

MOORE, F. L.

(PIONEER STAGE DRIVER)

#7604

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LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns

This report made on (date) September 22, 1937

1. This legend was
secured from (name) F. L. Moore

Address R # 3 Afton, Oklahoma

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe Wife is Cherokee. Mr. Moore a squawman

2. Origin and history of legend or story _____

From memory

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank
sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets
attached 1

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Interview with F. L. Moore
Afton, Oklahoma Route 3

My parents were Samuel and Poly Moore nee Seeler, both born and raised and married in East Tennessee, near Knoxville.

I was the youngest of several children and was born February 7, 1854, on Indian Creek in Newton County, Missouri.

My parents came by wagon to Missouri and had to build their own log house, and while they were comfortable they had to work very hard, making most every thing at home, from clothes to furniture.

The Civil War commencing when I was seven, I did not get to go to school as boys do today.

We left our Missouri home the last year of the War, after Price made his raid from Missouri to Texas, and our family moved to Texas and stayed till after the War.

CIVIL WAR DAYS

Old Bob Christian, who lived near Newtonia, Missouri, was the head of a bunch that bushwhacked in our part of the country.

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They robbed, stole and killed; burned houses and tortured as well.

Old Bob, trying to force the women to tell where the men were, would pull off the finger nails of the women with bullet molds. He would go so far in his torture as to cut off their ears.

He and his bunch burned our house twice and would not let us save anything; he forced us to stand by and see our home and all our belongings burn; our beds, bedding and what we had to eat as well as the children's clothes etc.

He hated my father, as we were rebels, and when Uncle Lewis Moore came or rather stopped to see his step-mother, Bob Christian thought Uncle Lewis was my father. Bob shot Uncle Lewis and then, hanging his body to a tree, shot it to pieces.

After that, on the way to our house this raiding party met my Sister Nan, who lived near, and Bob said to her, "I am the man that killed your G--d--Daddy."

Reaching our house, they set fire to it. He struck my mother over the head with a fire chunk, and

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she carried to her grave a big scar of the burn.

Shortly after that, Father met Bob and told him, "I am going to kill you for killing Lewis." He shot and crippled him, disarming him. Bob begged him not to kill him, but was told that he was going to get some of the torture that he had been giving others. Father scalped him while he was still alive and hollering. Afterwards he took the scalp, washed it in the creek, rolled it up and put it in his pocket. General Price had offered a reward for the capture of Christian, but my father's hatred of Bob for the murder of Uncle Lewis was so intense that he killed him instead of taking him alive.

That night when he came home, he said to me, "Lewis, have you any feed."

Sitting before the fire that evening with Mother sitting on his right, he pulled the rolled up scalp from his pocket and tossed the roll into her lap. She drew back and the scalp fell to the hearth and partially unrolled. In the light of the fire, she saw it, and she said, "That's Bob Christian's scalp." He made me dry

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it before the fire and when he left he had a square of the skin just above and in front of each ear fastened on each side of his bridle.

Bill, a son of Bob Christian, was born with only one ear. Shortly after this, my family went to Texas. After the close of the War my father moved his family to the Choctaw Nation, close to Sulphur Springs, north of Red River.

We did not remain here long, as my parents decided to come back to their old home in southern Missouri, but stopped on Horse Creek, near Afton. We settled on the old Knight place, two miles east and two south of Afton.

We had an old log house here with two rooms each 16X16 and an entry 12X16. There was no well but a spring about two hundred yards east of the house. My father made wagons and he built a shop at once. It was on posts set in the ground and with a clapboard roof.

I was fourteen at this time. W. M. Chitison of Baxter Springs, owner of the stage and teams that traveled between that City and Cabin Creek, needed a driver. He and my father

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were friends and Bob Knight, who had the Stage barn here where we lived, recommended that Mr. Chitison try me, saying that he could not find a better driver or one who would take better care of the horses. So I began to drive across the prairies and this unsettled country when I was fourteen.

