

HIGHTSTOWN

NEW



EAST WINDSOR

JERSEY

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2006

The Cherokee Strip Run of 1893

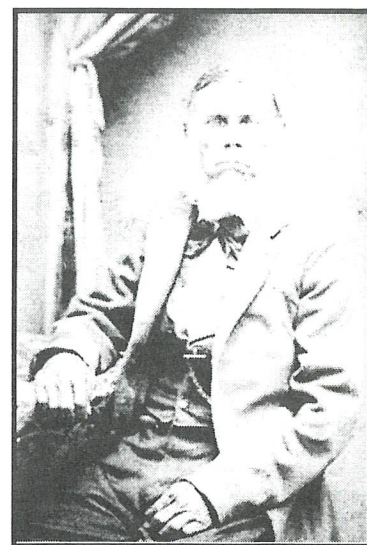
Members of the Hight Family, of Hightstown, NJ, witness and take part in the land rush through the Cherokee Strip toward the Oklahoma Territory.

Samuel Hight, who was born in Hightstown, Middlesex County, New Jersey, on 3 January 1803, died 26 April 1887 in Arkansas City, Cowley County, Kansas.

Samuel Hight's parents are not positively known but the Hight family believes that Samuel's father was Jacob Hight. Some of the Hightstown descendants made their way out of New Jersey and settled in Arkansas City, Kansas; via Ohio and Indiana. Samuel Hight's grandson, Philip Kearney Hight, a.k.a. "P.K." Hight, was born 8 Feb 1879, in

Indiana. He and his sisters, Flora and Anna Hight, witnessed the Cherokee Strip Run in 1893 for the land that led to the Oklahoma Territory. Below are their accounts, and those of a neighbor, surrounding the day's events.

When the history of this town is written, one of the most outstanding events will undoubtedly be what is called "The Run of 1893." In 1889, Oklahoma Territory was opened for white settlement. A strip along and below the Kansas border was reserved as a passageway to the West for the Indians and was known as the "Cherokee Outlet." When the settlers crowded into this strip, the government finally made another treaty with the Indians, and the "Strip," too, was opened to white settlement on September 16, 1893. The following was found in a scrapbook.



Samuel Hight, born 3 Jan 1803, Hightstown, Middlesex County, New Jersey

P. K. Hight and Hight Sisters, Flora and Anna

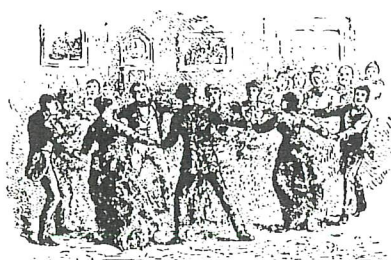
"The opening of the Cherokee Strip spoiled our huge playground—150 miles long and 75 miles wide," P. K. Hight, 910 North Seventh Street, said in reminiscing on the events of 1893 with his sisters Miss Flora Hight and Miss Anna Hight. The Hight family farm was located on the state line eight miles southeast of Arkansas City. The Hight sons, together with the other boys in the neighborhood, considered the strip of land just across the road south of their place as their own private playground. Here they rode their ponies, hunted rabbits, and roamed the hills barefoot from early spring to late fall, and successfully avoided contact with rattlesnakes and other species of poisonous reptiles.

Driving a small spring wagon, the Hight boys often visited the site of the sol-

dier camp, Camp Schofield, located about where Grey Noret school now stands on the Gillig farm, to call on the soldiers and sell them butter, eggs, chickens, sweet potatoes and other vegetables and fruit. The camp was located near the Gary Spring where each summer a large group of soldiers participated in various maneuvers. "They were always glad to see us boys," Mr. Hight recalled, "because we both relieved the monotony and supplied an acceptable addition to their diet of beans and bacon." The soldiers from this camp were the ones in charge of the race into the Cherokee Strip.

