

MOUNTS, GEORGE.

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

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Field Worker's name Nannie Lee Burns.

This report made on (date) February 18, 1938

Taken from memory.

1. Name George Mounts.

2. Post Office Address 612 S. Main.

3. Residence address (or location) Miami, Oklahoma.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

5. Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

6. Name of Father \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

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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Nannie Lee Burns..  
Investigator,  
February 18, 1938.

An Interview with George Mounts.  
Miami, Oklahoma.

My father was Miles Mounts, born, I think, in Kentucky of Pennsylvania Dutch stock. My mother was Eliza McAfee but I do not know where she was born. I was born, I think, in Howell County, Missouri, May 5, 1874.

Civil War Days.

During the Civil War my father was with the Southern Cavalry operating out of Sarcoxie, Missouri. He was a blacksmith and went along with his company of cavalrymen in the capacity of a blacksmith. The only incident of his service that would be of interest here is after the close of the war, there was so much banditry along the border of Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas and Indian Territory that soldiers were still kept in Southern Missouri to help quell these raids.

On one of their dashes into the Indian country from Sarcoxie they naturally would take all the available men there and so my father accompanied them and as best I know they came to the vicinity of Carey's Gap, south of Fairland. Among the prisoners that they took on that raid was Kinch West, the father of Bill.

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The old West Home is the old story and a half four room house that is at the foot of the hill six or seven miles south of Fairland on the west road. They had arrested Kinch and were taking him back with them. The soldiers were riding around him, some in front and some behind, and they thought that they had him securely tied to his horse when, some way, he managed to get his hand loose and as he urged his horse ahead he drew his gun and fired back at the soldiers. My father, who was among the front ones, received one of the bullets in the fleshy part of his leg and he carried this bullet twenty-five years. Finally after we came to this country to live it worked around on the inner side of his leg and showed just under the skin. He went to a physician and asked him to cut it out and he wanted \$25.00 for the job so father came home and took a razor and cut it out himself.

To Kansas.

From Missouri, my parents went to Kansas and homesteaded 160 acres and took an additional school claim of forty acres five miles west of Greensburg, Kansas, and here we built a sod

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house which had a roof of lumber. We had gone to Kansas in March of 1883. We found gyp rock in the well and after we went below that we had fair water. This gyp dirt made from the gyp rock made a fair cement.

We stayed there until the fall of 1888. Father, who had been looking for a new location, had met on a previous trip a Wyandotte Indian, Albert Mudeater, at Baxter Springs, Kansas, who told Father that he had a good place here that he would rent, or rather lease him. So Father returned home and the family got ready to come to the Indian country. We came overland in three wagons, driving a couple of good cows and six or seven loose horses and were in Independence, Kansas, the night that Benjamin Harrison was elected President.

#### Life In The Indian Country.

Mudeater was waiting for us at Baxter Springs and came with us from that place to the place he had in mind for us, which is now the O.P.M. Zimmerman place south and a little west of Ottawa and on the north side of the Neosho River.

From Baxter Springs, we had travelled the old Military Road to the Baldwin Grove just north and west of Ottawa. When we reached the place we found only a one-room log house with

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no chinking in the cracks. Father did not want this place but we spent the night there and the next morning he began to look around and not far from us on the other side of the river he came to Aunt Sallie Hudson's (A Cherokee) place. She knew father, though she had not seen him since she was a refugee during the Civil War days so asked him to bring his family there, saying that she had an extra house and could find plenty of work for my father, my younger brother, Charlie, and me. We began shucking corn for her <sup>and</sup> father established a small blacksmith shop on the farm and did local work that winter and the next year that we lived there.

Father's permit cost him fifty cents per month; I still have it. At that time, you could lease from any Indian provided that you did not settle within a quarter of a mile of any one's improvements.

Father was a peaceable man and after we moved here he learned that old Kinch West still lived at Carey's Gap and for years Father, wishing to avoid trouble, did not go to Fairland or any place south of us.

The second year we moved across the Neosho and lived the in/Ottawa Nation on the Mose Pooler farm and Father still

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continued his blacksmithing shop and had a better location at the ferry. This was the Military crossing over the Neosho River. Dad's friendship with the Hudsons caused him to lease from them and so we moved back farther north than where we had lived on their home place near the mouth of Hudson Creek. This time we were located one-half mile south and one-half mile east of the present Pleasant Valley Schoolhouse. We moved there Christmas week and here lived many years. Brother Charlie and I did the farming and Father built a blacksmith shop on the place and we continued to live there until after Father's death, in 1896.