The stage coach was painted red and the place where the passengers rode was enclosed in glass and seated twelve people, though I have crowded fourteen in it. I rode in a boot outside and up above. This was open, but was fixed so I could close it in and protect myself in bad, cold or stormy weather. A compartment for the mail sacks, of which there were four, was beneath my seat and outside of where the passengers rode. When extra crowded I have taken two up on the seat with me. The stage coach had a brake staff and iron axles with a frame on the back to carry trunks and baggage. I drove four horses or mules between each stand. I used chain harness with no bridle reins, but my tongue team had breeching on them to hold them back.

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THE TEAMS

Between Baxter Springs and Poolers I drove horses. Peacock and Wiley were chestnut sorrels spotted on the hips and had Arabian blood. The others, Tom and Jim were bays and freegoers. I would have to hold them back.

—From Pooler's to Knight's I drove Tom a big gray, and Jerry a bay, with a sorrel team, Bob and Dick, as the lead team. From Knight's to Cabin Creek I drove mules. Beck and Tom, my tongue team, were black mules. Eddy and Tess, bay mare mules, were my lead team.

Let me tell you something here. In driving, if a storm or a norther came up the mules could just tuck their heads and beat it to the next stop, but if I happened to be driving the horses, they would try to beat off the road from the storm.

THE DRIVE.

I met Jim Stean, who drove from Cabin to Fort Gibson, every other night at Lewis Kells, who had the stage stand and hotel at Cabin, above the mouth of Cabin Creek. Here I transferred the passengers who were going on south to him, and he turned to me those who were going north. Both stages spent

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the night here. The Kell Home, which served as the hotel, was a two story six or seven room frame structure. Early the next morning we were up, getting our teams harnessed and ready to start. We left at 4 A. M.

One morning Stean was loading(he always wanted to load first), when a young Smart Alec, who was going with me on the boot, started to get in. I told him to wait, for my mules would be off as soon as they were loaded, the passengers in and I mounted to the boot. He paid no attention to me, but proceeded to get in. He was hardly seated when the mules started. They circled the barn, then down towards the spring. Here they ran astride a young sapling which swung the coach around and headed them back towards the barn. I caught them coming towards the barn. I never mounted the boot till I had everybody placed and I was ready to start, for when I got up they were off.

In those days we had no roads except the Military Road; no bridges as you have now; our crossings were crude, the road

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often very muddy and rough when drying and how those rich people who rode with me would rumble about the road, the roughness and also my fast driving.

My first stop was the Lee Landrum place, a farm home half way between Cabin and the Trott Place. Here I left a mail bag and took one on, and passengers if there were any. By eight o'clock I would reach home at the Trott stand. I ate breakfast while they were changing my team and hitching up the horses.

After breakfast we were off again, still going northeast and would reach Pooler's for dinner. Here we had to cross the Neosho River. Boss Pooler had a ferry and we ferried when too deep to ford. If the water was too high to ferry by the cable, they would disconnect the cable and three men, one on each side with an oar and one man in the rear of the ferry boat with a pole, would row the stage across the river. My teams were changed again and after dinner came the last lap of my day, the route still going northeast to Baxter Springs.

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Then the country on that lap was a great prairie and covered with bluestem grass as high as your head. One saw flocks of prairie chickens like you see blackbirds nowadays. Occasionally we saw a buffalo and sometimes wild horses grazing, but they were shy and would run from us. We would reach Baxter Springs about six in the evening. I took my passengers to the Baxter Hotel, then my four mail bags, one from each stop, to the post office. My duty being over then, I drove my team to Mr. Chitison's, fed, and took care of them, stayed overnight at his home and next morning was at the hotel by four to get my passengers and those who had come in from the north the night before who would go on south with me. I made the same drive and the same stops but the direction was reversed. Going south I would see the sun rise on the open prairie south of Baxter. When coming north the day before I had seen it rise through the trees in a wooded country. Then too, on the south end of my drive, I saw more animals and sometimes a run of deer.

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The buildings at the Pooler, Trott and Ben Landrum homes were the only buildings on my entire drive.

I never had any trouble or holdups of any kind. Only once did any one go with me as protection. I took on two soldiers in uniform at Baxter Springs and they rode with me to Kolls. One rode on the boot with me and one inside, both with a shot gun and pistols. They said they were going to Shreveport.

