

VANDIVER, W. M. (MRS.)

INTERVIEW

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This report made on (date) June 18, 1937

- 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

Virgil Coursey  
Interviewer  
June 18, 1937

Interview with  
Mrs. W. M. Vandiver  
Altus, Oklahoma.

On Christmas Eve, 1888, our family of seven started from Ellis County, Texas, for Oklahoma. I was fourteen years of age and had one brother and three sisters.

There were three wagons; my father walked most of the way and drove twelve head of cattle. We chartered a car and shipped most of our household goods, corn and feed to Vernon, Texas.

Because of bad weather, traveling was very slow and it was necessary to lay over at some points for several days at a time. We forded the river at Round Timber and from that place on to our destination we passed only some two or three dugouts. We settled a little north of Altus, and other settlers came in quite rapidly.

This was primarily a cattle country at that time and this part of the country was free range. Cowboys often dropped in at our place about noon and remained for dinner. No one seemed to consider it necessary to be invited for a meal, but considered it proper to drop

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in when convenient.

Vernon was our closest trading point, and the trip there and back sometimes required a week's time, especially if there was rain and the river was "up." I have crossed the river a number of times when the water came up in the wagon bed. When my father hauled wheat or other commodities to Vernon, he usually arranged to bring back flour and large quantities of groceries so that it would not be necessary to make trips so often.

After stores were built in Altus he hauled supplies for them. My father often kept seven or eight hundred pounds of flour on hand and the stores sometimes borrowed from him when they ran short.

The lack of close market facilities was perhaps the one greatest handicap with which the early pioneers had to contend. I remember that one time Bruce Brad-dock's mother was seriously ill and needed ice. A trip was made in a buggy to Vernon to secure the ice. It was finally necessary to go to Wichita Falls for the ice. It was kept from melting by wrapping in heavy woolen blankets.

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The first year we were here my father raised mostly millet, and had a good crop. There were long ricks of it, and people from Washita County came in and bought it. The second year he raised some cotton. He carried three bales to Wichita Falls to have it ginned. After that, he raised wheat quite extensively. We grew sorghum cane and made our own molasses. My father also made molasses for others practically all Fall.

During the Summer months we and neighbors had what was known as the Beef Club. The men would meet on a certain day of the week at the home of one of the members. A beef would be killed and divided among them. Then it was decided who was to furnish the beef next week. The cuts of beef were also given in rotation among the members of the Beef Club. For instance, if my father got a fore-quarter last week, he would take a hind quarter this week and so on. There were not many flies in the country then, and by hanging the beef on the north side of the house it would keep fresh for a week or ten days. Indians used

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a similar method of preserving beef. They strung small pieces of the meat along wires, hanging on high poles. It would be partially dried by the sun.

We kept milk and butter cool by setting it in a trough of cold water near the windmill. The trough was so constructed that water entered at one end and flowed out at the other, and could not exceed a certain level. In this way there was a constant circulation of water through the trough. However, it was very unhandy to make trips to the windmill every time milk and butter were needed.

Protracted meetings were conducted in the Summer when there was not much work to do. It was not at all uncommon to go thirty miles or more in a wagon to church.

There were also picnics, especially on July 4th. Families carried tubs full of food and enjoyed themselves immensely.

During the Winter, parties were in vogue among the young people. I have gone ten or fifteen miles on many a cold night to attend a party. They were merely little get-togethers, but gave us the social contact so neces-

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sary for youngsters.

I have been married twice; first to W. A. Lane when I was eighteen, and later to Mr. Vandiver in 1910.

One day when my baby was quite small, an evil-looking cloud came up. I got into the dugout and closed the door and it began to rain. Presently the door opened and in walked about a half-dozen Indians dripping wet. They said nothing to me and I made no attempt to talk with them. An awful electrical storm accompanied the rain with terrific peals of thunder. The Indians were afraid of the lightning and each flash seemed to send terror into their hearts. On a table was a tin dishpan, turned upside down, and high above it on a shelf was a heavy dish. In some way this dish tipped off the shelf and fell with a resounding blow on the tin dishpan. The Indians almost stampeded. I heard one of them mutter something about "God," the only words spoken by any of them. I had no chairs to offer the Indians. Finally one of them pulled out a box from the edge of the bed and sat on a corner of it. Now that box contained all my best linens which I had just the day before

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laundered and there he sat, dirty water dripping from his clothes. My box of clothes had to be laundered again.

My parents are dead now and are buried in the Altus Cemetery.