

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

McLEMORE, JOHN W.

INTERVIEW.

10561.

Field Worker's name Zeidee B. Bland

This report made on (date) April 25, 1938

1. Name John W. McLemore

2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 421 N. Jackson Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 5 Year 1871

5. Place of birth Bastrop County, Texas.

6. Name of Father Phelix McLemore Place of birth Louisiana.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Isabelle Beaty Place of birth Georgia

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 2.

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Zaidee B. Bland,
April 25, 1938.
Journalist.

Interview with John W. McLemore.

Altus, Oklahoma.

421 N. Jackson Street.

Born September 5, 1871.

Father-Phelix McLemore

Mother-Isabelle Beaty.

I had a sister who came with her husband to Greer County in the early eighties. I was on the lookout for more land than I could buy where I was in Texas and had been up here several times to look around and to visit my sister, so after the land of Greer County was given to Oklahoma, and it was decided that no one could hold more than one-half section of land, a lot of people had to relinquish a quarter or more land and were willing to take anything that was offered to them for the land they had been claiming.

Near my sister's home I found an old lady who had never filed at all and was willing to take \$25.00 for a quarter section of land that had only a calf pen on it; it was right across the section line from where they had their dugout and they kept their calves penned in a pole lot.

McLEMORE, JOHN W.

INTERVIEW.

10561.

- 2 -

When I came up this time I had come with the intention of getting a claim and had brought with me a wagon load of farm implements which I knew I would need for farming so when I bought this claim I went to Mangum and filed properly. My filing number was 1083 and my land was the SE half of Section 31-3N-19W. I came back to my sister's and took her and family back home with me for a visit with the folks who did not intend to move up here. I sold all my other things that we did not intend to bring and bought my wife and child a ticket to Vernon, Texas. My sister's visit was out and she and my wife came on the train to Vernon where my sister's husband met them and they came home to the claim in a wagon. I brought a man with me to drive my wagon while I drove my stock through. It took us eleven and one-half days to drive through for I had four cows, a yearling, and several horses, besides the wagon and team. We crossed the river coming north, January 1, 1898. We did not have any trouble coming but one night it rained very hard. We always made our bed under the wagon and were already in bed when it began to rain. We did not notice that we had spread our bed in a low place and were nearly drowned out and had to get up in the middle of the night. There was no room in the wagon to

McLEMORE, JOHN W.

INTERVIEW.

10561.

- 3 -

sleep and everything was flooded, We had to bust up a chair to make us a fire to get dry by.

There were three quarantine lines we had to pass over and no one thought I would be allowed to bring my cattle in but I was not stopped a single time, even for inspection. I did not have any ticks on my cows anyway so did not fear inspection.

We stayed with my sister and her husband, Mr. Littlefield, until he and I could dig my hole in the ground. We went over in the Indian country and cut poles to build it up and fix the top so we would be sure it would not leak. I built up my walls with poles just like you would build a pole house on the top of the ground, covered the top with poles and then got willow boughs and wove them in and out to make a complete net and covered the whole with sod. We really had a good snug home in the ground.

I made a good pole hen house by setting the poles upright in the ground and weaving willow twigs through to hold them together. My sister gave us twelve hens and rooster, and one morning we awoke to find the wolves had gotten all the chickens

McLEMORE, JOHN W.

INTERVIEW

10561.

- 4 -

but four hens and the rooster and had we not gotten up when we did I guess we would not have had any hens at all. After that I went over to Otter Creek and split rails and made another hen roost more secure from the wolves.

The door of our dugout was swung in at first, ^{then} a little ^{was} house/built over the opening so that the door would swing out straight, and we could walk out on the ground upright. This little house had a regular comb on the top just like any house. We had only one bedstead but did have a feather bed and cotton mattress and if anyone came to see us we usually put the feather bed on the dining table and let our company sleep on the bed while we took the table.

We had an old dog we called Ring that we had brought with us and thought a great deal of him and he despised a wolf. I always hated to leave my wife alone when I went away but that was the only way we could manage, for we usually were gone over night every time we turned around, for it was twenty miles to anywhere except other dugouts like ours.

Once when I was gone to Mangum the wolves were so bad that they came right over the dugout and ran around. My

McLEMORE, JOHN W.

INTERVIEW.

10561.

- 5 -

sister had given my wife an old hen with about fifteen little chickens and the chickens insisted on roosting on the comb of the little house over the dugout door as soon as they were large enough to fly up on the comb. We tied the dog to the hen house door, to protect the four hens left while my wife said she believed that she could protect the old hen and chickens roosting on the comb of the roof over the door. This night when I was away the wolves began to play over the dugout and my wife was so frightened that she did not know what to do. When she first heard the steps she was not sure it was the wolves but pretty soon she heard the old hen trying to comfort the little chickens with a motherly chuckle and the old dog began to charge and then she was sure it must be wolves. It was about four o'clock in the morning so she screamed at the top of her voice, for she always said her scream frightened the wolves away. When she screamed the baby awoke and began to cry, the dog was lunging to the end of his chain and this made such a din I guess the wolves did run, anyway they left without a chicken that time.

My wife often said we had parlor, living room, bed room and kitchen all in one room and during a snow storm I had to

McLEMORE, JOHN W.

INTERVIEW.

10561.

- 6 -

bring a little of little pigs into the room to keep them from freezing. I tied blankets on all the horses and the old milk cow and put the calf into the crib; I did not lose stock from the cold but a lot of people did. We laugh today about how those little pigs would run up to the fire in the fireplace and smell, then squeal when they felt the heat and scamper back under the bed.

We had a buckskin horse that we thought a great deal of but he had a trick of slinging his head as he trotted. My sister was not very well and one Sunday I said to my wife- "Let's trot over to see sister today". We now had four children, the youngest, Irene, only three weeks old. I hooked up old-Buckskin to the buggy and we all piled in and just started off across the prairie through the tall grass and sage brush, the nearest way to sister's.

As Buckskin trotted along he slung his head and off came his bridle that I had neglected to put a throat latch on. This seemed to excite him and he began to run. I was pulling back on the lines with all my might and talking to the horse with all my might but my wife decided it would be better to

McLEMORE, JOHN W.

INTERVIEW.

10561.

- 7 -

have the children out so she told the little boy who was standing by her knee to jump clear of the wheel. She assisted him a little and he jumped clear. She helped the next little girl, Earnstine, to jump but the child was frightened and wife had to almost throw her out and as she fell/hub of the wheel struck her ankle and she is a little lame in that ankle to this day. Wife had an extra large blanket besides the baby blanket around the little baby girl, so she wrapped the baby in this big blanket and stood up to lay her out in the sand. She swung the baby two and fro, feet foremost, to be sure she would clear the wheels, then when the baby was swung out my wife jumped and cleared the wheels.

I began to look for a soft place in the sand to jump. By a pasture gate post we had hauled out a bunch of sand and left quite a hole there. I decided that this would be a good place to land in and accordingly, I turned the lines loose and jumped and went down into that sand clear above my shoulders. My eyes nose, mouth, and ears had sand in them a month, I think, and my shoulders seemed out of place but I had no time to think about myself, I had to go back and see about my family. None

McLEMORE, JOHN W.

INTERVIEW.

10561.

- 8 -

of them were hurt except the one little girl's ankle, little Earnstine always insisted her mother threw her out and when I got to them she said, "What for did ~~my~~ mother throw me out?"