

SOUTHWORTH, HATTIE

INTERVIEW

#8218

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

Field Worker's name Ida B. Lankford

This report made on (date) August 13, 1937

1. Name Hattie Southworth

2. Post Office Address Cordell, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Star Route,

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 15 Year 1882

5. Place of birth Lebanon, Texas

6. Name of Father August Bauer Place of birth Germany

Other information about father Farmer

7. Name of Mother Barbara Yunger Place of birth Germany

Other information about mother Dairy Maid

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 _____

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An Interview with Hattie Southworth, Cordell.

By - Ida B. Lankford, Field Worker.

August 13, 1937.

I saw Oklahoma, December 18th, 1891, with my father, mother and three brothers; I landed on the Oklahoma side of the Red River in the new country. The Indians gave us a thrill as they would ride up to our wagons, look in, never say a word, but grunt. The first one really gave us children a scare as we were alone in the wagon. Our parents were helping some other wagons across the swollen Red River as they had to use two teams.

The first night we camped on Cache Creek. There was so much water that we could not ford it, and there were no bridges on which to cross streams. The next morning the water was not so high and there were more men camped there to double teams and help each other across. Mother's hens that were in a coop on the back end of the wagon were almost drowned.

The second night we spent near Fort Sill in the yard of the Red Store, the first home owner we saw

in Oklahoma. The people were so nice to us. They insisted that we children should sleep in the house.

The Indians had just received their rations from the Government and celebrated with a big powwow and kept up their music and singing all night. My parents thought they were on the war path, and kept watching all night. The next morning they asked the people at the store what all that awful racket was, and were told that it was only a celebration.

The third night we spent near Sugar Creek where a big snow kept us in camp two days and nights and father and mother again took time about staying up to keep the fire going. Wood was plentiful and could be had for the cutting.

The roads were very rough and hard to follow and the teams could make only a few miles a day.

The creeks were frozen over, and one creek I remember was frozen so hard that it held up the wagon and team over half way across.

It was easy to get lost as the roads were

only wagon trails, among hills and trees, and we saw no one to tell us which was the right one. Sometimes the trail would suddenly stop where someone had been camped a few days. We would meet Indians but when father asked them about the road they would only answer "No savie".

So before we landed at our destination, which was two miles east of where Cordell now is located, we were really lost. When my father filed on our home he came west of Cloud Chief, which was then a post office; he had to remember the location of the land as just so far west of Cloud Chief.

We landed on what we learned later was Elk Creek. We made camp, and could do nothing but wait, hoping someone would pass that way. About nine o'clock a cowboy rode up to our camp. Father learned from him how far we were from the right road, and how to get back to it.

We came over more rough roads and camped one more night and landed at our destination, one mile east and one mile south of where Cordell is now lo-

cated. We were on Mr. McKissick's claim December 24th, 1891, and moved into his little dugout, which we were very glad to have permission to do. It was very cold. A big snow fell the next day, December 25th. The day following, father got up early and rode one of his horses to Rainy Mountain Creek to see if the things he had brought out when he came to file were still there, as he just unloaded them on the creek bank and came back after his family as soon as he filed. He found everything there all right, but mother and we children thought we would never see him again, as it snowed and was so cold that we thought he would be frozen. He accidentally ran on to a dugout, six miles south, where the people took him in, gave him hot coffee and a blanket to wrap up in until morning. Well do I remember that Christmas night. Mother did not go to bed and she put the lantern out so if he came in sight he could find the dugout. The next morning the sun was shining and Father came home about 9:00 A. M.

As soon as the ground thawed, Father started

our house. He dug a hole, 12 ft. x 20 ft., and covered it with lumber made from cotton wood trees, which was cut by a little saw mill on the Washita River east of Cloud Chief. About the first of March, we moved into our little home. How happy we were in our own home with a roof over our head and a fire to keep us warm!

But Alas! when the spring rains and sun-shine came, our roof warped so that there were big cracks for the water to come in. We had to cover our beds with wagon sheets and in this home we lived for six months, when we raised our first crop and sold it for enough to build two rooms of the little house in which we now live.

The year Father built the house, we raised seventeen bales of cotton. He hauled it all to El Reno to market and sold some for $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents per pound and some for 5¢. Lumber was cheap. We only paid \$14.00 per thousand and hauled it from El Reno. It took him from one week to ten days to make the trip, according to the weather and the condition of the roads.

The price of other things was about the same in comparison with the prices of cotton and lumber. When mother wrote a letter, she would send me to the Post Office with a dozen eggs to buy a stamp. She sold her butter for 10 cents per pound, and bought four spools of thread with the dime.

My first school in Oklahoma was in the winter of 1892, in one room of a hotel at Old Cordell, and my teacher was an ex-soldier, Mr. J. M. Foss. Our school terms were short. Only three months each year. The last two terms I went were five months each with about sixty children in a little boxed school house and one teacher to take care of all grades up to and including the eighth. Our school house was also our church building, where we went to Sunday School and to church when a preacher happened to come that way.

The Indians, we learned, were friendly, and my father soon won their confidence. Many of them came to our home to exchange wood or posts for something to eat. My parents never turned them away if

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they did not have anything to exchange, but divided what little we had with them. Mothers brought their paposes and only by making signs could we make them understand or could we understand them. But after we got over our scare from the first Indian we saw, when we first landed and he came riding up beside the wagon where we children were left alone while our parents were helping some other people across the river and we thought sure he would carry us off before they got back to us, but he only grunted and looked at us, we were never afraid of the Indians any more.

The big prairie fires were more to be feared than the Indians. The grass was as tall as a man's head on this place, two miles east of Cordell; although people plowed fire guards and back fired against the strong wind, the fire would jump across and start again. I remember one time when the fire started about thirty miles north of here and could not be stopped. People

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almost lost their lives trying to save what little they had. My mother and father were sick for weeks from getting too hot, but they saved what they had. At that time, at the age of twelve years, I was staying with a young neighbor woman in a little home dug in the bank of a draw or dry creek. The front was boards, and grass was growing right up to the door. When we saw the fire, there was no place we could go to be safe, as there were three little ones to look after. We had to take our chance in the dugout. They had a little well of water not far from the door, so we filled everything we had and wet sacks and old coats to beat out the fire as it burned to the door. Everything except the dugout and its contents was burned.

Rattlesnakes and coyotes were plentiful and when we went any distance at all, we carried a stick and tried to kill all the rattlers we found. Sometimes two or more ^{would be} near the same spot. Now we never see one.

The coyotes would watch the chickens come

from the coops, and pick them up and run. They would eat all our watermelons, play hide and seek with the dogs. They were too smart to get shot. We could see one or more every morning when they would come out of the tall grass.

We were told that cotton would not grow in this part of Oklahoma, but the second year father and Mr. Ogle, whose farm adjoins Cordell on the south, brought a few bushels of seed to try it and found it would grow as well as feed. It was about the third or fourth year before wheat was raised on this farm; I do not remember whether any of the neighbors raised it or not. We had rains enough to grow most anything we planted in the garden. But the bugs, rabbits and worms had to be taken care of.

Our water proposition was serious. We had to dig deep to get it and the first beans we cooked rattled like rocks, and the longer they cooked, the harder they got. Later we learned to use a little soda which would help to soften the water. When it rained we would save rain water to cook beans, and

make coffee. It was about five years before people began making cisterns to catch soft water.

Father could have sold this home thirty-five years ago for \$5000 but he refused because he had pledged the Government to make it his home, which he did as long as he lived. It is now my home.
