

MORGAN, ERNEST B.

INTERVIEW

7089

**444**

MORGAN, ERNEST B. INTERVIEW.

Form A-(S-149)

BIOGRAPHY FORM

445  
7089.

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Grace Kelley

This report made on (date) August 9, 1937. 1937

1. Name Ernest B. Morgan

2. Post Office Address Dewar, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) North of Main Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 17 Year 1876.

5. Place of birth Comanche, Texas, was the home of his parents but he  
was told he was born on the Chisholm Trail.

6. Name of Father John Westley Place of birth Kentucky.

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

7. Name of Mother Nancy Marguerite Smith Place of birth Castle, Missouri.

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 11.

Grace Kelley,  
Interviewer.  
August 9, 1937

John Morgan's Early Experiences  
in the Territory  
Ernest Morgan, Dewar, Okla.

In 1872 the Springfield people made the offer to let any man hitch his team to a wagon with the wheels chained in such a way that they wouldn't move. If the team pulled the wagon a certain distance he was allowed to pay ten dollars for it and drive it home as his. Father lived in Bentonville, Arkansas, at that time and he and a neighbor took their teams to get a new wagon. They had to pay the ten dollars in advance, and when his team of mules were hitched to the new wagon they pulled it easily and got the wagon. Then he asked to try again and they allowed him to for they said no team could move the second wagon without resting, but they had as little trouble with it as the first and were barred from trying again.

He went back to Arkansas and filled these new wagons with apples, about sixty bushels to the wagon. He drove one, and mother drove the other, for there were no children as they were newlyweds. After a few days her team just followed except at the crossings. They went from Bentonville to Tahlequah, crossed at Ft. Gibson and at Colbert's Ferry, on to Austin, Texas.

There the apples were sold for a dollar a dozen to negroes who were picking cotton, and the wagons both sold for four hundred dollars. They bought a farm with the money they received.

#### MY FIRST TRIP ACROSS THE TERRITORY, 1889.

I can not remember when I first rode a horse, cursed, took my first chew of tobacco, or roped my first animal. I was thirteen years old before I entered my first school. Mother was well educated and worried all the time because she could not send her children to school. She had taught me so that I was classed with the fifth-grade children when I did get to school. She worried so much that father sold out and we went back to Arkansas where there were good schools. We had two wagons on that trip but I rode horseback and drove seventy head of wild horses. The only other animals we had were two little dogs, Connie and Trip.

#### ROUTE THROUGH INDIAN TERRITORY.

We crossed the Red River at Colbert's Ferry to Fort Worth, followed the Katy Railroad to Oktaha, east to Webbers Falls, crossed at Gamms Ferry, to the old Wire Road to Van Buren, Arkansas, and the rest of our trip was in Arkansas.

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## OLD WIRE ROAD.

This was called the Old Wire Road because in the Civil War they had a telephone wire along there, before the Missouri Pacific Railroad came through.

## GANN'S FERRY.

Gann's Ferry was about three miles below Webb's Falls.

## HOW MONEY WAS CARRIED.

Father had five thousand dollars in gold in a rawhide belt under his clothing. Most travelers carried money in these belts and they were afraid to have it all in one place, so to be safe in case of robbery they hid twelve hundred in different places in the wagon.

## PASTURING IN THE SAC AND FOX RESERVATION.

In 1892 father was the largest cattleman close to Clarksville, Arkansas. Keith came from the Sac and Fox Reservation and he and my father made a deal for some cattle to be shipped back to grass. Two or three train loads, not car loads but train loads, were shipped on the Missouri Pacific to Oktaha and from there they were driven to the reservation, which is ninety miles. Keith's outfit came for them but father sent me along to see that

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they were brought to grass and not to market and to watch all during the pasturing. We camped near Keokuk Falls about the twentieth of April when the grass was rising and would ship them out just as they fattened, from July to September. They were brought back to Oktaha to the railroad and shipped to Kansas City. We passed through Henryetta and Dewar, but they were not towns then.

#### SLATE CROSSING (FORD).

The Slate Crossing was supposed to have been called that because you could see the slate bottom. Every time I crossed it was too deep to see the ford. It was bank full and I'd had to swim my horse and whatever other stock I had. It is just north and under the K. O. & G. trestle on Deep Fork River.

#### LITTLE BEAR FORD.

Eight miles up the river from Slate Crossing on Deep Fork River, northeast of Shulter, is a ford called Little Bear Ford. Birds, people and horses are cut on rock, at this place.

In 1893 another shipment of cattle was taken to the Sac and Fox Reservation. I brought cattle for three or

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four years. During 1893 we went to Old Shawnee Town Trading Post for supplies.

#### HOW PASTURING PLACES ARE PICKED.

Cattle, like people, do better when contented so they are watched to see when they like a place. Then they don't roam very far but feed around over the same places. Different bunches would make paths to the water and they never got on the wrong path. Every time a cow went to drink it went to its own place. We didn't have much trouble with their going into the timber either for there were too many insects there which kept them chased out.