#### Home Life.

Our homes were not very comfortable in those days. In bad weather we did not have nice warm barns for the cows, and at milking time we would drive them up to the house throw them some corn and here, protected from the wind, Mother would milk. Water for home use had to be carried from a well or convenient spring. Many of the cattle ran on the open range and had no protection from the cold weather and storms. Our barns were rude affairs made of either logs or native lumber and often covered with hay or straw.

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In one of those years, I remember that the Texas fever spread among the cattle and no matter which way you went you would see the dead cattle lying sometimes in bunches and sometimes singly. After the fever had run its course there were very few cattle left in the country and even the Big Pasture was almost empty. The cattle from Colorado owned in the Big Pasture at this time belonged to Al Dively and Tom Griffith.

On the 14th of February of that year, I was cleaning a gun and it went off and as my hand was over the mouth of the gun it severed my middle finger from my hand. Our nearest physician was at Prairie City, now Ogeechee. So they went for Doctor Collins and when he came and saw my hand he said that he would have to take it off but my father said "no", so they called another doctor by the name of Ford to aid him. A man of the name of Joe McCoy came along and when he saw my hand he fainted. My hand was saved but I am minus that finger on my right hand. The spring ploughing had to be done and that spring I ploughed with the lines fastened in a loop around that arm above the elbow.

We had malaria. First to have it was Brother Charlie,



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who soon recovered, but I was not so fortunate. Dr. Eli James, the old pioneer physician, made ninety-nine trips to see me and once when he thought I was dying he stayed two days. After my recovery, I began to wonder how I would pay him as money was not plentiful in those days. In payment for the bill I let him have a stag hound that I owned, three loads of corn and killed him four hogs.

#### Wolf Chasing.

Dr. James, then a young man, was a familiar figure on these prairies as he either rode a large horse or drove a team of little mules to a four-wheeled cart. He was followed by a pack of hounds and always he had time for a wolf chase. As the dogs he had could not catch an old gray wolf that he saw frequently he wanted my stag hound, Old Sharp. This hound with the aid of his other hounds who came to his assistance after the stag hound had caught the wolf, finally killed the wolf but not until after the wolf had torn the dogs badly in the death fight.

I have stood beside Dr. James and heard him call imitating the coyote and you could not tell the difference in his call and that of the animal; and this was the reason that

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it was so easy for him to start a chase. He could call the wolves into the open.

I had only that one staghound until one of the men who was moving away gave me his pack of hounds so after that I took my pack and joined in many of the wolf hunts.

I went to a wolf chase last winter and how different it was from the ones that we had in those days. Then we rode horseback and the range was mostly open and we could follow the hounds, but last year several were in cars and would drive the roads and try to be near where the dogs would pass until the end of the chase when they left their cars and went foot to the scene of the kill.

When we moved there were only three houses between us and Bluejacket; they were the Leck Lee Place, Silly's Place (now the Zajic Place) and Pat Murphey's place.

We seldom went to town and when we did for things that we could not obtain at Prairie City, we drove to Seneca, Missouri, or Baxter Springs, and it was more than twenty miles to either which meant a long, slow trip in a farm wagon. The roads were scarcely more than trails and in the winter it was often impossible to drive a wagon through the muddy country. If it was necessary one went horseback and brought back the

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necessary articles in a sack carried across the horse.

#### Miami and Fairland.

In 1890 they began to talk two new towns. Old Ogeechee was moved three miles west on the Frisco from its old location out on a rise covered with tall bluestem grass and because the beautiful colorings of the prairie flowers reminding one of a Fairy land it was named Fairland. Today all that remains at Ogeechee is the schoolhouse and a switch for loading stock.

On this side of the river the different Indian Tribes felt that they wanted a town and so the purchase of five hundred eighty-eight acres from the Ottawas was finally arranged through Washington and the town of Miami was laid out in the early part of 1891. I helped to haul the lumber for some of the sawmills down on Grand River, and from the Frisco at Fairland.

Miami has a different history from any of the other towns in the Indian Territory. It was bought outright and so did not come under any jurisdiction of any of the tribes and during the first two years had saloons and, of course, this attracted many undesirable people here. Once the Federal officers came here,

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raided the saloons and closed them. When the case was taken up with the United States Courts the Federal men were compelled to pay for the liquors that they had destroyed and taken. The saloons were not closed until a special act of congress established a form of government and placed it under the Arkansas Laws.

The first railroad reached Miami from Baxter Springs in 1896 but was not extended from there to Afton until 1901 so during the first few years it was a favorite spot with the cowboys and those desiring to celebrate.

