, leaned his gun against the side of the door and shot Patterson. The bullet went in the right ear (or left) and out the other. The saloon was

next door to the corner of Broadway and Grand on the south side of Broadway. The Marshal came out of the saloon and into the Drug store on the corner run by S. H. Allen and sat down in a chair and died (internal hemorrhage), in the front of the drug store. Eisenburg did not come back for a few weeks on account of the feeling.

There were runaways on the square in those days, but they did not occur very often. Hitching racks lined both sides of the square. Old wagon boxes full of straw and clutter filled the court yard. The wind would blow it all over the square. The ground became bare, (and the dust from this would blow also).

When the Strip was opened the government established several county seats on paper. For Grant County, they established a location just across the Salt Fork from Jefferson, instead of where Pond Creek is now, and North Enid instead of Enid as the county seat. But the Indians had a right to make allotments and one old Indian selected a place where N. Enid was.

6

The Rock Island had already planned to make North Enid and the old Pond Creek Site county seats, and bought the land from the Indian or Indians. It seems that the government got wind of what the Rock Island was doing and they moved the County Seat of 'O' County, the present Garfield, to the present Enid and temporarily located the Grant County site at the present Pond Creek. The result was that neither Enid nor Pond Creek had any railroad facilities for one year to a day.

During the year lots of things happened. Bridges were blown up and burned, and the Rock Island had trouble in keeping the track in shape. In the summer of '94 the situation became desperate. The citizens of Enid were afraid the railroad would burn the town. There was no fire protection so a police force was organized. About one hundred and twenty-five special police served 3-4 months. There were about 25 in a squad. I still have the police certificate. The town was practically under martial law. The men would take

7

turns patrolling the town with Winchesters. I patrolled a beat about where Main Street is now, near the tracks. We would halt everybody and make them explain their business. The trains kept going thru, passenger and freight. The government mail pouch was put off. It would hit the ground and bounce in the air.

An arm reached out from the train and picked up the out-going mail bag. (Pat Wilcox, now of the Central National Bank, was the postmaster.)

There had been a bill in Congress to compel the railroad to stop here, but through railroad influence, the bill did not pass. When things began to happen, however, the bill did pass.

Just before the bill passed in the fall of 1894, my wife came down here. She and her father and child lived in a small home or shack a little to the south of the square. There were just a few buildings here then on that side of the square. One morning a man came riding across prairie dog

8

town, (yes-you could almost shoot a prairie dog from your front porch) riding a mule,. He went south to the trestle and I followed. Before I tell what happened, I might say that the government had sent soldiers there in 1894 to patrol the tracks but the citizens got acquainted with them and got them to drinking so the line was not always well taken care of.

The Rock Island train had just come along. The engine had got over. The caboose hung - on the south side of the trestle. The freight cars filled with wheat and lumber were down in the ditch. The railroads began to see the hand writing on the wall. One 'bum' was killed when the freight train left the track. This accident occurred about 5:00 AM, just ahead of the passenger train.

The railroad trains went slower when these disturbances began and when they began to tear up track. They would stop at a trestle and look it over. Finally

one day a message came to C. J. Fleming. It read:

"If the people of Anid will raise \$2,500, the Rock Island will put in a depot and the north bound train from Dallas will stop, and from thenceforth the Rock Island will give Anid service."

The money was quickly raised, and some day I believe, and you never saw such a crowd as there was at East Broadway when that Dallas train came through.

I had been here by myself the first fall and winter. I lived in a tent between where the Montgomery Ward Store and the First National Bank are now. There was no street there then nor any of the three National Highways. In fact tents were everywhere where streets are now in the early days. One of the persons I met first was M. H. Champlin. He was reclining in a tent just across the street on the east side of Grand and Randolph on the lot across from the first National Bank.

10

Among the stores was a frame bank building where the Kress store is now. The President was a Wichita man, George Theis, now dead. It became the Bank of Knid. It changed hands three or four times. Then it moved to the middle of the lot on the North corner of Broadway and Grand, and finally to the west of the same lot where it is now located, and is known as the Central National Bank.

Another firm was Gannon and Goulding. Pat Goulding, after the state capital had been moved to Oklahoma City, became a state legislator. They did a loan business.

Eber Cotton was a good land office lawyer. He had had experience in Western Nebraska and knew how to handle cases to good advantage.

