

PARNELL, DOHA B.

INTERVIEW

#12091

304

PARNELL, DORA B. INTERVIEW.

12091

Investigator, Grace Kelley,
 November 9, 1937..
 Interview with Dora B. Parnell,
 Henryetta, route 1
 Close to Rosenwell School.
 Born 1859, Illinois.
 Parents Abram Gppy, Ohio.
 Of the Belgium Nobility.
 Hanna Jefferson, Maryland,
 Descendant of Thomas Jefferson.

The first time I was ever in the Territory we left Missouri in a lumber wagon. When we came to the Verdigris River it was rolling high. We passed over it in a canoe, with an Indian rowing. When he was taking me across the boat turned over and some driftwood piled over me. I had gone two hundred feet before they could get to me to get me out. They left the wagon and horses for three months before the water got low enough to cross. They would row across the river to take care of the horses. The water was said to have overflowed for ten miles east of the river. At that time father owned a sawmill at Chetopa, Kansas, and we went back there.

In 1866, when I was seven years old, we moved to Big Creek in the Cherokee Nation, six miles south of the Strip.

PARNELL, DORA B. INTERVIEW.

12091

-2-

We had three houses in the camp. Eight white men worked at the mill; one was a blacksmith. There was no store nor postoffice at the sawmill.

Cherokees and Lumbermen, Abram Oppy.

The Indians, Cherokees, furnished the logs and brought them to the mill themselves for half the lumber. They were all oak logs. The Cherokees were highly civilized and wanted good houses made from lumber instead of log houses. Later, they were not satisfied with getting their portion so they went to Fort Smith and got an order to close down on the sawmill and hold it for themselves. Father had paid a Cherokee named Al Morse for a permit but Al Morse never did give Father the paper so he had no proof that he had a permit although he had been allowed to stay there for two years and supposed he was doing according to the law.

Father had been slipping his lumber to the line and selling it to settlers who wanted it to improve their places. He went up on the Strip and told these men, who were white, who had bought lumber from him that an officer had served the papers on him. They came with wagons and horse teams.

Father had teams of oxen and chains and moved the sawmill eight miles over on the Strip during the night. It stood out high and dry on the prairie for a long time before Father got another location.

No Schools-1866

As there were no schools whate er, I was sent to Illinois where I got a good education and a little later was married.

Hog Ranching-1878

About 1878, I came to my brother's house to live. I came to Oklahoma City from Washington, D. C., and went from Oklahoma City through the Kickapoo country into the Sac and Fox country in a wagon.

Brother Abram Oppy had a ranch between Chandler and Sparks; he had mostly hogs but some cattle. These hogs were put into wagons and hauled to Shawnee where there was a buyer. Brother paid ten cents a bushel for the corn he used to fatten the hogs.

Pioneers not Outlaws.

The people whom I knew in the early days were good people who needed to get a new start in life but were not outlaws.. I have worked in churches and Sunday schools every-

PARNELL, DORA B. INTERVIEW.

12091

-4-

where I have lived and I think you will find that there were more religious than irreligious pioneers.

Two stores-1866

There was a two mile strip of land between Big Creek in the Cherokee country and Kansas. Nobody could own it as it was in litigation. We lived six miles north of Big Creek. We traded with a white man named Brown who "squatted" on a hundred and sixty acres of ground. He had a store and post office.

Two miles from that one but inside the Territory was the Dora post office, store and stage stop where they changed horses on the Line Stage Route.

Stage Route

This was on the line and served both the Kansas and Territory people. It ran from Chatopa to Coffeyville then to Caney.

Came to Creek Nation in 1904.

In 1904 I came here with my second husband, R. C. Parnell, who was a cattle rancher. His brand was a diamond with a P in the center of it. He leased ground for fifteen

PARNELL, DOBA B. INTERVIEW.

12091

-5-

cents an acre and had thousands of acres. Nobody was allowed to run cattle on the land he leased but it was unfenced. He paid the money to the Indians and negroes who had claim to the ground but the land was not allotted then. Here around the Rosenwall school where there are good farms the brush was so thick that you could not shoot through it.

Terrible Sleet-1904.

