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~~BYNUM, DORA.~~

INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name Wylie Thornton

This report made on (date) May 2 1938

1. Name Dora Bynum

2. Post Office Address Tahlequah, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 2 Year 1846

5. Place of birth Springdale, Arkansas

6. Name of Father John Holcomb Place of birth Indiana

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Dora Wilbanks Place of birth Indiana

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 _____.

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Wylie Thornton
Investigator.
May 2, 1938

Interview with Dora Bynum
Tahlequah, Oklahoma

I can't hear very good now, but I can see very well. I haven't been able to get around very well for five or six years. I spend every day sitting here in this rocking chair. I have no worries except about my children, and grandchildren. I try to hear from them once a week at least and some of them every day. You see all of these Bynums in Tahlequah are my children and grandchildren. Some are awful good people, and some not so good. It has always been in most of my people to have something, of course some are not so thrifty.

These Bynum stores are owned by my children, and every one of those clerks in those stores are Bynums, or in-laws.

Mrs. Henry Henson, who is keeping me, is my daughter, and this house we are all living in belongs to my son, Will Bynum. Will Bynum is building us all a new home up there where he lives, and as soon as it is completed, he wants us to move up there.

My husband's name was James A. Bynum and he died right

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over here near what is now Shady Grove school, north of Hulbert, in the year of 1922 and is buried near there.

I was Dora Wilbanks before my marriage to Bynum and I was born in Arkansas in the town of Springdale. Husband moved his family to this Indian Country in the year 1902. He stopped over here near Gideon on Blackbird Creek. He leased a 40 acre tract of land from an Indian of the name of Hughes. Husband cleared up about all of this land and put it in a good state of cultivation.

This was not the first time I had been in this Indian country either, because Husband and I left Arkansas in the year 1877, and came through this wild country on our way to Texas, thinking we wanted to spend the rest of our days where there weren't so many rocks and stumps. Ha! Ha! We did stay away from them twelve years. We were hidden down there 200 miles west of Ft. Worth for all of those twelve years.

We finally came back to Arkansas in 1889. Then we left Arkansas again in 1902 and settled on Blackbird Creek in the Cherokee Nation, almost directly due north from Tahlequah. I tell you right now things were a lot different then to

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what they are today. Pretty nearly every farmer was clearing land of under brush and timber, preparing the soil to be broken for the first time. I mean the first time since the world began. I had always wanted to settle in this country since the first time I ever saw it on our way through here to Texas in 1877.

I remember so well in those early days that a strong young man, willing to do a lot of hard work, and a good ax-man in the timber was considered a sure prospect for marriage, as he was considered a young man sure to win in the battle of life. Now look! A young man's strength and willingness to exert himself is not considered anything, but he now must be well educated, able to do the other fellow, before he gets done - a different world.

We lived on Blackbird Creek for only one crop season and we sold our lease and moved down here to the Shady Grove School District where we lived for two or three years. I finally lost Mr. Bynum in death at that place.

I recall when I was just a young girl my father used to load up a wagon with sundry things he thought he could

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bargain off to the Indians, and he and Mother and I would drive down with this stuff. Of course, we carried our camping outfit, such as cooking necessities, beds and bedding, etc. I remember on one occasion we had gone to Ft. Gibson on an Indian payment and we had our tent all fixed up, and Daddy was standing by his wagon selling different things when some Indians came stalking into our tent unsolicited or asked, and they began to search around and look at everything we had. After a bit one of them sat down on our bed. This bed was a big feather bed and this Indian discovered it was very soft, and he called to his fellows, and several came to him, and they gave it a thorough examination. Then one of them motioned the others to get back from it, and he backed off plumb out of the tent door and pretty soon he came through the tent door on full speed and he ran and turned a somer-sault on this feather bed, and the rest of the Indians gave a loud delighted whoop and clapped their hands. Now they did this in our tent, without permission, think of that!

Pretty soon they approached my father to buy this feather bed, and he placed a very big price on the bed,

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and bless patty! they paid him the cash for it. Ha! ha! The next day these Indians had this feather bed laid out under a shade tree and they ran and turned somersaults over it all day. That evening we saw one of them place it on his wife's back, and she disappeared down a path.

I have been blessed with nine children.

My father, John Holcomb, was considered a wealthy man in his day, he once owned all the land where the little city of Springdale, Arkansas, is situated. He finally sold all his lots and property, and left for the state of Illinois to buy a large and fertile farm or rather a section of land lying between and right in the forks of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. This plantation had a very large and a well furnished mansion on it.

At his death I inherited my start in life, or should have been my start, but I spent a great deal of money trying to educate my family, and get them started, and today I haven't anything to speak of, but my children, and my Government pension, but, of course, my boys all have plenty.

I was married to Mr. James Anderson Bynum in Arkansas was what is Springdale, but, of course, there wasn't any

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Springdale in 1864 the year we were married. We were country people living ten miles northeast of Fayetteville. We were married by a country parson without any license of any kind, with two witnesses, no such thing as a license in those days in Arkansas.

I will never forget about Father and Mother going on a peddling trip over here to the Indian Territory, selling apples and other junk, and when they returned Mother carried the money they had received for this stuff in one of her homespun stockings into the house and laid it down in the middle of the front room and asked me to lift it and I grunted and groaned quite a bit, but I couldn't raise it off of the floor. Mother was a large woman and her stocking was long and big too; the reason for this heavy stocking was this: there was no green back money in 1864 and this stocking was full of silver.

My husband built and developed nine different farms around Shady Grove School District, built nine different houses and today only five are standing.

In 1910 I came to Tahlequah with a load of cabbage to sell to the Indians, and we drove down Tahlequah streets

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in mud and sold our cabbage to the Indians. When preparing the cabbage head for sale I very often cut the outside leaves off. I would let these leaves fall in the wagon bed instead of on the ground, and by the time I had sold the whole load I had a lot of cabbage leaves to be disposed of, and a man of the name of Littlefield running a hotel in town had me drive this waste around to the back door of his hotel and shovel it out to his fattening hogs that were penned up at his back door. Now what about a man fattening a big bunch of hogs at the back door of the Thompson Hotel in Tahlequah?