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Grace Kelley  
Field Worker  
April 15 & 16, 1937.

Interview with William Elliott  
South 8th Street  
Henryetta, Oklahoma.  
Born 1864, Mississippi  
Father - George Elliott, London, England.  
Mother - Martha Elliott, Dublin, Ireland.

Indian Territory as seen by a Cowboy

On May 1, 1877, I rode through the present site of Henryetta. Hugh Henry was the only white man living there.

I went to work on the Cobb and Hutton cow ranch, close to the Sac and Fox line. I worked there seven years. There were eight of us cowboys. We received very little mail and had to go to Okmulgee for that. We usually went to Muskogee for supplies. Every thirty or ninety days the freight train, composed of wagons and horses, would go to Muskogee for supplies. Sometimes we would go to Tulsa but not often. We used horses because they were faster than oxen. A team of oxen could average fifteen miles a day while a horse or mule team average thirty.

Muskogee Trading Post

At that time there was one large commissary called

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The Turner Supply Company. Turner made saddles and harness besides having supplies to sell. We always went to him for our saddles and harness. There were two other little stores there, too.

#### Old Drive Trail

This old trail went clear through the Indian Territory. It came through the present site of Henryetta near our Corporation Street west of Bald Knob, went right past the site of Mrs. Hardin's house, made a swing at our Tenth Street, and went out of this vicinity over the Hugh Henry Hill, I believe about Ninth Street, continued to the left of Schuler, crossed Deep Fork about a mile west of the present Highway bridge, and from there led to Okmulgee and on toward Wichita, Kansas.

#### High Springs

Council Hill or High Springs, where the cattle corrals were, was between Muskogee and Hitchita, about five or six miles northwest of Hitchita. Graves Creek was northeast of Council Hill. There was a rancher, but I can't remember his name now, northeast of Hitchita, in toward Council Hill who helped survey the Territory.

## Warfield Store

Warfield Store was at Sansbois Town down in Haskell County on the Sansbois Creek, right below the mouth of Mountain Fork. The trail goes by Bokoshe, and Skullyville, on to Fort Smith.

## Price of Land

I traded a pony for a hundred acres of land between Spiro and Fort Smith, built a log house on it and cleared about five acres. A man came along and offered me a hundred dollars, and I thought I was getting rich quick and sold to him making a profit of about ninety dollars. The same land would sell for twenty-five dollars an acre or more now.

When Henryetta was first built you could have bought a lot on Main Street for four dollars and any other place for a dollar a lot.

## Wild Game

I once killed a deer where Main Street now is, and another on the Hardin place. There was a deer lick there, now the corner of 14th and Corporation, and the deer would run in herds as high as twenty. They would go there and

lick the ground-for the salt that was there.

There were as many wild turkey then as there are tame chickens now, perhaps more. Hogs ran wild. They would kill you if you didn't climb up a tree when they got after you. The cattle would do the same thing.

There were panther and catamount and black bear.

#### Bear Hunting

Jimmie Cawhorn was an old bear hunter and he knew where two black bears had gone to sleep for the winter. He wanted me to go with him and I thought if they didn't hurt him they wouldn't hurt me, so I went. They were in a cave on Rich Mountain. We went in and got behind them so that they were between us and the door. Our only weapon was a bit butcher knife that he had. He walked up to one and stabbed it in the back. It jumped up and ran out of the cave, dying a few steps outside of the cave. The other was stabbed and did the same way.

#### Stage Route

This old Stage trail went down the south side of the river from Muskogee to Webbers Falls, crossed the river and went on the north side to Old Childers Stage Stand, Sallisaw and Muldrow, and on into Fort Smith.

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## Indian Houses

To build the Indian kind of house, before they were taught to build log cabins, they would dig a place two feet deep in the ground, about 6 x 8 or 8 x 10 feet, longer than wide. They would put a pole at each corner and tie a ridge-pole, which ran length ways, to them with rawhide. The two end poles were brought together and tied to this ridge pole, then the other end poles were tied to it. After that they would stand other poles against the ridge-pole. They would then take willow, if they could find it, or brush, and weave through these poles until it was waterproof. After the whites came they started making log huts with a door cut out but no windows, and no door for the opening they had cut.