"The morning of September 16th, the whole family was standing in the south field to watch the race start," Mr. Hight recalled.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

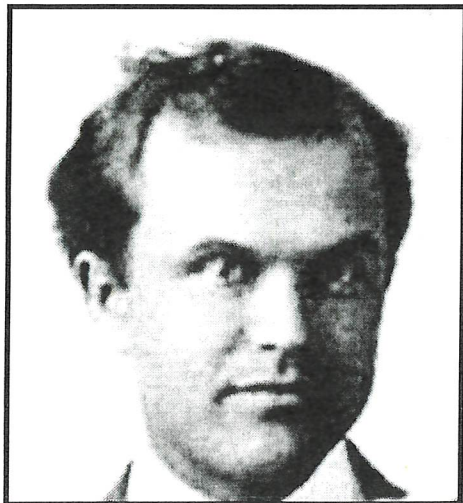
NOVEMBER

- 6 Business Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Sara Hutchinson West Educational Center
- 27 Ely House open for visitors, 2-4:00 p.m.

DECEMBER

- 3 Christmas Tea, Ely House, 2-4:00 p.m.
- 4 Business Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Sara Hutchinson West Educational Center

"People were lined up on the state line in both directions – about the same as in town for a parade," he said. "There were soldiers stationed about a half mile apart facing the runners and at 12 o'clock, we would see the smoke from the guns when the signal was given. On horseback, many people riding blooded race horses, and in wagons and buggies, the crowds surged south. They raised a big cloud of dust and scattered like feathers, to be out of sight in a minute. After the



Philip Kearney Hight, a.k.a. "P.K." Hight, born 8 Feb 1879

roar and rumble everything was calm and peaceful."

"Our father, T. J. Hight, ran just across the road and placed a stake in the ground directly south of his own farm. His neighbor to the east, Mr. Hayes, did likewise, and his son, Pete Hayes, placed a stake in the plot of land east of his father. Pete had a fast horse hitched to a light wagon, and as soon as he had driven his stake he came west on the state line to pick up his father, then our father, and they proceeded to the railroad tracks where the train was scheduled to stop. Boarding the train, they left immediately for Perry to file their claims."

"Our father was gone several days," Miss Flora Hight said, "and didn't even wash his face while down there. There was no water to wash with, hardly enough to drink, no clean place to eat, no place to stay. Perry was just a town of tents with no accommodations for the crowds, which thronged there to register claims. Mr. Hayes and Peter were

fortunate enough to file on their claims, but our father was no so lucky, as someone had a filed a prior claim to his spot."

"Immediately, after the crowd crossed the line, fires broke out in the prairie, caused mostly by people hunting the bench marks which had been set out years before when the land was surveyed. All those cinders from the fires drifted north and covered everything, entering homes through the open windows," the Hight sisters remembered. "The weather had been hot and dry, and although a nice breeze sprang up Saturday morning, it soon disappeared and the hot winds from the Territory blew incessantly. Pillow slips and bedding were grimy, and grit was everywhere."

The big need of the people prior to the "Run" was water, and it had been met at the Hight farm from a huge cistern and two big wells, from which Mr. Hight dispensed all the water they needed, accepting no pay. All kinds of money-making schemes were set afoot while people were waiting for the "Run" to start. One of the commonest was to dispense water for ten cents or a quarter a bucket.

"The night before the race I went with Owen Farnsworth in a rack loaded with hay for the Boomers' horses. Owen sold this for 50 cents a bale," Mr. Hight recalled, "while 10 cents a bale had previously been good pay for it. We drove from the river to Chilocco, stopping every little while to dump off a bale. All kinds of horses were ready for the race, but the people who got the best claims were those who had fleet-footed little Texas ponies, and who knew how to ride and save their horses."

There was always plenty to eat at the Hight home with fruit from the orchard, dried and put up, a beef killed each fall, and garden stuff, while sand plums which were plentiful "on the playground" made good preserves, and jack rabbits and squirrels were good hunting. The cows furnished plenty of milk and dairy products.