In the winter of 1904 there came a terrible sleet that was two or three feet thick; it was awful. We lived in a log house a mile west of Resenwall and you could throw a cat through the walls most anywhere. For five days and nights we stayed up for we were afraid if we went to bed we would freeze to death.

We had a stick and mud fireplace and ^Iwould turn around and around in front of it and thought I would freeze there by the fire. There were woods all around the house so it was not hard to get fuel. You could just take the axe and cut until there was a big pile of wood in the yard. We kept the fire going day and night. The cattle couldn't stand up and we could not get to them to feed them. Some of the cattle

BARNELL, DORA B. INTERVIEW.

12091

-6-

broke their legs and bawled loudly. My husband lost his mind and I sold the cattle out for fifteen dollars a head— anything to get rid of them— to a half Indian and negro man. They cut chunks of wood two or three feet long, and laid them the way they wanted in a path then set these chunks of wood on fire and as they burned they melted a path so that the men could bring the cattle down off of the hill.

Crazy Snake Uprising.

Old Crazy Snake got up a band of colored men and Indians and went through Kansas, Missouri, Illinois and Iowa and had a paper signed up. Any man who signed the paper and gave two and a half dollars was entitled to any forty acres that he would come and pick out; five dollars entitled them to eighty acres. Mose Gallagher's name was on it but he said his name was forged and several others said the same thing. A big crowd congregated out at Hickory Ground. Several of my colored neighbors took their wives and families out there for things were scarce here and we did not have anything good to eat for the stores did not handle things like oranges and vegetables in the winter time.

BURNELL, DORA B. INTERVIEW.

12091

-7-

Crazy Snake and his son were in his house and they went into his home and got the paper with these signatures on it; then Crazy Snake and his son were killed and were buried with some horses and mules.

A white woman named Mrs. Williams told me that she and her family were hidden in a stake-and-rider fence for they were afraid their house would be burned. About two hundred colored men came from the west and met some who were coming from the battle at the Hickory Ground. The men coming from the battle told the others that there was no need to go there to join Crazy Snake as some white men had killed all of Crazy Snakes men whom they could see and the rest had run away. So they all went back west.

At that time I was living out here but had gone to Missouri to visit some relatives. Crazy Snake's band had been gathering before we left but we came back right in the thick of it. The people of Henryetta had mobbed a negro for killing the liveryman and had burned all the houses of the colored people and had run the colored people out of town. When we got off the train at Henryetta there were some colored people there ready to get on the train and begging not to be

killed. We went to the St. Elmo Hotel for it was considered unsafe to go into the country. The hotel was full and the town was full. There was not a gun in the stores but everyone was armed and the men were stationed around town. There were scared and brave women, some crying and having hysterics. One woman was crying and told me that she did not know where her children were. When I asked her where she had last seen them she said that she and the children had come to town from the country in a wagon. As soon as they had got to town she had jumped from the wagon, leaving the children in it and had run into the hotel for she knew it was made of rock so she felt that she would be safe. Her children were found at the wagon-yard and were in a much better mental as well as physical condition than was their mother.

Church and Schools.

The first church we white folks went to was one mile south of where the Wilson School is and was called the Grayson School because Joe Grayson gave the land and was one of the leaders in the building work. It was six miles from us but it was the oldest school house. Later, Cora Summers Smith's father gave the land and most of the money

BARNELL, DORA B. INTERVIEW.

12091

-9-

for a building which was called Summer's Chapel. We had no regular preacher but got anyone to come and help with the church work who would. As they needed workers worse than the Graysons did we started going over there.

The Summers' Chapel was a mile east of the Okfuskee-Okmulgee County Line on the 75 Highway. It has been moved in the back on Woley Smith's yard to be used for a residence.

INDEX CARDS

Payments--Cherokee
Blacksmiths--Creek Nation
Blacksmiths--Cherokee Nation
Shallisaw
Schools--Cherokee Nation
Guesenberry
Game--Cherokee Nation
Stage routes
Webbers Falls
Stilwell
Steamboats--Arkansas River
Mercantile establishments--Cherokee Nation
Crime--Cherokee Nation
Railroads-- Missouri Pacific (Iron Mountain)
Fort Gibson
Cookson family
Muskogee
Law enforcement--Federal
Outlaws--Creek Nation