## Indian Law

When the Indians committed a crime, no matter what, they were taken before the Council and tried. After the trial the sentence was passed and they had a stay of execution, sometimes as long as six months. The Indian was told to be back there to be shot or whipped at a certain time. They meant for him to be there and he would go home or anywhere he wanted, and he was there to take his punishment

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when the time came. An Indian's word was worth more to him than his life; he would give up his life but he wouldn't break his word. He could have slipped out in the woods, hills, and caves and lived for a long time before they found him. It wasn't cleared up as it is now and a person who wanted to hide surely could do it.

#### Choctaw Execution

I saw an execution in the Council House at Spiro in the Choctaw Nation. An Indian boy had killed someone and the Council had condemned him to be shot, but gave him a six months stay of execution. When the day for the execution came, I was there. He came up with a shotgun in one hand and a squirrel in the other. He said that he wanted it to go with him so he wouldn't be hungry. They took his shirt off, after he got a chair and sat down, and painted a red heart right over his heart. Then the Indian who was to do the execution went to the door, turned and looked at him, walked around the building, stopped in the door, and threw the gun up to fire, but it snapped. He then walked around the house again, stopped, drew the gun, and fired. The shot went right in the painted heart. The boy hadn't flinched during the whole process. The Indian

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who shot him carried the gun in his hand all the time, instead of in a holster.

#### Osages on the Warpath

Dime Tyner, B. F. (Shorty) Tylor and I were coming from Wichita. We found some wagons burned, stock killed, and worst of all, two children and a woman dead and scalped and a man scalped and almost dead. The Osages had thought he was dead or they wouldn't have left him alive. We rode after them and got the scalps. We brought them back to the man but he couldn't use them after getting them. The Indians didn't scalp anyone else.

#### Building Osage Houses

Murphy Baysinger, Alie Loftis, my two brothers, Jack and Bud, and I were working for the Osages making houses and digging wells on the Quapaw Creek west of Skiatook. The bill for this work was presented to the United States agent at Pawhuska, and he paid it.

#### Osage Burial

When an Indian died they would take him to a hill, the highest they could find, and set him on a board that they had prepared for that purpose. Two boards were nailed together to form an ell, similar to a chair without legs.

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They tied his hands in front of him, and tied his head to the upright board so he couldn't fall over but had to sit up straight. Then they put all his belongings around him; beads, blankets, guns, saddle, horse, everything he possessed. They then walled him in by piling rocks upon each other in such a way that the cavity was round and larger at the bottom than on the top. On the top they placed a big flat rock. They wouldn't go about the dead after they had completed the burial for they thought each person turned to a snake. A good person turned into a good snake but a mean person made rattlesnakes and the like.

The only exception I know of was an Osage Chief who was buried in a crevice. This crevice was twenty feet long with a large rock over the opening. I had been in there and knew what was in there. The old Chief was just dried, bleached bones; the bit was all that was left of his bridle but no money. Alec and Murphy knew that there was money there and intended to get it when it got dark. I told my brothers that we would meet them when they got there and they agreed. We went up there

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before dark and hid. It was a steep hill covered with black jack. After awhile we heard them coming and talking. One of them said they would get the money and divide it between themselves; as we didn't come we wouldn't get a cent. We moved around a little and groaned. They wondered what that was and we made some more ghostly noises and threw something down the hill, in fact it was the old chief's head. They started running down that hill as fast as they could go, not paying any attention to the trees, bushes or rocks. It sounded like a stampede.

The next day we were at work on a house and waited until nine o'clock before they showed up. Then we asked them what was the matter, they said that they didn't go up to the Chief's grave but that their horses had become scared and run away. We knew they had had a run-away but not on the horses.

#### Ate Dogmeat and liked it

The Osages had a big feast once a year and had every kind of meat you could think of, even dog-meat.

If you should like to cook a dog I'll tell you how to prepare it. First you want to tie it up by the neck, but not to hang it to keep it from going where it could

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get something to eat. Give it plenty of water to drink but no food until it is about to die of starvation. Then kill a fat calf in the morning and give the warm blood to the dog to drink. That afternoon give it the clotted blood to eat. When evening comes give it the calf meat to eat. Then kill a calf every day for nine days and feed it all to the dog, which will be real fat by that time. I ate a piece as big as my hand and could have eaten more if they had had enough to give me. I ate this meat at a regular feast attended by about five hundred Indians. They also had venison, squirrel, rabbit, turkey, and terrapin.

