



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

#4623

DEAN, JOHN W..

INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Augusta H. Custer

This report made on (date) June 22, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mr. John W. Dean

2. Post Office Address Geary, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 27 Year 1869

5. Place of birth Alton, Union County, Iowa.

6. Name of Father \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_

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 7.

➤ An Interview with Mr. John Dean, Geary, Oklahoma.  
By - Augusta H. Custer, Interviewer.  
June 22, 1937.

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I was born in Union County, Iowa, December 27, 1869. My parents moved about so much that it was hard for me to get an education and I doubt if I went any farther than the eighth grade.

When I was about twenty-two years of age, in 1891, I went to Guthrie and stayed around Kingfisher and Guthrie until the opening in County C, which is now Blaine County.

Governor Seay appointed Amos Ewing Commissioner to act as judge during the opening of this land. There were not many squatters in this section. Caddo County was known as the Big Pasture.

#### THE OPENING.

Two other men and I left Kingfisher on the morning of April 19, 1892, for Watonga. The land was open for settlement at twelve o'clock noon and the town lots at four P. M. We arrived in Watonga at 4:05; we left our wagon and all struck out for ourselves. I got some stakes

and found a place. After establishing my claim to the lot it was nine o'clock and I could not find the wagon as the men had moved it. I looked until eleven o'clock and could not find the right wagon among that sea of covered wagons, horses and tents. There were no landmarks except one hotel and that was the only two story building in the whole town.

I walked and walked until I heard some men talking inside a covered wagon and I asked them if I might lie down beneath their wagon. The horses were tied to the hind wheels of the wagon and had been fed some hay on the ground. These men gave me one cake from a bale of hay to use as a pillow and I tied a black silk handkerchief over my head and slept there until morning. It had drizzled rain all night and I was almost frozen.

I got a cup of coffee. Water was selling for 5 cents a cup as there were no wells near the town site. I found that our wagon was about a block from where I had spent the night and the others with whom I had come had enjoyed a warm comfortable night.

That morning another wagon arrived from Kingfisher with the barber chair that we had had sent over. We put up our tent on my half lot and opened up a barber shop and cigar factory. I worked half time and my partner, Will Cutter, the other half. My half lot was on Main street about where Graalman's Abstract Office is today.

Later I bought out a fellow and had a claim just east of Watonga, I was appointed U. S. Commissioner and Justice of the Peace by Judge J. H. Burford and my business was to look after the cutting of timber and the sale of liquor to Indians and report to the judge who was a Federal as well as a State officer. The Federal Grand Jury would investigate the cases. After the survey it was found that my claim was in another township and since it was necessary to have your home in the township where you held office the line was moved to take in my home. That is the reason Cedar Valley Township is seven sections from north to south; the line has never been corrected.

OUTLAWS

William McVickers was a noted cattle rustler, and one time he tried to drive out a bunch of cattle and drove them into a corner of a fence which he did not know was there and got caught.

Charlie Greenup and "Black" Stanley were also cattle rustlers. They kept the settlers on the outlook all the time to keep track of their live stock.

One time I recall Bill McVickers and "Black" Stanley had a quarrel; they were both excellent shots. Bill had a saloon on the corner where the Watonga Republican is today, and "Black" Stanley had a saloon on the opposite corner west. All one day they walked up and down the block; each was afraid to reach and draw his gun because he knew how quick and accurate his enemy was. They had that side of the street all to themselves while the citizens looked on. In the evening when McVickers was making the turn in front of his saloon some of his friends reached out and pulled McVickers into the saloon, and this gave both

men a chance to cool off,

Bill Roach, a cattle man was fond of strong liquor. He was arrested one day for being drunk and disorderly. He was not in fit condition to plead his case, and was placed in jail to sober up.

The jail was constructed of two thicknesses of 2X4's and was very solid and strong. Roach sobered up some and decided he would not stay in jail any longer. He tried to set fire to the building. The boards were so solid that they would not burn very readily, but succeeded in causing so much smoke that it almost smothered him. He had to call for help and the officer let him out.

An Arapaho Indian by the name of Howling Wolf attacked a white woman and was protected by his tribe so that it was impossible for the officers to get him. This was a notorious case in the early '90s.

I came to Geary when the town opened and had a barber shop; that was in 1901. I was appointed postmaster at Geary by President McKinley, June 16, 1901, and held

the position until 1915 when Woodrow Wilson was inaugurated.

I was in the post office when the Big Pasture was opened; they only drew a few names at a time and as everything was so expensive in El Reno the people shoved back into nearby towns. Geary had her share of these people. The "El Reno American" was a newspaper and I got two hundred of these papers every morning and I had to put a board up in the middle of the door and have the crowd line up and file in one way and out the other to buy the papers, as the lucky names were published in the paper.

Cunningham was the first Marshal in Geary. There was a raid planned by the citizens to clean up the town and all the negro element was run out with the exception of one Charlie Marshman, a cook in a bakery. This was a notorious affair in the history of Geary.

At one time there was a special train run in here from El Reno and passengers were riding all over the tops of the cars.



There was a "Honkey Tonk" sort of a road house run by Ben Whiel; this was the center of attraction. During this big, wild party Crate Hudspath was shot and killed. He was the first man to be shot in Geary. No one was convicted of Crate Hudspath's murder.

The second man was shot by Dock Trumbley. This man's name was Brown and he was a relative of Trumbley's so this was a family affair and Trumbley was cleared.