

ELLIS, ALBERT H.

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First State Legislature

Merrill Nelson,
Field Worker.

Form A-(S-149)

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

42430

Field Worker's name Merrill A. Nelson,

Report made on (date) June 2, 1937.

Mr. Ellis is an author and valuable aid in research.

Name Albert H. Ellis,

Post Office Address Hayward, Oklahoma.

Residence address (or location) 1/4 mile south of Hayward.

DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 17 Year 1861.

Place of birth Shelby County, Indiana.

Name of Father Newell A. Ellis Place of birth North Carolina.

Other information about father See Story.

Name of Mother America Matilda Hubbard Place of birth Shelby County, Indiana

Other information about mother _____

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. Write on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____

Merrill A. Nelson,
Field Worker.

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H.
An Interview With Albert Ellis,
 $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of Hayward, Okla.

My ancestors on the Ellis side were from Owen County, North Carolina and settled in Dearborn, Indiana, on the Ohio River. My great grandfather took a claim in 1832 in that section. His wife was formerly Ruth Andrews. On the mother's side, Steve Hubbard, a slave holder in Virginia, married Jane Cartmill. They were, for that time, educated and belonged to the Established Church of England. They raised twenty children, ten of their own and ten adopted.

My great grandfather disagreed with the rest of the ancestors on the question of slavery and would never write to them. My grandfather, Newal Ellis, died when father was a little boy.

Father was a contractor and farmer. He was a member of the M. E. Church for sixty-five years. I was born in Shelby County, in 1861, and had the average country boyhood, going to school and church and playing hockey.

My mother was a semi-invalid. I had five brothers and one sister.

I left my people at the age of twenty-one, going in a covered wagon to Kansas, where I was married. My wife and I settled in Comanche where we had five years of pioneering.

I made the Run from the south line of the Strip, now the north line of Logan County. (Garfield County had a handle to the southeast in those days, taking in the present Lucien.) I drove a wagon with mules and secured the NE⁴ section 29, Twp 20, range 3, in Marshall township.

I went down to Mulhall on the train. There I secured a team. As there were no roads, nor trails, I came right across the prairie. There was nobody on this piece of ground so I just secured it by chance. (One might say without effort). I did not even have a contest. When I made the race (said his wife) there was a sack of beans tied to the bottom of the wagon. This broke open a little and, later on, one could trail me by the growing beans.

I stayed here a while, went back to Kansas and then came here a second time in February, with Mr. Leonard Zelle's father.

I was caught in a storm near Elk City, the snow was so deep that we went over wire fences and did not know it. It was so cold the horses would not eat their feed. (See Leonard Zelle's story.)

We built a log dugout here on this place and after we arrived in April and bought our supplies, we had only seven cents left. I went harvesting in Oklahoma,

leaving wife and babies. Once ~~it~~ while I was gone and they found a nest of snakes. Centipedes were plentiful, too, and rags were placed over the ceiling to keep them from falling, but it was hard to tell on which side of the rags they were.

I bought twenty-five bushels of sweet potatoes and stored them in the ground. I always declared I never could eat greens but I managed to get them down. We would take a bucket and get lamb's quarter. Another thing I did not like was corn bread but I came to enjoy it here.

The first school in this section was located on my section in 1894. It was named "4 D" for the "4 D" Creek and "4 D" Ranch. You would be surprised at the modern equipment we had. Thirty-five to forty children attended, some of the children coming for two miles or more. I was clerk of the district school board. We secured a good stove, charts, blackboard, and home made curtains. From that school have gone five State University students. We had a literary society which trained a number of boys to become good speakers. The Baker children were good conversationalists but poor speakers, but Cliff Hart, a half-brother, was a real orator.

I made all our benches and bedsteads, one of which was joined to the wall, having only a foot and a side;

the other one was a good one. We brought two chairs with us and I made another one.

One day while I was away, my wife saw something strange looking over the wood pile. She found it was a snake as she saw it raise and lower its head, and went out and killed it. Then she told the children that likely others were about. Before they were through, they had killed seven. (Told by Mrs. Ellis)

I used a sod plough to break the land. It was a plough with a short iron beam, and instead of a mold board had adjustable rods which threw the sod into a half circular shape or turned it over.

I would take an old shot gun planter—a tin box nailed to a board with a grooved stick going through the box, and push it down into the sod after it had caught a few grains on a groove. Sod could not be planted any other way.

When we came we used carpets for the doors. We had a team and wagon; one door, one-half window, sod roof and dirt floor. At that time we had four children. Sometimes the centipedes would drop on the table. They were longer than the present type. We would often hear the scratching noises they made, and we would keep a light burning. They were dangerous for children, causing them to swell up, but seldom die. My daughter innocently brought one to me in the fold of her dress one day.

One of our first improvements was a cyclone cave. We dug a stable in the bank, covering with straw or hay, and we also built a log chicken house.

We raised a little kafir corn the first year. One season it rained every Saturday for seven weeks. Then, for over a year it did not rain at all.

We lived about eleven miles from Orlando, where I went and did some wheat harvesting. I made about seventy-five cents a day.

For four years, I was Superintendent of the Whitaker State Orphan's home, located at Pryor, Oklahoma. (I still have a paddle which I used).

I was a member of the territorial legislature in 1897. I was Second Vice President of the Constitutional Convention in 1906-7. Also speaker pro-tem of the first legislature. (I still have the gavel; also, still have powder horns, and an old fire and kettle, and other things which I used in those pioneer days).

Soon the railroads came in the Alfalfa Route, or Denver, Enid and Gulf, and the Arkansas Valley, now the Frisco. At first we only had the Santa Fe at Orlando.

I had little stock at first. Soon I bought a cow and later built a herd. We only had a half dozen chickens at first. But with a spring and logs off our own place for building, we did well. Some received wheat to sow,

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on time, and they never paid for it. I did not get any. For some reason, it never made a crop. Some people fed it to their teams.

I also took a claim five miles north and west of Dover during the opening in '89, but did not stay with it, so it is no part of this story. (The prairie dogs soon left us, though they were plentiful at first.)

One of those who made the run with me or near me was A. B. Brown who lives two miles west and four south of me.

They gerrymandered my district from Noble County clear to the west line of Kingfisher County when they were arranging for the Constitutional Convention.

If you wish, I will tell of more of my connections with the political history of the state another time.

I have a book on "Constitutional Convention", one on "Land Titles" on which I spent considerable labor, and some tracts on historical subjects.

We were too busy to have any recreation but I suspect we had as good a time as people do now.

I come from the same family as J. W. Ellis, who was Governor of North Carolina in 1860.