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Field Worker: Merrill A. Nelson,
May 29, 1937.

Interview with H. Matt Hays,
Enid, Route #4

Born January 9, 1869,
Missouri, Mercer County.

Parents John H. Hayes, father,
Roanoke County, Va.
Pioneer.

My mother had four girls and three boys, and I am the fourth oldest living child. My father had made a trip from Virginia to California in 1852, where he was a gold miner, but he returned from Missouri and took part on the Northern side during the War. My wife's people also sent some of their number to the front, on the Union side, during that conflict.

I left home at the age of eighteen because of my health, and soon afterwards came to Kansas and southern Oklahoma. I cut wheat on a place, which was located in what would now be the heart of Wichita. Coming down into southern Oklahoma, I lived in a wagon, and I found the outdoor life in this country of benefit to my health.

I was married in '89, and my wife has pioneered and fought the battles of life with me ever since. We have one

child and several grand-children. Some people say I am prosperous now but I had no special favors to start with and my health was poor, as a handicap.

Just a short time before the run, I had been living west of Okarche, on Bob Burn's allotment. He was bookkeeper at the old town of Darlington, and his allotment was next to Little Bear's camp. I first made the Cheyenne-Arapaho Run, and later I made all the runs except the one into Old Oklahoma.

We moved up to Hennessey about September 14, 1893. We got our booth certificate, officially entitling us to make the run. My horse had been carefully trained and though he was not of a race-horse breed, he was a good horse. He was a Siphon trotter from Missouri.

We trained our horse in a number of ways. One way was to run them six miles every day for a while. The other was to take them to a certain point and then turn them loose, and naturally they would run home. We tried to get the best men to prepare our horses. The one who trained mine cared for race horses; and so rubbed the horse down and used other practices known to race horse-men. We were racing for

something valuable and meant business, so we were doing all we could that would be to our advantage. Another horse that this man trained carried his rider to the Hamp Maney Ranch, near Billings. He made the thirty-seven miles to that point in two hours and forty minutes and secured the ranch as a claim. It is difficult now to believe the distance some of these horses would make. I know a man who would frequently drive from a point in Western Oklahoma back this way. He would stop near or on our place, and from about dawn to about sundown he would make that journey of ninety miles. Some are said to have gone even greater distances in a day; but this was usually with a change of horses. Horses varied, a free bit, grey Texas pony, like mine, I considered the best. Horses unused to the western prairie would hit a hole and break a leg and turn over, so their speed did them little good. The opening of the Cherokee Strip was one of the greatest horse races of history. The records that day equaled, if they did not exceed, anything ever run on the race track. Before the Cherokee Opening there was a hundred foot belt all around the strip. This entire area was crowded with all kinds of

vehicles, as far as eye could see. When Lou Gray of Hennessey fired the gun in our vicinity, it was almost noon. Never was there a cavalry charge like this. About a hundred yards in front of the line was a four or five foot ditch, and when the line hit this, you could see loose and horseless riders in all directions. Four miles farther on was the worst prairie dog town you could imagine. Fine Kentucky horses, the colors of their stables flying, when they hit those holes would turn clear over. It was terrible to see horses go down several miles out.

The Sooners set fire to the grass just ahead of us to smother our horses down, and as I had no notion of where I was going to settle I just rode on and on. When I got to the Hackberry, the creek bottom was full of Sooners so I kept going.

The place I first claimed is right across the road from where I live now and just a little east of where I started in that race. I staked here because I thought it was the best land I had ever seen, although I don't know soils.

I could hear the Rock Island train whistle that night as I slept there alone on my claim and thought it was blowing for Laukomis, as I thought I was east of there, when in fact it was blowing for North Enid, nine or ten miles farther north. My location was SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 30 Twp. 23, Range 5.

My time was one hour and twelve minutes for the twenty-one miles or so, which I ran, supposing the signal to have been given at 11:55 A. M., or I arrived at 1:07 P.M. This may seem incredible, but my horse was used to making runs and had run thirty-seven miles in the Cheyenne-Arapaho opening. The wind was from the northeast and was blowing the smoke in our faces, and this may have slowed us up a little even at our excellent speed.

The Callahan boys were among the fastest of those making the run up the Chisholm trail from Hennessey to Enid. They had a buckboard, which is a light, long wagon with the seats fastened to the top of the sides.

Some race horses were shipped in a palace car from Chicago, and these horses were held in until they reached Waukegan, thinking that from then on they would overtake the Callahan boys. These boys whipped their horses from the word "Go." The race horses never overtook them, but they were fortunate in securing a claim where the Spaulding gardens now lay. This was good land for it was between Enid and North Enid, so it would develop no matter which town prevailed.

The next day I went back to Hennessey to get my family, which I left at the starting line. riding my horse but he did not appear to suffer from his fast ride.

When we first came to the claim, we lived in a tent about twelve feet by twenty feet. We stayed in it till January 8, but that was not bad, although fuel was hard to get, as I have wintered in a tent. Soon we went to Enid to file and then to Kingfisher for supplies from Enid. As the freighters were in the run themselves, everyone was short on all kinds of commodities. My wife had difficulty with contestants. One man ploughed up three of her tent stakes, but she had a gun hidden, perhaps under her dress; and if they had gone farther she would have shot them. I wish I had that gun yet, but I do have an old gun which my grandfather or great grandfather used; It is an old shot gun.

