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Bessie L. Thomas,
Investigator,
January 25, 1938.

Interview With Maud Parshall Norris,
313 "A" Avenue, Lawton, Oklahoma.

I was born and raised in Michigan and since I was of age my father, feeling the call of the West and he, being too old to file, persuaded me to do so.

Father had a brother living at Tecumseh at the time of the Kiowa-Comanche Drawing so he came on down before I did, visiting and looking over the country. His glowing accounts of the beautiful prairie, wild flowers, tall grass, wonderful streams of water and the possibilities in a new country, put adventure in my blood, too, so I decided to come down and try my luck at drawing for a claim.

I came to Tecumseh and we stayed there until the Drawing. My uncle, too, thought this the "wonder spot" of the earth.

We went to El Reno where I registered and I drew one of the early claims but didn't even know I had been so

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lucky until every one else in town knew about it. I didn't hear about it until a young fellow brought his outfit, got down in front of me and with many flourishes started to shine my shoes. Upon being questioned as to the reason for this unusual service he told me that I had drawn a claim.

Then the letters began pouring in--men wanting to marry me, men all the way from twenty-one to seventy-five. They had the money and I had the claim. However, I did not take advantage of any of the offers.

We came down on the train as far as Richards Spur and by stage from there to Lawton. The stage was one of those big old wagons, board sides and canvas over the top. We reached Lawton Saturday afternoon and Sunday we rode all over the country trying to locate my claim. There was an old dead cottonwood tree west of town that my uncle had in mind and he wanted me to have the land on which that tree was located.

We lived in a tent hotel where there were cots for the ladies on one side, and cots on the other side for the men.

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We finally located the farm and went back to the town of Tecumseh for a while, returning in January, 1902, at which time we built a house on the farm, a little two-room shack. The lumber was hauled from Lawton on a lumber wagon and it took all day to make the trip as there were no roads, just a sort of a dim trail. While going for the lumber the driver got lost, wandered over the prairie in and out of creeks, I guess for an hour or more before he found the trail again.

After a week my father and I took up our abode on and the new claim / living was hard in winter months. We nearly froze to death for the only stove we had was a small cook stove. Water was carried from a spring a quarter of a mile from the house. In rainy weather, which was very seldom, the house leaked, sleet and snow would come in through the cracks, and the cold come up from under the floor.

The first night my father and I were sitting playing dominoes, when we heard a knock at the door. Since there were no neighbors within miles we wondered who in

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the world it could be. Thinking only of wild Indians come to scalp us, my father whispered to me to get the shotgun while he went to the door. Imagine our embarrassment when the door was opened, to see standing there a young man from Kansas by the name of Sheridan. He had drawn a claim that day and someone hauled him out there with a load of lumber and left him. He saw our light and came to it. He stayed all night with us and the next morning he was anxious to find his claim, so Father hitched the team to the wagon and they started out to hunt it. They finally located it and my father helped him to build some sort of a house so he could have a place to sleep and eat.

I used to come into Lawton and back either on horseback or on a bicycle, for at home there was nothing to do but sit and look around over the prairie. Every once in awhile we would see Indians coming over the hill dressed in bright blankets or sometimes only a G-string. They wore brightly-painted war feathers and bonnets. We would run for the house, bar the doors and windows and wait

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for the war whoop but none ever came and finally we were not so afraid of them, becoming well acquainted with dozens of bucks and squaws in later years and counting them as some of our best friends.

To fence the farm my father and I went to the timber, up in the mountains, and cut logs from which we made posts and fenced my claim. I handled one end of a cross-cut saw for it was too lonely to stay at the house by myself. Father said it was also too dangerous for a girl to stay alone in this new country.

Money was scarce in those days therefore, part of the time we would not have much to eat, especially if the weather was bad and we could not get to town for weeks.

The day I filed, a man said he would pay me \$1,000. for my relinquishment but my father said I had no intention of relinquishing it under any circumstances. As for myself, I wasn't so sure whether I wanted to stay and homestead that claim or not, but did. There is something about a new country that makes one want to stay and grow up with it.

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On August 8, 1903, I was married to A. G. Norris
and our wedding was the first one solemnized in Cache.