

CHANNEY, S. M. (MRS.) INTERVIEW

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

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CHANEY, MRS S.M.

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Field Worker's name Zaidee B. Bland.

This report made on (date) June 21, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mrs. S. M. Chaney.

2. Post Office Address Blair, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) East Blair.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 15 Year 1868.

5. Place of birth Virginia.

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

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 8.

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Zaidee B. Bland,
Field Worker,
June 21, 1937.

An interview with Mrs. S. M. Chaney,
Blair, Oklahoma.

THE EXPERIENCES OF AN OKLAHOMA
PIONEER.

We came from Texas as a lot of the pioneers in this part of the state did. We came from Fort Worth or rather from a place near there in the country. My husband and his brother, J. J. Chaney, had been in Oklahoma the summer before, in 1888, and had filed on land and both had asked for the extra quarter of land that you were allowed to have if you were willing to pay \$1.25 an acre. \$1.25 was the valuation put on the land in the locality where they filed which was five miles north of Martha in Jackson County. I have forgotten the section number but one of my sons still owns part of the land J. J. filed on.

J. J. came out in November and built us a two room shack. Each room was 14' by 14'. He also dug a well and fenced ten acres for a pasture.

My husband chartered a railroad car and loaded all our household goods, provisions, a wagon, two horses, two hogs, some chickens and turkeys into it.

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My husband came with the car but the children and I came to Vernon on a passenger train. J. J. met us there with a wagon and team. It was real late when we got the car unloaded and turned our faces toward the land of promise. We crossed the river at Doan's Crossing and made camp for the first night. We had an early start the next morning.

The country looked very bare and desolate to me with no trees and only dugouts for homes. We got to old Brazier about dark but J. J. thought we had better go on home. There was a heater up and plenty of wood for a fire. We got home between eight and nine o'clock December 4th. We were all tired, cold and hungry. We built a roaring fire, ate the balance of our cold lunch, made down beds and tumbled in to sleep until morning. The next morning we cooked breakfast on an open fire out of doors but put the cook stove up sometime during the day.

FURNITURE.

I brought with me a New Home sewing machine, a cast iron cook stove, iron pot vessels, a big iron pot to boil my clothes out doors and to make lye hominy and render lard

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in, a cedar bucket and churn, a few chairs, a table, bedsteads, a bureau, plenty of feather beds and pillows and ticks to fill with straw. We knew nothing about springs and mattresses but used straw ticks under our feather beds.

I had quite a few dishes and plenty of crocks for milk only we did not have milk that winter except what the neighbors gave us; for my husband did not go back for our cows until the next May. We brought with us enough cured meat to do till hog killing time and, enough soap to do a year, some grease to make more soap if needed, a wash board and two wooden tubs.

CLOTHING.

I brought all the clothing we could need for the year already made up and thread to knit our stockings. I knit all our socks and stockings. We had wool stockings for winter and cotton for summer. I dyed the thread black for our Sunday stockings but let the mens' socks be the natural color of the thread.

Men all wore long underwear. I made their underwear from cotton flannel for the winter and drilling for the summer.

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Hickory shirts for every day and percale for Sunday. The girls' and my dresses were made of calico, gingham and outing cloth. Our underwear was made from domestic for the summer trimmed with yards and yards of hand-made lace. There were not many hats for the pioneer girl; she wore mostly sunbonnets and fascinators or hoods for winter. Once in a great while we would have a dress of cashmere or challis.

FOODS.

I brought enough meal, flour, a hundred pounds of white sugar, a hundred pounds of green coffee, lard, dried fruit, beans, peas, apples and everything we used at home to last a year at least. We had sour dough bread all that winter until my husband went for our cows. He drove through thirty milk cows when he did go for them and we were never out of milk and butter again. I have made a lot of soap from butter. J. J. lived with us for nine years but had to build a shack and live on his own quarter to prove up after this country was given to Oklahoma.

FUEL.

All the wood we had to burn and the posts to fence with had to be gotten from the Indian Reservation and it always

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took two or three days for two men to go get one load. I always had to cook enough bread to do them while hauling wood. Sometimes two or three of the neighbors would all go the same day and we liked that better for the men could help each other if there was trouble with the Indians or if any one got stuck in the river.

We only fenced a twenty acre pasture for the horses that first winter but as everybody's cattle ranged out we had to fence our crops. We made fine wheat and feed the first year right on the sod but went elsewhere to buy our corn at 25 cents per bushel.

We raised a lot of garden stuff from the start. Our cushaws were the finest in the country. I like them better baked with plenty of butter and a little sugar or sweetening of some kind spread over them than I do sweet potatoes.

We always had plenty of sorghum for gingerbread and other cakes. A man just north of us by the same name but no kin made up sorghum and we always took our cane there for him to make up. It was a toll mill. He made it up for a part of the sorghum. I soon quit fooling with green coffee, fuel was too dear, and I began to use Arbuckle's parched coffee. It was more economical and better too.

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SCHOOL.

there was already a school built at Corinth before I had any children old enough to go. We had a three months free school. they also had preaching in the school house. the school house was moved away and made into a dwelling house when the Hester school was built. At first we only had school in the summer and we tried to have school in the day time and church at night.

I remember three of the old-time preachers very well-- brother Hughes, Brother Banks and Brother McCuiston. I think they are all dead now but Brother McCuiston who lives at Hollis.

we had a good deal of sickness and it was not very easy to get a doctor. my husband died leaving me with five children. The oldest fourteen years old and the youngest fifteen months.

J. J. never married and helped me to raise the children. it seemed to me some of us were always having measles or something for we would not usually have a disease all at one time but would string it out.

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We were on the main highway when the mail began to come to Martha. We could go out and hand the mail man a letter to mail any time we saw him passing but we had to go to Martha for our mail. We always took the Dallas Semi-weekly News and J. J. took the Kansas City Star.

Being right on the highway and having a well of soft water and our house sitting away back from the road with a fence built running down to the house and no gates to open, people often stopped to camp on our place.

One night about dark a covered wagon stopped and asked permission to camp. After supper the boys wanted to go down and visit with the campers. I did not want them to and about that time there was a knock at the door and on opening it I found that five armed men had ridden up to my door. They said, "Don't be afraid, we only want to know about these campers on y ur land out here, do you know them?" I told them that I did not.

They then told me that there had been a man killed near Granite and while they did not think the man in the covered wagon had killed him they thought perhaps he was helping the killer to get out of the country.

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what a night we did have!

The armed men asked permission to search the place. In a few minutes the man camping came and asked to borrow a little oil for his lantern. While my oldest boy went to get the oil the officers came and made the man who was camping stand in the light until they had searched him. Then they went off to the wagon with him.

The woman in the covered wagon came next and said she had twin baby girls who seemed to be sick and asked if she could stay all night. One of our children was taking the measles so we could not let her stay.

These people finally hitched up and drove away in the night and we never heard if they had anything to do with the murderer or not.

I never saw much of the Indians but once in a while there would be a rumor that the Indians were on the war path and we neighbors would get together for protection for a few days.

I lived all alone and raised my children and sometimes we were frightened but the neighbors were always good to help me with the children and then I had J. J., their uncle, to help. The children are all grown now. Those pioneer days might have been hard days but they were happy days for me.