The *Traveler*, October 27, 1953, carried the following: "One thing I recall vividly

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HIGHTSTOWN EAST WINDSOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Hightstown, New Jersey
founded 1971*

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**To educate, while preserving for
future generations, our people
and our community's history.**

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Sponsored by The Hightstown-East Windsor Historical Society

Asa M. Dean, a Neighbor & Witness of the "Run"

about the Cherokee Strip Run is the weather—hot, dry, dusty," said Asa M. Dean. It had rained early in July and not thereafter. But it did rain right after the 16th of September—within a week. While he did not make the "Run" himself, Mr. Dean went with his father and some other relatives in a party to watch it start.

"We left Friday afternoon," Mr. Dean said. "We went out 'Shoo Fly' Road, after crossing the Sixth Street bridge, as far as the Jim Ewing place, where we received permission to camp in his yard overnight. His brother Ed Ewing lived just across the road. The next morning we traveled west to the north-south road which was two miles west of the Cowley-Sumner line. Continuing south we reached the state line where the 'runners' were assembled about

11 o'clock. The intersection of this road and state line was a low place, and there the vehicles had begun to congregate. The horsemen were on higher ground."

"It was a great panorama—horses, all types of vehicles, and people—as far as eye could see. Everybody seemed busy getting mounts in order for the 12 o'clock signal. A little breeze had come up that morning and it was cool then, but hot in the afternoon."

While there were many wagons ready to race, Dean recalled, they could not compete with the horsemen, and it was more or less agreed that they should follow, bringing supplies—tents, water, food, feed for the horses, etc. With Mr. Dean's father, also on horseback, was his close friend, Char-

ley Baker, followed by a wagon loaded with supplies. (The Bakers are the parents of Max Baker and Mrs. Zella Berghold.) "One type of vehicle which did compete with the horses," Dean said, "was a home-made two wheeled 'chariot' fashioned from two wheels, the axle and tongue of a wagon, containing a box-bed, 3 feet by 6 feet, on which the spring seat was attached. It was built for speed."

"We didn't hear the signal, but 2 or 3 minutes before 12, according to my watch -- and it was a good one -- a man on a big black horse started to race south, and the cavalcade followed him. It was an exciting time for the people, most of whom were sober, orderly, good citizens. It only took a few minutes for the entire

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The Holiday Greeting Card



Asa M. Dean , continued from page 3

group to be out of sight, with only a cloud of dust and a few fires already starting, to mark the passing. One lone horseman cutting across the filed soon vanished from sight. Shortly afterwards, a soldier appeared who said he had started the race farther west."

After waiting around for an hour, Mr. Dean returned home. He had been driving a horse and cart. His father did not get a claim since he reached a piece of land already claimed by "Sooners." Previous to the day of the "Run," Dean recalled that registration booths had been set up along the state line, and later in the city to take care of the crowd. This was authorized by the Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Hoke Smith, of Georgia. There was also a lengthy proclamation by President Grover Cleveland published in the *Traveler* a month before the opening of the Strip, which gave detailed instructions

Huge crowds of people were in Arkansas City for the "Run," he said, and they were camped everywhere. The main part of town at that time extended from the Gladstone Hotel (now the Elmo, at the corner of Summit & Chestnut) on the north to Madison Avenue (Kroenert Wholesale, then Action Manufacturing - now Deep Rock gasoline station) on the south. Homes were scattered among the business buildings, and there were quite a few vacant lots. The home of Major William Sleeth was located on the Fitch corner (Adams Avenue). The back 44 feet of the Ranney-Davis Mercantile Building was in use at that time.

Numerous stray horses roamed the streets and countryside after the "Run," probably bought for that purpose and then turned loose afterwards because of scarcity of feed.



Dedication of the Stockton Street Historic District - October 15, 2006

*The Hightstown-East
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wishes you and your families
a happy and healthy
holiday season!*

Hightstown-East Windsor
Historical Society
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