Soon we dug a well, which I believe was about fifty-five feet deep. In this country we have sheet water, and there is a stream four miles wide running from the northwest to the southeast, underlying this farm. The stream is under North Enid; but at Enid it thins out and becomes a sub-surface lake.

This tiny table was one of our first pieces of furniture. You see how these inch square legs were crossed to make it strong. Now it will support quite a weight, even if it is only two feet by three feet. As I said, I have an old shot gun which belonged to my wife's grandfather. Back in the early days there was a herd of antelope on this farm of about fifteen or twenty head, and I shot one. I never had time to hunt, but that was one time that something larger than a prairie chicken or a rabbit was killed around here.

In the fall of '94, I sowed some wheat and my crop made three bushels to the acre. It was of poorer grade than the present wheat, but we raised enough kaffir corn to feed the ponies.

In 1895, we all sowed some wheat, which had been shipped by the Rock Island Railroad. We put the wheat from seven hundred acres in one car, and it was the first car of wheat ever shipped out of Garfield County. In the fall of '96, I sowed the east half of Section 30, (320 acres) mentioned above, and I threshed seventy-five bushels off this in 1897. We had forty-two ricks of headed grain, but it rained and rained. We did not thresh till the twentieth of November;

and in that year, Leighter, the wheat man, went broke in Chicago. Wheat sold in March at \$1.25 a bushel, and I could and did buy the quarter on which a part of his bumper crop was raised for five dollars an acre. From then on till now the crop has averaged fifteen bushels to the acre.

The reason for the large crop was that the ground was rolled out for the first few times and it commenced to rain in April and continued until the wheat was in. This present year, we are having the latest summer rains since I have been in this country. I am no more of a sticker than anyone else, and one time I was about to quit but just then a big rain came up and saved my crop, so I stayed.

At first we had no machinery and harvested our crop the best we could, but soon we secured a threshing machine used by horse power, this was the first thresher in the country. Later, of course, came steam.

We used a header in the early days, but it was not until 1896 that we bought one. The header would take part of the straw with the grain and we would stack the grain in ricks. From 1900, for some time we used a binder but these were expensive. I had to pay men, during the war, seven

dollars a day, in fact, it cost me forty-five cents to put wheat on the market after it was cut. It also took two men to do the work one should have done, as men would not work. It was the shortage of labor to shock wheat that forced me to buy a combine. I used to work up to twenty-five men, but after I bought the combine, three men did the work, and I could put the grain in the elevator for seven cents a bushel. It would have been impossible for me to have stayed in the wheat business had we not made the change, for although laborers complain that they have been thrown out of work by these new machines, I am showing you the other side of the story.

We used a mold board plough, or a tandem disc and a mold board plough. (The early prairie ploughs had fingers that made the turf curl over at the back of the plough).

I never used the large disc ploughs, tho' some do. Now one tractor can do the work that it took sixteen mules to do, and do it in half the time of these mules. It makes about twenty-five acres in a day and as I now have five quarters or more, this method of cultivating is quite necessary.

I also shipped shorthorn cattle in the early day with my partner, A. J. Hapwood.

Now days the soil blows from the Panhandle and stays here. It is partly a volcanic ash soil that sprinkles down on our land, and electricity coming from the northwest has the effect of burning this wheat, in my opinion. Except for the unusual amount of grasshoppers, the crop seems to be normal this year, even though there may be large numbers of army-worms in some sections.

Wheat farming will not pay, itself, as there is likely to be a crop failure here, and if the wheat farmers would keep plenty of cows for milk and butter they could make a living off of cows and chickens, then their wheat would be so much extra.

I sold seventeen thousand dollars worth of shorthorns off my place in one day, all thoroughbred stock. When the bottom fell out of the fullblood market, I went to raising steers. Others kept feeding their expensively bred stock and went broke, but I never have to look around for a buyer when my fullblood steers come on the market. I had come from North Missouri, the home of white faced cattle, and

we nearly always have about one hundred shorthorns on the place.

I have sold close to one hundred thousand milch cows to the farmers in this section. The Kansas City stock yards would loan the farmers money to buy the cattle, and would give them two years to pay. I never lost a note in these deals; so I believe people were more honest in those days, as I would rather have a man's word than his note now

Knowing where all the good shorthorn cattle were, as we had helped the farmers to stock up, we would go and get calves from them and ship them from year to year. I have shipped thousands of head, these being raised in addition to the milk and butter from the cows; and the farmers make a good profit from these dealings. The cattle market has gone up and down three times since I have been here.

I have a son named Everett, who enlisted for three years in the United States Navy. He was chosen as one of the best five hundred out of five thousand, and he was then chosen as one of the best twenty-five out of five hundred. Twenty-three of these finished an examination for officer's training, and he rated one of the best of the twenty-three. He is now married and has five children.