#### Roasted Terrapin

I couldn't eat the terrapin though, but I can tell you how they did it. It was at an Osage meeting. They had about five bushels of terrapins which they found in prairie dog holes where they had fallen and couldn't get out. A fire was made of heavy wood placed in a ring, that is a circle of fire with no fire in the center. Then when it was burning good the terrapins were dumped into the center and roasted alive without any cleaning whatsoever. When the hulls were black they would take them out and cut the

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bottom hull off and eat all of the terrapin with a wooden spoon.

#### Osage Medicine

While there I took sick and thought I was going to die. It was fifty miles to a doctor or medicine. The Osages had a medicine dance for me. Just the old folk danced and each had put terrapin hulls around their ankles. The young folk had put deer skins over stone jars for drums. The old ones had placed their blankets on the ground around the fire back from where they danced. They started at eight o'clock and kept it up until three next morning when they began giving out and would go to their blanket and fall down and go to sleep. Whatever herb they dreamed about was the herb that would cure me. I thought they would kill me with the racket. A little woman, named Mrs. Mudd, half-breed Osage and Quapaw, was the only one to dream and she dreamed about sweet weed, called fever weed now, for it will cure the fever. It is a weed with little leaves, which grows flat on the ground and has milk in it. They gathered a bunch of it and made a tea of it. She brought me a quart of it and I had to

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drink all of it. In four hours she brought me another quart of it. I know nobody ever sweated as I did and it broke the fever in me.

I was weak and Lucy Cedar, another Indian, came and told me her mother would make me some squirrel soup to drink if I wanted her to. I couldn't eat anything on account of my mouth being so sore and salivated. She made the soup and I drank all of it I could for three days. In three days I was able to go and kill a squirrel myself and I went to her to get her to show me how to make that good soup. She burned the hair off and that made the hide so she could strip it off easily. She had a pot of boiling water which she dropped it into without cutting the eyes out or the entrails or cutting off the feet. Then it was boiled until it was so tender that she could put it through a sieve; it made the good soup I had been drinking for three days.

Robert Mudd, Lucy Mudd, and Mose Cedar, millionaires of Skiatook, are descendants of these women.

#### Inside Story of Belle Starr's Death

Belle Starr went into Fort Smith and made a deal with

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Col. Yoes, a United States Marshal, to turn her men over to him for a stipulated sum of money. He wrote her a letter at Briartown and Famous Smith went after the mail. He got her mail and saw the marshal's name in the corner of the envelope, so he wanted to know why she would be getting a letter from Yoes, so he tore the letter open and read it. He came back and promised to kill her before sundown, put buck-shot in his shotgun, and went after her. She was coming from Frog Ferry when she was killed by buck-shot. He came back and said he had finished the job he started to do. So he must have killed her.

Pearl Starr was Belle's daughter by her husband Cole Younger. She had a boy by Jim Reed but he never took part in anything the gang did. There was Sam Starr, Felix Griffin (Indian), Famous Smith, Joe and Reese Hilterbrand.

She had a home place, and she stayed there more than you would think, and a lot of hideouts; a cave on the south side of the Canadian, a hideout at Hartshorne and in the mountains. There were always look-outs on guard for anyone who didn't belong there and it was an easy matter to slip out in the canebrakes and hide, for it was wild and a good place to hide.

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Besides, the marshals weren't too anxious to come up against one of the outlaws when it was one or the other. Of course once in awhile you came across one who was fool enough to close his eyes and come on but it was seldom. I knew two - I could give their names but I won't - who would take a load of prisoners in and bring out a load of whiskey to us. They could go get it but we couldn't, but we could sell it after we got it. They weren't bad; they were just friends of the outlaws.

#### Dalton Gang

They didn't have hideouts but lived on the Grand River with their mother. There were John, Emmet, Grant, Bob, and Frank.

I knew Ned Christy, an Indian; Fidgeon, an Indian; Cherokee Bill; Wahoo (Hickory) Hampton, an Indian; Doolen, a white man; and Frank James of the James Boys.

My sympathies were with them for I found they were not such bad people. It was hard for anyone to get by without breaking the law in those days. The marshal would come to get you and you didn't want to be captured. The marshal would be shot and then you were on the dodge. The

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outlaws were usually kind hearted persons who had made a mistake and couldn't right it by making more.

I could tell you more but I don't want to implicate myself too much, for as you know those days are gone and we don't stay the same anymore than the times do.