

HENSLEY, DORA B.

INTERVIEW

10485

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

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Field Worker's name Zaidae B. Blend,

This report made on (date) April 19, 1938. 1938

1. Name Mrs. Dora B. Hensley.

2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Eight miles west and two north of

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 19 Year 1875. Altus.

5. Place of birth Arkansas.

6. Name of Father Isaac Edward Moore Place of birth Tennessee.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Sarah J. Vernon. Place of birth Tennessee.

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 5.

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Zaidee B. Bland.
Journalist,
April 19, 1938.

An Interview with Mrs. Dora B. Hensley,
Citizen of Oklahoma for forty-two years,
Altus, Oklahoma.

My husband's father and brother were up here so he came up here and stayed nearly a year before he sent for me and the children. He filed and made a dug-out, fenced a corral, dug a well and did his plowing before he sent for me. I came to Vernon on the train and he met us there in a wagon to bring us home. I thought it the most desolate wild country that I could imagine.

It was in February and very cold. When we got to Red River we camped for the night and tried to cross the river in the daylight hours. The river was "some high" and looked very dangerous; however, we got across without any trouble and came on home. My husband already had a stove up and had a bed, a few old chairs and a table, and had plenty of wood hauled up from out of the Nation. We did not have any light except candles and had to keep all our best clothes in our trunks for there was no place else.

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The every-day clothes were hung on the wall.

The rats and mice were so bad that it kept me scared all the time. Fleas were also a proposition. As soon as it got warm enough outside for us to stay out very long I made a dish pan full of very strong briny water and would sprinkle it all over the dugout. This seemed to kill the fleas and they would not get bad again until the next spring and then I would have to do it all over again.

All around the dugout were broom weeds and I would pull up a bunch of them and tie them together and use them for brooms to sweep out my living quarters.

If the children had bad colds or had the La Grippe I would stew these broom weeds and make a strong tea, sweeten it a little and give it to them and it always seemed to break up a cold better than anything. If the children got "ant stung or spider bit" I would bathe the place in coal oil and paint it with bluing.

One of the babies was lying on the bed one day when a centipede fell from the ceiling on him. The baby gave one

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scream and fainted. I ran to him and brushed the centipede off and began to work with the baby. I happened to have some ammonia in the house and bathed the place with ammonia and afterwards put coal oil on it. I guess we must have worked with him five or six hours before he seemed normal and after that he was all right. The place looked red for a few days but that was all.

I was more afraid of rattlesnakes than anything. We killed a lot of them but they never happened to bite any one of us or any of our stock.

The first two or three days after I got here I was awful lonesome with the coyotes howling at night but after that we got on pretty well except when my man went for wood or went to Vernon for he was always gone a night or two when he made those trips and I never did get so I would not be lonesome when he was away and I was alone with just the children.

The first year we had a neighbor who loaned us all the cows we wanted to milk and we had plenty of milk and butter. I had two hens and raised twenty chickens that first year and after that we raised a lot of chickens every year. We killed

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prairie chickens to eat the first year and prairie chicken eggs were good if you could find them fresh. We had two hogs for our meat and we planted barley and a little cotton on the sod but the grasshoppers ate us out.

We stayed on this place five years and proved up on it, then sold and went to Elmer to put the children in school. We had nine children, eight of whom are still living. Our oldest boy loved to say speeches and I think that first year the teacher let him recite every day so when the Spring contest came on he came to Altus and entered the contest and won \$5.00 gold piece for saying his speech best of all. He is a teacher now and teaches at Alva.

Some people say that the prairie land being all plowed up causes our sand storms but there was sod, sod, every where when we came here and we had the sand storm, just as bad as we do now.

We did not like to live in Elmer so came right back and bought a farm about two miles from the one we homesteaded and we own this farm now.

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This time we did not have ^a well and had to haul the water from Horse Branch to use. It was not much fun to haul water so far. One day my only small son was in the wagon with the barrels in which we were fixing to haul some water when the team ran away. I was nearly frightened to death for I was sure Son would be killed but the barrels rolled out with a clatter and the team ran into a fence and stopped, so no one was hurt.

When we did dig a well it was soft water which was very, very unusual for most all the water in this country is hard. We were two miles east and one mile north from Horse Branch and about one mile north of the place where Victory is now.

Our land joined my sister-in-law's place on the north. We built here and every time we would build a house, the sand would blow out from under the construction or foundation and the houses would become very uneven. At last we became very much disgusted and bought nine acres from our sister-in-law and built this cement block house, and now we are satisfied.

Our life has been very like the lives of all the other

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early settlers. Perhaps we have accumulated a little more than some but we have been saving for Husband was a good trader and we thought we must look out for the sunset of life. Our two youngest children are all who are at home now and both are away at college at this time.