#### HOW STOCKMEN WERE FURNISHED SUPPLIES.

Stockmen bought their supplies from the bigger stores for only the big stores could afford to carry them. Sometimes their bills would run / <sup>from</sup> eighteen hundred to two thousand dollars. If a stockman ever failed to pay a bill it was too bad for him because dishonesty is one thing that can't be kept secret. So even if a man wasn't honest by nature he had to be or lose out. Sometimes a merchant had carried him a year, charged everything he needed, and

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the prices were so low that he didn't want to sell his cattle. He'd go to the merchant and tell him the facts and how he wanted to wait till next year to sell if he could carry him over. Lots of times the merchant would see his way to carry him over for the two years and when the cattle were sold the merchant would get his pay in full. Lafayette Mercantile Company at Checotah did a lot of that kind of business.

## CARE OF THE SADDLE.

Whenever a cowboy got a saddle which "fit" him he kept it until it was worn out, which meant that it was broken forked. Saddles were different prices but the middle priced ones were used most. They were oiled once every year and usually when the men knew they weren't going to be dressing up to take their girl anywhere. Then if they had to dress up, a blanket was thrown over it to protect their pants, for the oil would surely ruin them. It didn't matter about the work clothes and most of us had leather chaps which protected them. Saddles would last for three or four years according to the care re-taken of them and then they could be rigged. A real rider never changed saddles unless absolutely necessary.



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If he was going to another part of the country by train the saddles were sacked and shipped for a dollar, but they had to be in a sack so <sup>they</sup> could be handled easier.

## UNBROKEN HORSES.

In 1893 I bought eighty-nine unbroken horses from the Indians and started back to Clarksville, Arkansas, on June the twentieth and took them through by myself. I crossed Deep Fork at Robert's Ferry where Sharp's Crossing is now. I had a pack horse for it would be too hard on my horse to carry me, a pack, and drive the other horses. I spent a dollar and sixty-five cents on the whole trip. I camped out at night, drove during the day, and swam the <sup>rivers.</sup> From Okmulgee to Muskogee, Webber Falls, swam all the horses through the Arkansas River, and they drove like sheep, to Lee's Creek, to the Old Wire Road to Van Buren. The horses were traded for a three year old steer for each horse and another steer for riding to show it could be ridden.

## SAW MILL.

There was a sawmill in LeFlore County on Rush River but I couldn't tell the exact location.

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## OSAGE HORSES BOUGHT AND SOLD.

J. R. Skinner was the paymaster for the Government to the Osage Indians. For four years father bought wild horses from him. One year he bought a hundred and fifty horses, delivered by the Osage Indians to Fort Smith, Arkansas. They grazed them across the country. At Fort Smith father paid from two-fifty to three dollars a head for them. As the horses were delivered about the first of October I would be back from pasturing the cattle and ready to work with the horses. They were ready to ride and sold by Christmas.

These Osages who drove the horses were as near nude as possible. They wore a breech clout, if anything, and had their faces painted. Some of them had rope saddles and others rode bareback. (Some white people had rope saddles too). Some people say they guided their horses by the way they leaned their body and others say it was by the pressure of their knees, I couldn't say how it was done but there was no bridle used.

IN 1896 I WAS "LOOKIN' THE COUNTRY OVER".

HAY MAKING.

There was a fellow making hay a mile and a half west

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of where the Baptist University is now located at Shawnee. He hired extra help to bale the hay, then laid them off until we had loaded and sold it. He and I would load the two wagons, but we'd put the heavier load on my wagon. Then we'd take two teams and pull his wagon off of the meadow onto the road which was packed harder than the meadow. One team couldn't pull the hay wagon across the meadow for the wheels would sink in but it could pull it on hard ground. Then I'd unhitch the lead team and take it back and put it to the other wagon which had one other team already hitched to it. We'd drive to town and sell the hay. He'd stay to get drunk but I'd come right to camp. (You could buy whiskey in Shawnee. There were thirteen tent saloons there in 1896). He paid me two dollars and fifty cents a day wages.

## KICKAPOOS LINED SAND PLUMS.

The kickapoos gathered the sand plums, which ripen in the early summer on the North Canadian River. They wore a breech clout, long hair and moccasins.

They would go into Shawnee and get drunk, and come riding by. One time when I was alone, just getting ready to eat my supper of karo, bread, bacon and butter, they

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shot out my light, a brass coal oil lamp. I hid in the hay but they didn't come near the camp, just rode on past.

## HOGS FATTENED.

At that same time the Parks boys had a claim just suited to hog raising. Had a / <sup>slough</sup> for them to wallow in and a high place for them to get to when the high water came up. Some man brought the hogs from Arkansas, bought corn at Eufaula for twenty cents a bushel and they hauled it by four/mule teams to their claim near Shawnee. I imagine it cost him fifty-five cents by the time they got it to their claim. When they were fattened they were shipped to Kansas City.

## WILD TURKEY ON NORTH COLUMBIA.

It was impossible to sleep when the turkeys started making a racket for there were hundreds of them in the woods along the river near Shawnee.

## WESTERNER'S CODE.

Father was a Texas Ranger and was commissioned all his life. His belief was about the same as other people's. If a person was caught doing wrong he was stretched <sup>up</sup> by a rope, and I still believe it is the best way. If a friend

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got into trouble, even if it was his fault, and came to you, you gave him an outfit if he needed it, and the best horse you had, and money if you had it or whatever he needed to get away. You stayed with a friend right or wrong.

## STAGE LINE EARLY 1890'S.

The stage line out of Okmulgee to McDermott passed the Fifty-Two Springs Landin Post Office, to Dent Post Office, Belmont Post Office, then crossed Eaton Tuskey into Shawnee.