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

8103

Field Worker's name Ruth E. MoonThis report made on (date) July 27, 1937.

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1. Name J. E. (Jake) Douglass
 2. Post Office Address Guthrie, Oklahoma
 3. Residence address (or location) 324 E. Harrison, Masonic Home for aged.
 4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 8 Year 1866
 5. Place of birth Jefferson City, Tennessee
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6. Name of Father Samuel Douglass Place of birth Tennessee
Other information about father _____
 7. Name of Mother Margaret Newman Place of birth Tennessee
Other information about mother _____
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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 _____.

DOUGLASS, J. E. (Jake)

INTERVIEW.

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Interviewer, Ruth E. Moon,
July 27, 1937.

Interview with J. E. (Jake) Douglass
Guthrie, Oklahoma,
324 E. Harrison

In the Summer of 1889 we were living at Trinidad, Colorado. We were newly married and we decided to come to Oklahoma. My wife's sister and her husband came with us. We both had spring wagons covered, and we brought very little along except our bedding and camp stuff. At night we camped out and the trip took us a month. It was September when we got here. The last place we camped before entering Oklahoma was Kiowa, Kansas. Then we crossed No Man's Land and came on down to Kingfisher, where we stayed one night. It was a busy place, but there seemed to be about two carpenters after every job. I was a carpenter, so we decided to come on to Guthrie.

Our first night here we camped at the north end of Fifth Street under a big cottonwood tree. Most of the town was still tents, some shacks, and one brick building was being built on the corner of Oklahoma and Second Streets.

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The first house we lived in was on Second Street, across the street from the present location of the Fairmont Creamery. Water was scarce and bad. We carried all ours, while we lived there, from a well on the corner of Cleveland and First, two blocks. Our first baby was born here and died. There was lots of sickness and death, especially among the children. I had typhoid and was sick a long time.

The first work I found to do was hauling logs to a sawmill which was on Fifth Street and Harrison on the Cottonwood River, and was owned by a man named Pibern. I bought tracts of timber, mostly cottonwood, from men along the river and cut the logs and sold them to the mill. For a while I ran this mill for Mr. Pibern.

Most of the first shacks were made of this cottonwood lumber. We lived in one for a while. It warped so badly that you could "throw a cat" through that house.

Then I worked at a furniture factory that was by the side of the sawmill. We lived across the street from the factory in a house that is still there, and I made a whole set of furniture out of black walnut for our home.

I worked as a carpenter, building some of the nice homes that people were building about this time.

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Mr. Thomas lived close to the old sawmill and while I was working there he hired me to build a steamboat. It would carry seventy-five passengers and had a big wheel at the back. He named it "The Charley Mansur" for his friend who was a congressman from Missouri. When it was finished Mansur came on a visit and we got up a party and went down the river to May Park. That was the most fun I ever had. I don't remember what we did, only we had some beer along.

The Cottonwood River had more water in it in those days. Young couples went rowing on it, and a trip down to this park on the steamship was a real thrill. Mansur Avenue was named for this same man.

In 1901 we built a home on the top of West Noble Hill. There were very few houses west of us. Joe W. McNeal's big house and the McGann house on Cleveland were the only ones I remember. The hill was steep and full of rocks, and after a rain, muddy. I did most of the work myself and we were proud of our home.


Dr. A. L. Blesh was our family doctor until he moved to Oklahoma City.

I was a member of the city council when Dr. John W. Duke was mayor, but I was so busy after I got into the cotton business that I didn't have much time for office holding.

We attended the Christian Church and soon after we came I helped build the first frame building. I think it was on the corner of Cleveland and Broad.

Before the Government was established in the Territory, there was a company of soldiers under Captain Cavanaugh stationed in West Guthrie. Things were pretty quiet, though. Very little disorder and crime. The most exciting thing that happened was a shooting just outside the land office. Ira N. Terrell, a member of the Territorial Legislature, had warned a man named Emery not to testify against him in a case about his claim in Payne County. Emery was subpoenaed and went in, when called, looking pretty nervous. Just as he came out of the land office, after giving his testimony, Terrell shot him. I saw him fall. Terrell was sent to the penitentiary.

I built the Pioneer Cotton Mill, the first, and for many years the only cotton mill in Oklahoma. There is another now at Sand Springs. I was the president and general manager of the Pioneer Mills until 1918. Then I sold out my interest in it.



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Soon after the close of the war, Governor Robertson appointed me a delegate to the World's Cotton Conference at Manchester, England. I was also a delegate to the Rotary Convention at Edinburgh, Scotland, so I made a four months trip, all through Europe and the Holy Land. I visited some of the battlefields and the ruins of fine buildings. The most beautiful was Rheims Cathedral, but great parts of it were ruined. From Solomon's Temple I brought home some stones which are kept in the museum of that building, (Masonic building, probably Ed.) and one piece was made the keystone over the entrance of the main auditorium.