I am the only person here who saw Bill West kill Kenny, the town marshal. Bill West and his father, Kinch, had passed a boy of the name of Hart and me. We were bringing a load of corn to town south of the Neosho here. They were in a buggy and were driving two big mules. We crossed and as we came up Main Street the Wests were talking to Long Mike, a gambler, on the street and when I reached the place in the street right in front of Kenny's blacksmith shop, which was on the west side of the Main Street fronting the east, Bill West walked to the door and said to Kenny, " I don't want any trouble but I want my watch and gun". Kenny had arrested West a few days previously for shooting

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out some windows and had taken his watch and gun from him. West had escaped and had sent Kenny word that he was coming back on this day at two o'clock and that he did not want any trouble but he wanted his watch and gun. Some say that this was a sweetheart's watch and some say that he had her picture in the watch. Kenny, instead of giving him the gun and watch, ducked behind a partition in the shop and fired at West. West then drew his gun and aimed at where Kenny was hiding and, firing just below the top of the partition, his shot struck Kenny in the top of the forehead and Kenny fell over a wagon wheel with his brains oozing out.

West then walked into the shop and got his gun and watch and, after looking at Kenny, turned and came out. He walked up to the north corner of the block, looking at his gun as he walked, crossed the street and entered the old Cottonwood Hotel. He walked through it out to the well back of it and got a drink and turned and came back to the street. His father who had driven up the street was coming back so he walked out and got in the buggy and they drove south out of town. John Cheyne, who was in charge of the Sigham store across the street heard the shot and came across after West left and when he saw Kenny

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lying there he called to Hart and me and asked us to come there. We got off of the load of corn and went inside and Cliney said to us, "Boys, this man gave his life for this town. Help me lift him up". We did and put him on a bench in the shop. When I went home and told my father what I had seen, he told me that I was not to mention it to any one as he did not want any trouble with West.

In the excitement that followed, the part Hart and I had played was overlooked and at the trial the only witness that gave testimony, was the small son of Henny who was at school about a half a block away and did not reach there till later. West was taken to Fort Scott for safekeeping but he escaped here and later escaped from another jail and the last time that he was captured, he was being held at Oswego, Kansas.

I did not mention this until after my father died in 1896. One day I was talking to Sandy Lee, a cousin of Bill's, and I mentioned seeing him shoot Henny. A few days after that evening, Kinch drove up to our place and called to me to come there. I was scared but I went and then he asked me to tell him what I had seen and heard. When I told him he said, "That is just what Bill told me. You will not be hurt and I will see

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you again soon." As soon as he could get in contact with Bill, they began to plan for him to give himself up and stand trial but before the arrangements could be made, a Federal officer came across West asleep in the hills about twenty-five miles east of Eureka Springs and killed him.

Our laws in those days were very different from the present ones. When we first came here we had the Indian Police and when any one of the Indians would complain against a white settler, he would be taken by the Indian Police across the state line either into Kansas or Missouri and told not to return.

Fairland had its characters, too, in those days; among them Tod Donalds, Jerry Tell and some others jumped him up in Fairland one day and followed him to the Jake Samples place some seven or eight miles but he turned on them as he reached the timber they went back to town without him. At another time, when a group of men were drinking, Tod Donalds and Bill West held up the operator of a shooting gallery at Fairland and one held him while the other shot notches in his hair.

When they were building the first old steel bridge here shortly after 1900, Mont Conday and I were the first persons to cross it. The bridge was finished and the approach was completed on the south side and they were several feet from the bridge

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on this side. We rode on from the other side and across the bridge and then jumped our horses across the uncompleted approach here. The contractor swore at us but we only laughed and told him that we wanted to be the first to cross the new bridge.

The old white two-story school building here that was built in the summer of 1900 was the first free school in the Indian Territory. When it was torn down to be replaced by the large brick building, the lumber was bought by George Nicely, the elevator man, and he built the east part of his mill and elevator out of it on Third Street southeast.

I had little schooling except in a few subscription schools but, some way, I have managed to pick up quite a bit of music and can play several instruments. My favorite instrument is the guitar and I used to go eighteen and twenty miles to play for a dance but after Father died and Mother did not have good health I found that I could not farm, look after her and attend all of the dances so one morning after I had been out all night I called my hand and told him that we were parting company and that I was settling up with him. I told him I could not keep on as we were going as we had always gone together and then I turned to the girl who had helped in the house and asked her if she wanted the old



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guitar, that if she didn't that I was going to hang it over

post.

As Mother's health grew worse I left the farm and brought her to Miami and took care of her until her death in about 1910, after which I returned to farming and this time I purchased a building that stood about one hundred fifty <sup>yards</sup> northwest of the Hudson Creek Schoolhouse and moved it across the road east on some land allotted by Doyle Nideffer.

It was a three-room house and built of white pine boards and some of them were two feet wide. The house is still used but it has been weatherboarded since. I was told that it was an old home of the Dalton Family. After living here five years I returned to Miami where I have continued to live since.