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Journalist, Hazel B. Greene
February 25, 1938.

Interview with Dave F. Holt
Hugo, Oklahoma.

I was born December 23, 1865, in Tennessee, and my wife, Fannie Wilson Holt, was born in 1870, in Arkansas.

My wife's parents, B. D. Wilson and Angeline Seal-Wilson, were both born in Tennessee, and both are buried at Sulphur.

My wife's parents came to the Indian Territory a couple of years or more before we did and settled on Joel Springs' place on Horse Prairie, about five southeast of Grand. Mr. Wilson was working a hundred acres of land for Mr. Spring. We made a trip to visit them before we decided to move here. Then Mr. Wilson said he had plenty of land for us both and that he would help us to move here, so he went to Prescott, Arkansas, after us.

We were young and were thrilled at the idea of moving to a new country that looked as good as this Indian Territory did. That was in January, 1896, and even though it was winter we thought the country beautiful. We entered

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the Indian Nation at Ultimathule, Arkansas, which was right on the line and we camped there that night. That trip was a perfect picnic for us, we enjoyed stopping along the creeks and rivers and cooking on a camp fire and camping nights. The second night we camped at Lukfata, at an old Choctaw Church. We had to run wild razorback hogs out of one of the camp cabins to get it to cook in, on the fireplace. They bristled up and wanted to fight us but we won and got the cabin. We cooked supper and breakfast on the fireplace, but did not sleep in the cabin; we knew that the fleas would eat us up so we slept in the wagons. We left the cabin to the hogs next morning and went blithely on our way.

The next night we camped on a creek near Doaksville, went on across Kiamichi River at Rock Chimney crossing and on to Horse Prairie next night by driving late. Now that was a happy family reunion. My wife had not seen her mother and father and her sisters and brothers had not seen each other for a year or more, and that is an awfully long time to young people. A hundred or more miles was too far to go visiting often

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in those days with poor roads and no way to go except in wagons or horseback.

Mr. Wilson made crops in summer and "logged" in winter. He had good mule teams and I had one, so we each used four mules to haul logs to Arthur City, where there was a sawmill. We would ferry the river, and then were "snatched" up the river bank on the other side with an extra team of mules which were kept there for that purpose

We logged all winter and after each load of logs I would haul home something to make our house of, and soon put up a little two-room cottonwood plank house with a shed out in front to serve as a porch. It was a new home and we were very happy there. A baby girl was born to us there, Mrs. Wilson acting as midwife. There were doctors at Grant and Goodland but we didn't bother about one for Mrs. Wilson delivered for all the women on that farm.

I made a cotton crop that year. Our cotton market was at Paris, Texas, until Al Nelson moved to Grant and put up a gin and a grist mill and store; then he bought cotton and paid cash for the cotton, too. I have known him to have \$40,000 at once sticking around in different places in his

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store and home. He would not keep it all in one place for fear of robbers. He bought lots of cotton and handled lots of money.

One fall he paid Mr. Wilson and me a dollar a bale to haul cotton to Paris, Texas. We could haul fifteen bales at once. It would take us all day long to go over there and another to return, but he gave us the work rather than use the railroad. We had to ferry the river, too. On one trip a negro came walking along and wanted to ride with us. There were so few people here then, we were glad to pick him up just for his company. We paused at a little creek to make some coffee and eat dinner. We fried some bacon and had some clear grease left in the frying pan, Mr. Wilson hated to throw it out and he made that negro drink it. He didn't want it but was afraid to refuse to do anything a white man told him to do. Mr. Wilson told him it would store up energy for him. The Winchester was "the law" in this country then.

Another thing, here in the Indian Territory, it was customary to stop at any neighbor's house; and "neighbors" meant anybody who was respectable. If the people were not at

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home the doors were never locked and one would simply go in, cook and eat all they wanted and feed their horses and leave everything in order; but one must not carry anything away with him - that would be stealing. Neighbors were far apart, but they "neighbored" and looked after each other in sickness and death. If one didn't hear or see anything of a neighbor for a few days they went to see about him to see if he was sick or needed anything.

That was the way they found out that Morris Fisher and his wife, full blood Choctaw Indians, were murdered. Nobody saw them for a day or two, so they began to investigate. They had some vicious dogs that would not let anybody in but homefolks and that was why people first suspected the son, Willie, who had, indeed, killed them.

We lived five miles from Grant; that was our post office and where we had to go to mill. The nearest church for white people was also at Grant. There was a Choctaw Church close to us and sometimes we would go there and try to understand what they said. We enjoyed the singing, even if we could not understand it; it was a slow draggy chant-like singing that they did. They usually had big dinners, too, but we never stayed.

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for those, because we never took anything. We nearly always just rode the mules over to church and left the children with the grandparents, so we returned home as soon as services were over. We had one mule that didn't object to a side-saddle on him.

We did a lot of our trading at Goodland with Joel Spring just because we were on his place but it was so far to go, about fifteen miles, that as soon as we got off of his place we changed our trading place to Al Nelson at Grant while we were near enough.

I think it was the fall of 1896 that a white man and two negroes were hanged in Paris, Texas. They had committed murders in the Indian Territory and were under the jurisdiction of the United States law, so were tried and hanged in Paris, Texas. The white man protested his innocence to the last and went to his death weak and pale. A man was murdered and he was suspected and was convicted when the ten-year-old son of the murdered man picked him out of nineteen men as the man who killed his daddy in a quarrel over a calf.

