

HODGES, BETTIE.

INTERVIEW

9255

112

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

HODGES, BETTIE

INTERVIEW

#9255

Field Worker's name Ethel Mae Yates

This report made on (date) November 19 1937

1. Name Bettie Hodges

2. Post Office Address Elk City, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 922 W. Avenue C

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 24 Year 1874

5. Place of birth Hopkins County, Texas

6. Name of Father L. C. Snowdens Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Malenda Snowden Place of birth Mississippi

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

HODGES, BETTIE

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Ethel Mae Yates  
Investigator  
November 19, 1937.

Interview with Bettie Hodges  
922 West Avenue C., Elk City.

My parents came from Jack County, Texas, to the Indian Territory in the year of 1896; came with all their living children except one married daughter. We started out for the much talked of nation and very well do I remember that we children had never moved from one country to another so we thought we were going to have a thrill of our lives.

We came to the new country in the old-fashioned covered wagons. We were on the road one month, camped out at nights and slept in a tent and cooked on camp fires. We crossed Red River bringing with us a small bunch of cattle and we came seven miles north of where Hammon now is and lived in tents for a few days. But we didn't like the water, it was so guppy so we came on over to where Hammon is now and lived in a little house for a while.

My father, two brothers, three brothers-in-law and I filed on claims four miles north of what is now Elk

HODGES, BETTIE

INTERVIEW

#9255

-2-

City, and then the hard times began. El Reno was the nearest railroad town, a distance of about one hundred and fifty miles. We were here with no material to build houses, but we lived in tents and the men soon set about <sup>erecting</sup> houses. Some of them were built of cotton-wood logs that grew in canyons about twelve miles from where we were and it was no easy task to cut those logs and drag them out of the canyons. Of course, this had to be done with horses, and then hauled to our claims over the prairie where the grass was waist high and there were no roads.

My father's house in the Territory was dug down in the ground and walled up with logs and covered with logs and dirt. There was only one house from Hammon to Ural, it was a little shanty over on Elk Creek and it was for sale. I begged my father to buy it for I thought I could never go to sleep in a dugout. But by the time the dugout was done we were glad to get in it. It had a board door and a fireplace in one end and we cooked on the fireplace for a while.

HODGES, BETTIE

INTERVIEW

#9255

-3-

The next work was for the men to get the claims fenced in, then they began to break land with an old sod plow. They would plow three furrows, then go along and plant the seed by hand and we raised fine crops and gardens.

We got our wood over in the canyons where we got logs to build our dugouts.

We had only been in this country a short time when my little niece drank some poison medicine and died and her casket was made of boards, just rough lumber, and covered with lath. In April my oldest brother's wife died and about two years later my youngest brother's little boy was drowned; their caskets were also made out of rough boards. These deaths left us very sad. But, of course, we had to carry on.

About 1898, my father hauled lumber from Weatherford and built a small house. By this time we were getting better acquainted with this new country but still it was not settled much. Our nearest neighbor was seven miles away and our post office was Ural, about fourteen miles south of us. Most every Saturday it was my part to go to the post office

HODGES, BETTIE

INTERVIEW

#9255

-4-

and get the mail; I was then about twenty-two years old. I had to go horseback, but I had learned to ride over these prairies in a hurry for I have ridden over the prairie where Elk City now stands many times before there was any Elk City. We could sit at our home just four miles north of Elk City and see the tents and houses going up when Elk City first started.

When we first came to the Territory our nearest doctor was at Cheyenne about twenty-five miles.

Our first church house was my father's old discarded log house. We had church and Sunday School in this and enjoyed it immensely:

Cattle were a good price and there were lots of cattle in big pastures, occasionally we could see a cowboy riding the range. Later on it was more settled; people built better homes, better churches and better schools.

There were lots of Indians in this country in the early days and to say we children were afraid of them is putting it mildly. In places there are quite a few Indians yet, but they are better educated and have taken on the ways of the white man.

HODGES, BETTIE

INTERVIEW

#9255

-5-

Our hard times were many but in time they have been almost forgotten. My father and mother were getting up in years when they came to the new country, but it seemed so hard to have anything in the states they came to get a home and for free range. They suffered and toiled and went through many hardships and are both dead now. Mother died November 23, 1911, and Father died May 29, 1914, and they are both buried in the Grandview Cemetery. We children are badly scattered.

I was young when we came to this country but now I am going down the slope of life, the mother of five children and a widow. I have watched the nation grow into statehood and from an untilled and undeveloped state to the present industrial and agricultural state of progress. This part of the country was all known as Roger Mills when we came to the Territory.