

ONAN, TEMPAH ELIZABETH

INTERVIEW

#4283

201

Ethel D. Pfeiffer
Field Worker
June 2, 1937

202

Interview with Tempah Elizabeth Onan.
Born December 8, 1871. Keokuk, Iowa
Father-G. W. Stansbury
Mother-Jemima Ross

Life and Experiences
of
Tempah Elizabeth Onan

My parents came from Iowa to Missouri when I was a small child. Mother died while we lived there, and was buried near Neosho, Missouri. After her death we moved to Texas near Gainesville. Father died and was buried there.

My Marriage

We moved to Waxahatchie, Texas, where I met my husband, J. H. Onan. We married August the 10th, 1888, when I was seventeen years old. My husband went to Oklahoma to look for a location for us to move to and get a home. In 1899, he found a farm and bought out a relinquishment from a Mr. Hancock. He filed on the 160 acres of bare land located in Jackson County, Oklahoma, the S¹/₄ S-30 T3N of Range 22 W, just four miles northeast of Duke, Oklahoma. Later we purchased an adjoining

-2-

eighty acres for which we paid \$1600.00. After filing he returned to Texas for me and the children.

Our trip to Oklahoma

We made the trip in a covered wagon. We had to ford the rivers, with the exception of one which we had to cross in a ferry boat. This was my first experience and we were afraid we would sink or go on down the river. The team was very frightened, too, and tried to run off the boat. One man had to stand in front of them and hold to their bridles. This was in January and it was very cold. We had one wagon and one buggy. We brought the buggy so the children could go to school when we got to Oklahoma, as the school was too far away for them to walk. We furnished the buggy, a neighbor furnished the horse, and all the children went to school three and one-half miles away.

Our Home

We stopped with a neighbor while my husband built our one-room house. The lumber was hauled

-3-

from Quanah, Texas, which was about forty miles away. It took about three days to make the trip. We didn't have much furniture, just what we could make out with; what we could haul in one wagon was all we brought with us. I cooked on a bachelor stove, which served for a heater as well.

Our Fuel

Our fuel was mostly mesquite roots and prairie coal. We didn't have the money with which to buy coal. The first year's crops were not so good. We rented ten acres that were already for planting and planted this in cotton. The grasshoppers ate most all of it up but we got one bale. It was several years before we made very much because of the grasshoppers. The grass was good and the stock did well; as we had open range and we just let them run out. Each individual branded his stock so they could be identified.

Water

Water has always been an object in this county. There was a well up in this valley that supplied stock

water. We soon dug a cistern to catch the rain water that fell on the house; this we used for drinking water, and to wash our clothes. All well water was bitter gyp, and not good to drink, but stock could drink it.

Fencing and Improvements

We finally got our place fenced with woven wire. We soon raised good crops and got plenty of feed to raise hogs, so we made some money from hog raising. Then we built our five-room house. After we got our land in cultivation, we made good wheat and it was high grade. I have heard it said that this part of Oklahoma produced the highest protein wheat in the State.

Education

We reared our five children, and through great sacrifice we schooled them very well. Three finished high school, and one had three years of college. Our youngest child died in infancy, and one at the age of six years.

-5-

One of my daughters taught five terms in a graded school, going three miles in a buggy to teach.

Our first school house was built of native stone. It had one large room, but was afterwards enlarged by adding a brick building. We used it for school and church, holding union Sunday School in the early day. Later this district, with others, was consolidated with the Duke School District. Recently with the help of W. P. A. we have built a fine new modern building, and the children are transported to and from school for miles around in big comfortable busses.

Teachers Employed.

They have lots of advantages now that we didn't have in our pioneer days, but I think the hardships we have undergone brought out the good in our lives. We were happy and the sacrifices we made were worth a lot. Anything that is worthwhile is worth striving for with all our might.

Our Clothes.

I brought my sewing machine from Texas, when I came here, and always made our clothes; I have always been glad I came here. We had a hard time, but I didn't mind the hardships while I had my husband. My real trouble began after he died June 1920, but I have managed to carry on and see my children all married. I am now living in Duke, and my youngest boy is home with me.