B. E. Chappett had the block in the Jonesville Addition where the First National Bank now is. He stayed there for 10 or 15 years.

Charles Elliott, attorney, and Dodson was another firm, on this same lot as the Stevenson building. They

11

had a tent first, then a frame building. Elliott used it for a law office. This was just west of the Broadway tower. Then it was used as a drug store. Fleming paid \$15,000 for the lot. He bought it about 1900 and sold it again, in 1905, using it for the Bank of Enid. Then it was sold to Arch Stevenson and his brother-in-law, Sam Evans, for \$17,500. It was still an old frame shack in 1906. Then the present Stevenson building was erected.

There were from 3-5 frame buildings erected here at the very first. They were scattered in different parts of town. There was no high school at first. Watson, who was not very prominent, was one of the first principals.

John G. Moore was the first mayor. Charles Moore was an appointed Mayor. Later they were elected.

The first thing the early city fathers did, after the manner of politicians, was to vote themselves

12

a good salary. Among the six members of the Council were H. D. White, Edmond Frantz, and Luke Faubain (Faw-be-an). Faubain was an ignorant farmer who proved up on a claim. (Mr. Lee has a picture of the early city council).

There were two or three desperados here in the early days. Among those were Zip Wyatt, and Dick Yeager and a fellow named Black, his companion. They were ambushed near Ringwood. Black was killed as he hid behind a tree. Yeager got away. He held up a farmer and took his horse and buggy. He went to a place near Marshall. He then entered a cornfield with the corn, head high. The officers trailed him. They found where he had abandoned the buggy and started into the corn field. There they found him asleep. They pulled up their Winchesters and shot him ingloriously. They brought him here and kept him in jail several weeks before he died.

13

There were a couple of bad men in a restaurant across the alley on E. Broadway near the Broadway Tower location. Marshal William went in there. He had himself killed a man for \$700 and was not to be trifled with. "Stick'em up," he he said. They grabbed for their guns but he shot them first. He used to pull his trigger with his middle finger and was very quick. Rattle Snake Charlie was another. Three or four officers went to arrest him. They had quite a struggle and nearly tore all his clothes off him. I saw him in jail. Torn and almost naked. There were badger fights and all kinds of 'thunderbucket' jokes.

Dr. Rush was one of the first dentists. He came from Salt Lake City. His office was in the upper half story of a grocery store, just east of the Broadway Tower. He had an improvised dental chair and other rather primitive equipment. He gave nothing to ease pain.

I notaried here from the very first. For a while I was located in the Day building on N. Independence.

14

I have renewed my contract every four years since and still have the same seal press. However, the seal itself has had to be replaced once or twice, having worn out from use. The building was iron clad.

So far as I know, I was the first abstractor and the first insurance man here. Another abstractor was Lewis J. A. Vollers. He is now in Oklahoma City. Another was A. F. Buffington, who soon commenced making abstracts.

There were two or three personal banks in town. Old Mr. Spencer operated one of these. It was on the north side or next door to Cotton's Law office. He hardly had a dollar when he started his bank.

Judge M. C. Garber was located one mile south and a mile east of Garber. I remember seeing him in his country store. It was quite a nice store and had a good stock for a rural establishment.

Where the Broadway tower was, at first, there was a restaurant. The lot was often vacant. An iron clad

building was erected east of this in the middle of the block. There were two or three houses where the Bass Building now is. Woods, the first townsite treasurer, later placed a swimming pool there.

Old man Spencer was cashier in the "O" County Bank. The fall or winter of 1894 the bank closed and I lost eight or ten dollars. I had sent a check for that amount to a firm back east. The check was refused due to the failure of the bank.

About all you had to have in those days to start a bank was a sign, a safe, and a notice you would receive deposits. I had sent the check for ten dollars worth of medicine. I finally paid the ten dollars, but the bank never reopened or paid anything to its depositors.

I have three children, H. Lee Minton, who is with the Traveling Insurance Company of Milwaukee; Max Minton, who works in the office with me; and Virginia (Minton) Dailey of Ada, Oklahoma. Her husband is manager of the National Supply Company. My wife is still a member of the Enid Study Club, which is yet an active organization. It is with a great deal of pleasure that I have observed the growth of Enid, some of which I have recorded here.