

ESLICK, BEADEN

INTERVIEW

~~#12531~~

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Form A-(S-149)

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

Field Worker's name Grace Kelley,

This report made on (date) December 28, 1937

1. Name Beaden Esllick

2. Post Office Address Henryetta, Oklahoma, Route 2

3. Residence address (or location) 1 mile north, 1 mile east of the  
Salem School.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month        Day        Year 1870

5. Place of birth Missouri

6. Name of Father Joseph Esllick Place of birth Iowa or Mis-  
souri.

Other information about father       

7. Name of Mother Hanna Scribner Place of birth 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 15.

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Grace Kelley,  
Investigator.  
December 28, 1937.

Interview with Beaden Eslick,  
Route 2, Henryetta, Oklahoma.

Coming to the Territory in 1882.

I have made so many trips to the Territory from Missouri that it is hard for me to keep them straight in my mind. The first trip I made was when I was twelve years old. My parents had started to Texas. We had been on the roads for eight or ten days as we took our time instead of seeing how fast we could travel. The roads were winding instead of keeping straight courses and persons would travel more miles in getting to a certain place than they do now. Then we had to cross the streams without bridges so if a stream was up we had to wait for it to run down.

When we left one town we had instructions as to how to get to the next town and that was all the information we got unless we happened to meet a white person. There were Indians but they either could not

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or would not talk; if you spoke to them they never thought of answering.

There were pretty good roads close to the larger towns, such as Muskogee, Tahlequah, McAlester, and Fishomingo, but all the other roads were like cow trails and you had to guess at whether you were taking the right one or not.

The night that we camped at or close to McAlester somebody tried to get the team so Father and I sat beside the horses with our guns until daylight. We then hitched up and started on our way.

We came to an old man who had camped not far from us that night. He had had one mare but somebody had taken it that night. He and Father were talking about it when Father asked him if he would know her tracks. The old man said that he would but that as he was on foot he could not hope to catch up with the horse thieves. He offered Father \$5.00 a day to take his team from our wagon and to ride with him after the mare.

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Father got down, unhitched and left us standing there while he went off with the old man; we felt very lonesome while he was gone, too. They followed the tracks to the old man's son-in-law's corral. He went into the corral, tied a rope around the mare's neck and started back without saying anything to anyone. Father and the old man were a half day getting back and we then resumed our trip to Texas.

The second night after that we were camped again and it was very dark. Brother was playing around the log campfire, running back and forth. He started screaming that somebody was untying the horses from the wagon wheels. We jumped up, although we couldn't hardly believe anyone would come so close, and a fellow ran off. We tied our horses by the fire and they were again guarded all night with a gun.

Good horses brought a good price and a stranger could not find a horse after it was out of sight while a native of the same country would know just about where to look

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for it; so, for that reason it was usually the stranger who lost the horse. Most of the horses out of the state were fat and pretty compared to the Indian ponies; therefore, that was another reason for their wanting ours. I found that it was whites more than Indians who did the stealing and there was more horse stealing than robbing.

A man would travel over miles and miles of prairie without a house in sight and without meeting a person. It isn't much wonder that we got tired of the trip. When we came to the farm of Tom Collins, a white man having an Indian wife, we stopped to pick cotton and corn for him until we got enough money to return to Missouri. His farm was in the Washita bottoms west of Tishomingo.

#### Indian Story.

I do not know if these Indians were Choctaws or not but they were met in the Choctaw Nation. We saw a long string of Indians coming up the road toward us. They were riding bareback, about thirty of them, and

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they did not ride as we did, that is, two or more abreast but were riding single file. We were really afraid but we just kept driving on as we were in plain sight and it would not have helped us to stop. When they got even with us they just barely pulled out of the wagon road and went around us without speaking or acting as if they had seen us. There wasn't a woman in the bunch, just men. They had nothing on but breech clouts. Their faces had red spots on the cheeks and their long hair hung down in plaits. I did not find out where they were going but I was glad that they were not interested in us as each one carried a big bow and arrow.

#### Sawmill Story of 1887.

The next time I came to the Territory I was seventeen years old and I came that time with my parents. That time we stopped between Lehigh and Viola; we put in an overshot mill for Bill Jackson. He was also a squaw man.

Here there was a very little store owned by John Boswell and there was a post office in it. There were

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four or five houses nearby; some of them were on farms and others were where the land was not in cultivation.

Six or eight men sawed and hewed timbers for the construction of this mill; when completed there was a sawmill, a grist mill and a cotton gin with two gin stands. Father helped build all of these and I made a hand every day.

Jackson paid Father \$5.00 a day for us both and Father gave me \$1.00 a day and my board as my share. I figured he paid me a fair division as I was an inexperienced boy while he was experienced in mill construction, worked hard and had the expense of the home and family. I did not waste my money though but spent it like a man. I bought a couple of good horses that we needed and all of us could use.

After these buildings were ready to use Father rented them and ran them the rest of the year on shares. Some of the people brought their own logs to be sawed on shares. Part of my father's share of the logs went



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for rent. Other people who did not bring timber bought his share; I think he sold Jackson's share, too.

The closest cotton gins were at Caddo and Atoka, twenty or thirty miles away, so people brought their cotton from ten or fifteen miles around; corn was also brought the same distance to be ground.