I drove about two years, till after the Katy Railroad was built through. Then they quit and moved the stage and teams farther south to the end of the railroad.

Let me tell you an incident concerning the gray horse I drove called Tom. My brother, Huse, worked on the building of the railroad, when they were building it from Monroe to Shreveport. He was shot and I went after him. I staged from Monroe to Shreveport where he was. Near Monroe I saw a gray horse in the lot at the stage stand. I spoke to the driver, and asked him where that horse came from, and I was told that he had been driven on the stage for twenty years and now they had set him free.

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I told him that I had driven that horse two years myself. It was Tom.

My brother, Huse, had driven the stage near Cross Timbers, Texas, before he began working on the railroad.

The Stand at Knight's was kept by Bill and Hardin Trott and sometimes called Knight's and sometimes Trott's. The Trott's Stand had only the horse barn. I changed teams there. The barn, a one story building, stood about seventy-five yards east and south of the house. It was a long building with sheds and cribs on the north, the stalls were on the south side. The end stall at each end was boxed up, but the rest were open facing the south. It would hold or rather had eight or ten stalls. Part of the old log house still stands; it is about a mile west of here.

EARLY AMUSEMENTS.

When I was a boy, Tom and Bob Knight and my brother-in-law, Bob Stafford and I would go the Military Crossing on Horse Creek and drive a bunch of wild turkeys up above Afton on the prairie for Sunday sport. We would have a club six or eight feet long. Out on the prairie

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where we could follow them, we would scare them into flying and you know a turkey cannot fly over three hundred yards until it first rises. We would chase and kill them with our clubs and bring home a load that night.

WILD HORSES

We turned our work horses out at night. One wild, mouse colored horse would come up with them. He kept coming closer and closer and finally we left the lot gate open and after a while he came in the lot with the horses. Then we began to leave the barn door open with feed inside. After some days, he went into the barn. We closed the door and kept him there all day, but did not pester him. Then we let him out. Bob Knight and I watched him for a week and then one day we got a rope on him in the lot and soon taught him to lead. He was the easiest horse to break that I ever saw. He never pitched a bit when Bob rode him. He kept him and called him "Rat."

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Wild Deer

I have stood on the porch in these hills and counted sixty deer. They call a little deer a fawn. They have white socks on them the size of navy beans, and are the shyest thing you ever saw. When you try to catch one they will fight, but if you get your hands on one, pick it up and carry it two hundred yards, and then put it down, it will follow you home.

When we lived in Newton County, we had a pet deer and put a red flannel around his neck, so the hunters would not kill him and then he would bring other deer to the house. But one day, one of the girls in the neighborhood, Margaret Stanley, and two of my sisters went up the hollow to get some rosin wax. He followed and sprang at Margaret, striking her in the small of her back with his two front feet. He grew so mean that we had to kill him.

Deer will kill snakes. They back off and then run at the snake with their two front feet, cutting them to pieces as they spring at them. Also they will fight each other. I killed two once that had locked horns in a fight and were fastened together. Father and I have found here in these hills the heads

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of two deers with the horns locked together.

Marriage.

I married Bettie Goodwin, a Cherokee girl, July 3, 1876. It was Sunday and we were married at Hickory Grove by the Rev. Thompson of Tahlequah. We had a church wedding. We have had nine children, five boys and four girls. We have lived in this same neighborhood ever since, though not at this place.

Mrs. Moore.

My parents were John and Katie Cooper, who came to this country before the Trail of Tears and settled later on Money Creek, near Southwest City, where I was born Nov. 2, 1854.

When the War came up my parents went to the Choctaw Nation and remained there till it was over, and while living there my mother died. After our return, I went to live with two aunts. I stayed first with one aunt and then the other, but mostly with Aunt Sallie Ward, until my father married Mary Thornton, another Cherokee lady. Our home was in a bad way when we returned but had not been destroyed.

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I went to school in a double log school house and some of our teachers were Misses Carrie, Nan, and Aunt Liza Bushyhead. The name of the school was Upman. There is still a school on the old place.