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The negroes had killed two white men and a boy who lived in a shanty boat on Red River and fished and gambled. It was said that the negroes confessed that they killed them for money. I thought I wanted to see that hanging and did, but I never want to see another. The negroes went on the scaffold singing hymns. A drunk near me kept loudly yelling that he wanted them to hurry up, that he wanted to see the hanging, but when he saw the first one drop he almost fainted and it sobered him.

We all moved away up the river just about three miles south of the little town of Jackson, which consisted of a cotton gin, grist mill, two stores and a blacksmith shop, and was located just about nine miles south of the present town of Bennington. Mr. Wilson and I would make crops, but we'd cut logs, too, in the-summer. We would get them accumulated on the river bank, and make rafts of forty or fifty, by binding them together with long poles spiked to them, and wait for a rise of the river high enough to float them down to Arthur City to the sawmill, a distance of maybe thirty-five miles as the river ran. We'd take one raft at the time downstream.

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Once, Mr. Wilson was gone when a big rise came, high enough to float the rafts so I took three other fellows and started with it; John Pinsell, Sam Daly and a fellow whose name I never knew, but we called him "Slim." We got about five miles down the river and got "sanded" at the mouth of Sandy Creek. We had our skiff tied behind the raft and in it were provisions and an axe. Well, there was a little store up the bank not far from where we stuck on the sand bar, across the river on the Texas side. They sold whiskey up there, so while we were lying around on the river bank by a fire waiting for a second rise to float our logs, Sam and "Slim" went up to the store. I cautioned Sam not to get any liquor because we would need level heads to pilot those logs down that swollen stream. They returned, and when I asked "Slim" if Sam got any whisky, he said he did not.

But as soon as we got out in the stream, going down to untie the raft which was still on the bar. Sam pulled out a quart of whiskey and began drinking and saying that he meant to run that raft against every snag he saw so it would be out of the way when he came down again. Then I

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knew he was getting drunk. Slim drank a little but John and I would not drink any and kept begging Sam to quit. He was in the front of the boat, rowing. Slim saw two snags ahead and called out to Sam to look out and go to one side of them. He gave a lunge to one side and broke an oar and turned the boat to one side and threw us all out into the water. John and I climbed onto the two snags. Slim grabbed hold of Sam and they both went down and when they came up, I could see that Sam was sobered. He got loose from Slim and swam to that boat and got in it and it half full of water. One of the paddles was in it and he got that. Slim went straight down, yelling "Sam, save me," but Sam was for saving himself. He could swim but Slim could not. With that one oar left in the boat, Sam paddled to shore but he was away down the river, clear out of our sight. I never thought to see him again.

We clung to those snags four hours, it seemed to me like a week, shouting for help and kicking drifts off of the snags to keep them from throwing us in the water. The people up at the store heard us hollering but thought we were hunters, so paid no attention to our yelling. We pulled off our

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old buckled brogan shoes and fastened them together and hung them on the snag. I begged John to swim out but he wouldn't; he said he was going to wait for help. Then I gave him three silver dollars that I had in my pocket and told him that if he got out and I didn't for him to give them to my wife, I was going to swim for it. I thought of my wife and three little children up the river in a little pole cabin with a dirt floor, expecting me to return and keep providing for them, and I just couldn't fail them. I pulled off my clothes and meant to throw them in the river, that was the reason I gave John my money but he begged me to hang them on the snag.

About the time I got my clothes off and ready to jump in, I saw men on the river bank and I saw Sam. We could not hear a word they said, the water made so much noise but I saw they were making a fire and I wondered why. It was March and very cold, but I was not cold. I guess the excitement kept me warm, but just as soon as we got on the bank I began to shake. Well it was dark by the time we got our clothes dried, then we started to walk the five miles home up through the dark river bottom. It was after midnight

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when we got there and when my wife saw just two men with me and I told her that "Slim" was at the bottom of Red River, she had a nervous chill.

The men there hunted for "Slim's" body while we were drying out and the next day we three went and hunted all day for him, then Sam said that those logs should be floated on down while we had the water and I agreed with him. So, wearing Slim's hat, which had floated within his reach as his own floated away, Sam and John untied the raft and floated it on down to Arthur City. They got their pay for their work and I never saw or heard of them again but they told the saw mill owner that the logs belonged to Mr. Wilson and me and we got credit for them.

With others, I kept looking for the body of "Slim," and finally, on the ninth day it floated up near the bank and a negro who was watching with us for it, saw it and helped us to get him out. We built a box, buried him high, up on the bank of the river and marked his grave. We tried to find out who he was and to find his folks, but never did; we had never heard his name. He was so swollen and dark that he was unrecognizable, but we knew it was he. That was in

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March of 1898. I never "rafted" any more. I wanted no more truck with a river, only to cross it.

I lived on Red River the balance of that year, then I had enough of it. Once water got up all around our cabin and I had to "coon it" on a log across a part of the stream to go out and get a boat to take my family out. Once a big old timber wolf came up in the yard and whipped all the dogs and was carrying off a pig before I shot it. I skinned it and used the hide to make a back seat for a rocking chair. Wild cats were so bold that they would hide in the cotton and slip out and catch our chickens. I was sick and tired of it all. My cabin was one I had put up of cedar poles and was not much, so, just as soon as I gathered my crop I got out.

I moved to Clayton in the mountains, a much better place to live and we ran a hotel there for years. Then, too, we could send our children to school.