

JACKSON, NANNIE H.

INTERVIEW

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Interviewer, Zaidée B. Eland,
July 27, 1937.

Interview with Nannie H. Jackson,
Duke, Okla.

Born Texas.

Parents J. G. Brawley, North Carolina
Sarah Ann Brawley, S. Carolina.

I was born in Texas, about ten miles north of Weatherford. The log house sat near a running stream named Clear Fork. All the buildings on the place were made of logs. There were three buildings in the yard that we used all the time. None of them had any windows. The big house was where we lived and slept. About ten yards away from this was a smaller one where we cooked and ate and a little further on was still another house we called a smoke-house, where all of our food was kept except what was used every day in the kitchen. All of these houses were chinked and daubed with lime and mud between the logs. My father went to the woods and cut the logs and built the houses the last year of the Civil War.

I grew up and married on this place. There was not a mortgage or delinquent taxes on it for more than fifty years, while it belonged to Mother and Father.

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In 1891, my husband and I left Texas and started to the Chickasaw Nation. We had three little girls. We started out in a covered wagon, driving two little mules. It was November. About one month before we started I was bitten by a centipede and the poison had never gotten out of my system and I could not walk upright when we left for the purpose of finding a new home.

Our first stop was at Ardmore. There was a blacksmith shop, a wagon yard, two stores, and a few houses which made up the town. The hogs were bedded in the streets until you could hardly get through. We wandered around about a month and a half in that country trying to find land to buy or rent. Finally we camped about eighteen miles north of Ardmore between two streams. The larger of the streams was called Boggy. This was a good camping ground and there were several families camped in the valley between the streams. While we camped there my husband and another man found a wild turkey roost and we had a lot of turkeys to eat, also, we had deer while we camped there. Here we heard of land we might rent. There was a log house just put up made from green logs and no windows in

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it but we were so glad to get land to cultivate and a house to live in we rented and stayed two years. The house was 20 feet long and at least half as wide. After two years we moved a little farther north and went to another log house. This house was made from logs split open and stood upright with the flat side in and the bark side out. This house wasn't nearly so warm, for the cracks could not be stopped with mud. This house had a good board roof on it and a little brush arbor out in front to be used to sit under in the summer. We raised cotton and corn. We had lots of vegetables to eat but did not enjoy them so much for we were always sick; it was such an unhealthy country. There were no schools near enough for my children to attend.

There were wild grapes, plums, persimmons, and plenty of pecans. You could go out any time and kill all the squirrels you could eat. Our postoffice was called Hewitt. I think it is called New Wilson now and is in an oil field.

After staying on this place five years we started west to what was then Oklahoma^{territory}. We now had five children, the baby only one month old. It was February and the day we started was as pretty a day as one would want to commence a journey. We found

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an old house to camp in when night came but during the night it began to rain. It rained for two days and one night and late in the afternoon of the second day some people came along and told us to move along. Still it rained, but the next morning we loaded up and started on our way. We traveled all day in the rain. We stopped to camp at a little store house in a clearing called James. We stopped under a big tree and just as we stopped our team a squirrel ran up the trunk of the tree and my husband killed it. We had squirrel for supper. After supper we propped the wagon tongue up with the breast yoke and spread some quilts over it and let them hang down on the sides. My husband and the oldest children slept under that. It rained all night and in the morning the ground was so soft as we went along the hubs of the wagon would sometimes drag in the mud. We got stuck several times but somebody would come along and hitch on and pull us out and we would go on. Here we stayed a week at Comanche Town until it began to fair up. When it had faired up a little we started on again but the road was so soft that we would stick every little while and would have to be pulled out.

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At last we got to what was called Snyder Flats and here we stuck and stuck, I don't know how many times, before we got to the town. That was the little town that has blown away so many times. It was new then and the houses were made of tin. There were some tents. We found a little house to camp in. The next morning we drove on west and got to Otter Creeks and camped. In the night it began to rain again. They were putting the railroad through to Eldorado and there were several campers. They had some women with them and when it began to rain some of the women came over to where we were camping and insisted that the children and I come over to the tents and sleep. The three little ones and I slept in the tent with them and my husband and the two oldest children slept in the wagon. The next morning it was still raining. We cooked breakfast and ate with them. They invited us to stay that day which we did, and the night also. During the night the two Otter Creeks came together and the water was running through the tents, so we left there without any breakfast. They had the railroad track built so the work train could cross over and we walked out on the rails. We had to track back the way we came. A family not far from the creek took us in and kept us a week.