#### Construction of a Water Race.

This was an overshot water mill; the power wheel was forty feet in diameter and had boxes at certain distances apart. The water fell down on top of the wheel and filled the top box with water; the top box went down and the next box came to the top. It stayed there until the force of the water drove it down; that gave the power to run either the gin, grist mill or saw-mill as the belts were changed but the same pulley was used on the power wheel.

There was a large spring on top of the mountain and a "race" was built from it to the wheel. You would think it as a trough built on a trestle that was built of logs.

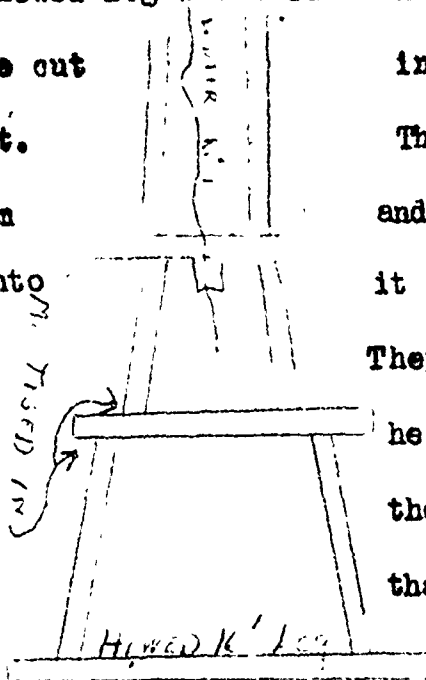
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A sixteen foot hewed log was laid down for a level foundation and a hole cut in each end to hold two logs upright. They had another hewed log across them and two upright logs were mortised into it at points about twelve feet apart. They were measured and built the right height to hold the race. Some of them had to be built much higher than others owing to the distance from the spring.



Father liked the Territory as he could make more money here but his people were in Missouri and he would want to see them so we would go back and stay a while, then return to the Territory.

While we were gone Mr. Jackson rented the mill to another man who tore it up pretty badly so when Father

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returned he again took it over so that he could get it back in good condition.

The route we took on these trips was from Fort Smith to Poteau, straight through to McAlester, Stringtown, and Lehigh.

#### Dead Cattle.

The winter of 1887 was a bad one, much colder and with more snow and ice than was usual. Some company in Texas had some cattle grazing around Viola. Since a person had to pay for a permit to live in the Territory, a representative from this company went to the officers of the Indian government and paid for a permit to turn loose a thousand head of cattle. That was why the officers were wealthier than the common Indians as they "beat" them out of their share of the grazing money. They had not been in the habit of feeding the cattle as there was always winter grass for them to eat but this year the snow covered it until the cattle could not get to it. They were not used to the snow and cold either.

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You could stand in one place and count from fifty to seventy-five head of cattle dead or dying. The carcasses were just left where they fell. Some men got a contract to skin the hides off on halves - that is, the men would get half of the hides for skinning them off. I was a boy of seventeen and would not have done that for good cash. It doesn't take much imagination to know it wasn't a pleasant job. They would just throw the skin up in the wagon and go to the next cow.

Wild Game.

There was plenty of wild game and I kept the settlement in venison as I liked to hunt. They would help me bring the deer in, skin them and then we would divide the meat among the neighbors. Deer were not restricted at that time.

No Ball Games.

The Choctaws had made it against the law to play ball as they had gotten to gambling but they had stomp dances. I never went to their dances but have been to the Creek

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dances. Both had a drum like thing to dance by, a wooden hoop, one end was open and the other had a rawhide covering upon which they pounded out the time.

#### Selling Cotton in 1895.

I came to Tahlequah and rented a farm from Boss Thompson for thirds and fourths. Sometimes I would take my cotton to Tahlequah; sometimes to Hulbert as I was as close to one place as to the other. There was no set price on cotton then and every buyer had his own price. A neighbor would take his cotton to one of the towns and when he came back the others would ask him what he was paid. Another neighbor would go to the other town. The rest would go to the town where the best price was given.

#### Indian Missions.

The Rock Academy was east of Viola and was for both boys and girls. As its name implies it was a

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large rock building. There were no homes near it and I do not think they had any farms close to it.

There were two Indian missions at Tahlequah. The one for the boys was on the southwest side of the town and the girls school was on the northeast side. They were both fine, large stone buildings.

End of the Salem Post Office.

I bought the store from Owen Marler and the post office was in it. Oscar Watson had been postmaster at the store until I bought it. There was a route from Henryetta besides the Salem Post Office. It took all of my wife's time and she did not make 5¢ a day. She would get a certain amount of money for the stamps that she sold and for registering letters, et cetera, but would get nothing for handling the mail. I took care of the store and she took care of the mail. So I wrote to the Post Office Department and told them the conditions and they wrote me to bundle up all the

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stuff and take it in to Henryetta. I did as they directed and that ended the Salem Post Office.

### Salt Spring.

My brother and I were riding between Tahlequah and Adair; we heard water boiling up for quite a while before we got to the spring. We supposed it was hot; we got down and put our hands in the water but it was cold and very salty.

\*Note- This saw mill was on Clear Boggy Creek between Lehigh and Viola.

-Grace Kelley, Field Worker.