

FINK, RENA

INTERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian Pioneer History - West, for Oklahoma

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Field Worker's name Zedee B. Bland

This report made on (date) September 23, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Rena Fink

2. Post Office Address General Delivery, Altus, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (Location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: not August Day 26 Year 1878

5. Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

6. Name of Father Dr. J.T. Reynolds Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about father First doctor the town of Frazier ever had.

7. Name of Mother Bettie Harden 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 6

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Zaidee B. Bland,  
Journalist,  
September 23, 1937.

An Interview with Mrs. Rena Fink,  
Altus, Oklahoma.

I was nearly ten years old when my father decided he would seek a new country to practice medicine. Accordingly he loaded Mother and us children into a covered wagon with his sheep skin medicine bags, bedding, and a camping outfit and headed into the unknown. I cannot remember just why we paused at Frazier just west of where Altus is now. We set up housekeeping in a one-room house with a shed room on the side and stayed in that house until the great flood of 1892 washed it away, and then we moved to Navajo where Father was to take up practice with his brother who had located nearer the mountains and was more fortunate as to location if not in practice. Everything had to be freighted from Vernon and as there were only three stores in the place I was often asked to stay with the wives of the merchants while the men went to Vernon for supplies.

We had a one-room schoolhouse where all community

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gatherings took place, preaching, debates, shows and gatherings of all kinds.

At first, Father always rode horseback and often got caught in high water and was in danger. Once he was caught in the river. His saddle bags floated off. He got off the horse to swim after them and he thought his horse was drowned but the horse got out and some men who lived near the river saw the horse without his rider and came down and helped to rescue Dad. All Dad's medicine was spoiled and the labels were all washed off the bottles and he had to come back home before he could prescribe any medicine although he went on to see his patient before he came home.

Helping new babies into the world, treating fevers and smallpox were about all Father had to do, but doing these kept him pretty busy. He sometimes would have to stay two or three days waiting for the baby to arrive after he was called for it was too far from home to come home and go back. Everyone lived in one room, mostly in the ground, and all the family would be in that one room together with the

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dog and cat sometimes a sick pig or a bunch of little chickens. Father got only \$10.00 for a baby no matter how far he had to go or how long he had to stay. I remember very well the first twins he ever reported. He was gone three days and nights and lost both babies but saved the mother. After he began to go in a buggy I always got his horses hitched to the buggy while he got his medicine case fixed when the call would come. Usually the one who came for the doctor would dash up on a horse, bareback, for he was scared or the doctor would not be called. For such things as measles or mumps and such every day things the doctor was never called unless complications set up and the family got scared. I went to school in a one-room schoolhouse at Navajo too. We studied McGuffey's Readers, Blue Back Speller, Ray's Arithmetic and Harveys Grammar. We learned to write by a copy being put on the board once a day by the teacher or one of the older scholars who could write well. We had double desks and two or three sat in a seat. All the grades were in one room.

Everyone took his or her dinner and school took up at eight and turned out when it began to get dark. The

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sun was usually down when we got home. We had ladies for teachers mostly and they were sure good ones too.

My mother had a \$150.00 for a sewing machine for Mother. It was a Singer and then we had a lot of boys to come to our house to learn to sew. Five yards into a dress and five yards into a skirt. I had yards and yards of home-made lace. My dress was made out of cream cashmere and my hat was made out of the same material. I trimmed them in cream ribbon and ribbon. In Navajo we had a two-story house and a dugout to cook and eat in.

My mother met Mr. Fink at a dance and we loved each other at first but went together three years before we married. We were married at prayer meeting by the Justice of the Peace at Cloud Chief which was the county seat of Washita County then. Judge Hatchet was his name. There were no preachers to be had except on regular days when they were supposed to come and preach, and when we got ready to be married we did not want to wait.

We had lots of play parties and picnics as well as dancing for our social activities.

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Once I had a cousin who had a birthday and wanted to celebrate it so she gave a continuous dance for two days and nights, so that people from a hundred miles away could come as well as the ones forty or fifty miles away. Dancing went on all the days and nights and you could eat whenever you wanted to. The food was furnished by the host but the visitors paid the fiddlers, usually 25 cents for a set. The boys were always glad to do the paying. We hardly ever had over two pieces, a fiddle and banjo or guitar. It was nothing to go sixty miles to a dance. A couple of boys would hitch their saddle ponies to a wagon, set in two or three spring seats, get all the girls and boys who could pile in and away we would go and we really did not come home until morning sure enough.

We made our dresses out of challis, lawn, chambray and calico for summer. For winter our dresses were of broadcloth, cashmere or woolsey. My wedding dress had an eleven gored skirt. Every girl's Hope Box contained quilts, sheets, pillow cases, feather pillows and if she was lucky a feather bed and towels.

We did not have fancy dishes or cook vessels but every girl knew how to cook. We did not know what baking powder

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was but made our cakes from baking soda and cream of tarter. We made pound cakes, orange and lemon cakes and spice and fruit cakes. I had never heard of vanilla.

When we had a dance the house where we had it was more often than not one-room and every stick of furniture was moved out until after the dance was over.