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There was a little mound that the horses could stand on and my husband walked back and forth on the railroad and kept them fed. We got the man who ran the work-train to bring our bedding out. One of the men who was camped with us said he was an old cowhand and had been in this country a long time. He said campers were always getting caught in there and he and a lot of cowboys had tied their ropes to the tree tops a lot of times, and loaded women and children on tops of tables or any flat surface and would row them out by pulling the ropes. He said two old stubborn men would not come out and leave their things and he swam out twice a day to take them food. The man we were staying with said he intended to be a cowman but did not go on the trail but once. They came to a big river and it was up and they could not get the cattle to go into it. So he pushed one old bull off into the water and jumping off his horse he grabbed the old bull by the tail and by slapping him with his hat and yelling he kept him going the right way across and the other cows all followed. And that was enough for him.

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After unloading so many of our things the team could pull out. We left Otter Creek and made it safe to North Fork of Red River. It was still misting and the river was up. We were afraid to drive into the water. There was a man plowing near the river and we tried to hire him to pull us across. We told him he could hitch his team in front of ours and pilot us across. He told us there was no use in that as the river was perfectly safe for us to just drive in. So we started across and we would have made it all right had not one of our mares been afraid of quick sand. About middle way she laid down and would not get up until she was unhitched from the wagon. My husband took the other mare and by making a lot of trips he got us all out and a lot of the things, too.

It took some time to get five children and me out and by that time some cowboys came along and tied their lariat ropes onto the end of the tongue of the wagon and pulled the wagon out.

We got out and traveled a little farther and got to a little town, I have forgotten the name of it but we stopped

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to camp for my husband was wet to his waist and by now the rain was snow and we were all cold. The next day brought us to where Altus is now. Here we got acquainted with a man who lived on farther west across Salt Fork. He had killed some kind of a wild cat and had stuffed its hide and nailed it to a plank. It was as big as a good size dog and had black and yellow spots. I did not think much about the stuffed hide then as I knew we had another river to cross that evening. So we followed the man out of town and when we got to the river the man hitched his team in front of ours and we crossed safely. We went on to his house and spent the night with him. He just lived in a little dugout and cooked on a fireplace. Their beds were one legged bunks. The railings of the beds were logs just stuck in the walls of the dugout. The next day we drove into Duke. We had to go through the pastures as the roads were so soft we did not dare go over them for fear of being stuck again. So you see through all this travel we had been out but one night. The people were good to us and took us in and it never cost us a penny except at the wagon yard.

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We got land and began to farm and are still farming. We used to make good crops. We made eleven bales of cotton the first year and I cannot tell you how much maize and cane we made. There were lots of wild plums on that first place. I made a plum pie the sixth day of June and we still had plums on the trees in September. I cannot tell you how many plums were sold off of the place.

The next year we moved over on the Salt Fork. It was a dry year but that did not keep the river from coming down and overflowing. I watched the river come down and cut out seven acres of our corn that was planted next to the river, and carry it on down the river, land and all. I crossed the river to Mangum when the water was over the bridge. I stayed here five years and made pretty good crops, considering the water and dry hot winds.

I have spent some years in New Mexico and proved up a claim out there but that is not much of a cotton country. I have stayed here most of my life, after my husband died as my oldest children were girls and I thought I had to stay in a cotton country so they could help make the living,

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What little schooling they got they had to go three and four miles to get it and a lot of times they had to drive the old gray mare. I have washed and ironed for sixty-five cents a dozen to help with the expenses when we had a dry year.

I am still able to keep house for five and milk the cows. I am happy. I have been a pioneer.

There has been but one divorce among all my girlhood friends. We stayed married better fifty years ago than we do now.