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HAYNES, WELLING (MRS). INTERVIEW.

Amelia F. Harris, Field Worker  
Indian-Pioneer History  
June 10, 1937

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An interview with Mrs. Welling Haynes,  
1524 Euclid Street, Oklahoma City,  
Oklahoma. Biography of Mrs. Mary Wiley  
as given by her daughter, Mrs. Haynes.

Mrs. Welling Haynes was born in 1883 at Oxford,  
Kansas. Father was David Albert Wiley who was born  
at Zendale, Kansas--deceased. Mother-Mary Wiley  
made the run of '89 and homesteaded near Crescent.

I will give a brief history of my parents  
deplorable condition prior to our coming to Okla-  
homa and of the true heroism of the pioneer woman.

My parents were share croppers in Kansas and  
father had his crops about ready to "lay by", when  
he took sick with typhoid fever, which threw all the  
work as well as the care of father, upon mother.  
Mother, however, was not the self-pitying type and  
she worked all the harder until it came time to har-  
vest the wheat which mother could not do alone and  
she was without means to hire it done. Father was  
up but very weak, yet he felt he would have to help  
or they would lose the wheat. He saved the wheat  
but took a relapse and died.

Mother then sold her part of the crops, the  
tools, and the stock excepting one team and wagon  
and one dozen hens. After paying the doctor's bill

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and funeral expenses, she had a little money left. We moved into the home with our grandparents, and I suppose we children must have worried Grandma for she soon let us know we were not welcome. Mother knew something had to be done at once. We read a great deal, and neighbors talked much more of free homesteading in Oklahoma. Knowing it was up to her to make a living for her little brood, (Mother felt that success was determined by one's ability to recognize opportunity and that opportunity was indeed knocking at her door) with undaunted courage and determination she sold all her furniture excepting what we could pack in our wagons. After wiring the chicken coop on the back of the covered wagon, she bought a tent, hitched up the team and with only her three children left Kansas early one morning for Oklahoma.

We were four or five days on the road. Camping every night close to some house and getting an early start every morning until we reached the boundary line of Oklahoma. Here we camped early, fed our horses well and let them have a good rest preparatory

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for the run the next day. Next morning we got in line ready to make the run when the signal was given. Then, real excitement began--everybody yelling, horses' hoofs clattering, all in a hurry. Mother applied the whip and the horses started running. She didn't try to guide them until we came to land on which very few people could be seen. She stopped the horses, jumped out of the wagon and stuck up her stakes. (This claim was one mile east of Crescent). Mother then looked over her claim for a likely place to pitch our tent. She found a wide rocky canyon and a good spring of water.

About twenty feet from this spring there was an old trail from Guthrie to Kingfisher. I don't remember hearing whether this was a part of the old Chisholm Trail or not; I know there were deep ruts cut out by wagons and that the trail was well traveled. Mother thought it wouldn't be so lonely with so many people passing by here.

We staked our tent and dug out a place in the canyon (where a big rock projected) for a chicken house, in which we left the chickens that night intending to turn them loose the next morning. But

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someone stole chickens, coop and all. This was indeed a great loss to us. The following day we all went to Guthrie to file mother's claim. She had to pay some money too--I can't remember how much--but know that she had very little cash left after this transaction. She had intended to buy more hens but couldn't, as she had to feed the four of us. Some kind neighbor entered her name for government aid, and when she received a card announcing that she was entitled to draw aid inasmuch as she was a widow with dependents, mother cried for she thought it would be considered charity (and begging was far from her mind). Her neighbors talked to her and told her she was taking the wrong attitude, that the Government had a special fund to help the brave ones who wanted a home but were unable to help themselves so she made the trip to Guthrie at the time this aid was issued and received her proportionate share. With this assistance were we able to eke out an existence and had seed for the spring planting. Brother was ten years old, when he and mother broke out twenty-five acres of sod, and she traded work with a neighbor getting him to break out more. She

and brother chopped out cotton and corn for pay. My sister and I helped to plant the crops; brother would plough three rounds and I would then follow and drop kaffir or corn seed. Mother fixed a piece of canvas over four poles for me to rest under out of the sun and I would wait for him to plough three more rounds, then start dropping the seed again; though only seven years old, my little help was needed. Mother raised a good garden and she canned and dried everything she could that summer. She took all her empty jars and we went to visit my aunt (near Oxford, Kansas) who had lots of fruit. Mother filled all of her jars and dried apples and peaches enough to last one year.

We lived in this tent one year. Mother's uncle staked a claim about a mile from us; he had plenty of timber and we had plenty of big rocks (in this canyon) so they traded logs for rocks and uncle helped build us a comfortable log house about one hundred yards from our tent house and up on high ground away from so much traffic. We had plenty of wild game for meat and the neighbors saw that we had plenty.

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The first Christmas spent in our tent home was not very much, the head had come off of my china doll. Mother pasted it back and made it a new dress and bought ten cents' worth of stick candy. We had saved up the signatures from Arbuckle Coffee wrappers and sent them off for fairy story books, such as "Little Red Ridinghood" and "Jack and the Bean Stalk." this was the extent of our Christmas but we were all happy; we had a home we could call our own. The next year was a little easier on us, we got to go to school some at Crescent, walking one mile.

In the spring we had to work in the field, as mother was not yet able to hire help. When I was nine, I drove a buck rake and pulled the hay up in rows; brother and sister pitched it up on the wagon and hauled to the baler, where mother was working. My legs and arms would be blistered by riding the buck rake in the sun all day.

From the beginning mother entered into the spiritual and social activities at Crescent, always doing her bit. I quote an incident that was published in the "Pioneer" by the First Methodist Church of

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Guthrie, May 5, 1933:

"The heroic struggle of those people at that time is a page in Oklahoma history all by itself; by reason of poverty and great drought that covered their lands; In order to raise funds to cover the costs of incidentals necessary for their Sunday school and church services, they decided to give an ice cream social but were unable to get ice nearer than Guthrie, which proved the determination and spirit of a "pioneer woman", who undertook the hazardous and dangerous journey to get the ice for this occasion. Mrs. Mary Wiley (a widow with three small children) hitched her team to a spring wagon, drove fifteen miles over hills, canyons, and a road that was the roughest of trails. When she came to the Cimarron River just north of Guthrie, the river was up too high to cross. She unhitched the team, tied it to the wagon, and then worked across the railroad bridge and caught a ride into Guthrie. Here she found friendly hands to help her get the ice across the river and into the wagon.

The thirty-mile drive on that occasion is a record crowned with success for an anxiously happy



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crowd patiently waiting her return. In this way they raised the first expense money for their church at Crescent, which showed the strong character of a purposeful people."

As we grew older mother bought an organ for us and the young people would meet at our house Sunday evenings and we would play the organ and sing. The next Sunday we would meet at some of the other neighbors. This was about the only entertainment we could afford.

Our first and only home, the log house, is in a good state of preservation and is still in use.