

PARKER, MARY E. INTERVIEW.

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

Field Worker's name Amelia F. Harris

This report made on (date) May 17 1937

1. Name Mary E. Parker

2. Post Office Address 415 E. 9th

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 18 Year 1869

5. Place of birth Leavenworth County, Kansas.

(white-89'er)

6. Name of Father John W. Foster Place of birth Canada.

Other information about father Indian scout in Kansas-89'er.

7. Name of Mother Sarah (Young) Foster Place of birth Ohio.

Other information about mother Prisoner of war drove into enemy camp-looking for husband.

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 6 pages.

Amelia F. Harris,  
Field Worker.

### Biographical Sketch

Father from Canada to Pottawatomie County, Kansas, and was an Indian Scout for the Government for 5 years. In that capacity he hated the Indians. These tribes, the Pottawatomies and Cheyennes, were mean and treacherous. They would kill the white people when ever they got a chance. One time I remember so well of a massacre. The Cheyenne Indians went to a school house and killed the woman teacher and about 20 children, scalped them and cut their tongues out; we lived in fear all the time, and mother kept a loaded shot gun standing at the door. Mother persuaded Dad to go to Texas. We did and lived there for one year-that was the winter of 1888. Many of the people in Texas were making preparations to come to Oklahoma to the opening. Dad got the fever, too, and saved up every dime we could and about the first of April, 1889, my parents fixed a covered wagon up for camping, stacked two bedsteads, cooking stove, 3 or 4 old chairs, a dozen chickens and led our milk cow, and a cow pony, and headed for Oklahoma to make the run with thousands of others. The Chickasaw district separated this land from Texas, the southern boundry being the South

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Canadian River. It took about ten days to make the trip. We stopped near Purcell. Dad brought his cow pony along especially to make the run on, as she was a fast runner and for a week previous to the opening he trained her to run at the firing of a gun. He also rode over some of this "Promised land" and selected a tract near ten miles flat (the Ten Mile Flat is two miles west of Norman). There was a cow's carcass on this land, and he stuck the cow's head up to guide him to this land. So when they blew the bugle at 12 o'clock he started his pony towards the land he marked with the cow's head and gave her free rein to run. With thousands and thousands of voices yelling and shrieking the pony became "stage frightened", as Dad called it, and she fairly flew. He had to cross Boggy Creek which is about 12 feet wide and equally as deep. This little creek stopped many; most of them bunted crossings but our cow pony didn't hesitate-- she gave a big leap and cleared the creek and by doing this father reached the land where the cow's head was stuck up before the others, but our little pony was so exhausted that she fell and lay stretched out for hours. Dad built a big fire, trusting it would guide mother to him--he had left her at the boundary line with the wagon, team and camping out-

fit. Mother plunged into the Canadian River at Downing Crossing (west of Norman) defying the current and quick sand in an effort to keep up with Dad, but she soon lost track of him and wandered around over the country stopping at every camp that had a fire (as that was the signal), hoping it would be Dad. She had driven from 12 o'clock noon until 11 o'clock that night. Several times she thought she would stop and camp and wait until daylight and continue the search, but the thought of Dad out there waiting for her she decided her to try one more camp. In narrating this eventful trip to us she would say, "And there he was". We (the five us us) slept in the wagon, and the next day Dad hauled a barrel of water and some wood to keep house with, from Boggy Creek (which was a mile from our camp), then he ploughed a furrow around our land to establish ownership. The next day he went to Guthrie to file the claim for the land.

He was born in Canada and when he came to the United States he took out Naturalization Papers once, but it seems he had to do this act again, because they would not permit him to file until he had done this. Dad said nothing about this matter to anyone. This was a secret in our

family well guarded. He immediately wrote to Washington for his papers. This was about the 25th of April, 1889. He started improving his place and built one long box room 12X24 and the next year he put in a partition and built a kitchen and dining room, which formed the house in a "T" shape. He then built a barn, barn lots, and a storm cave. He next broke out land and an acre close to the house for a fall garden. In September, 1889, he got his Naturalization Papers, and immediately went to Guthrie, filed his claim, and came home a very happy man. That fall we planted black eyed peas and turnips and we sowed lettuce and radishes among the turnips. We had a fine fall garden and plenty of wild meat. We thought it was a paradise all our own.

That winter (I was 18 years old), I taught school in a log house--one room of the Miller home. This was a subscription school and children ranged from four years to twenty-five years old. My salary was \$25.00 per month.

The next year I taught in the Windy Stratton home. Mr. Stratton was a traveling photographer then, he is a millionaire now. In 1891 they built a school house, the first erected in Norman. I never thought I would get the school. J. T. Wagoner the first Representative from

Cleveland county and an influential citizen, was on the school board. His little boy, Percy, went to school to Miss Retner ( she taught in a home too ); for that reason I thought she would get the school but she happened to give Percy a spanking that day, which greatly incensed Mr. Howard. He immediately sent Percy over to my school and as he entered the door he said, "Pa said for you to move up to the new school house. Pa don't like Miss Retner because she tanned me". Was I happy. So we grabbed our good box seats, and I tried to have them march, but we were all so overjoyed that we ended in a run. One little fellow spoke up and said, "Where we going", and I replied "to the promised land." Then Percy spoke up and said "No it's not the promised land - Pa just said for us to move up there". This was the first public school and I was the first teacher and indeed, I am very proud of that honor. I taught school in this building two terms and then taught school at Adair in Cleveland county. Then I got married, my husband will give our history after that. (His Biography)

I want to tell you more about my parents; they both worked hard; in 1900 breaking ground and planting corn and cotton. Mother helped to plow and everyone of us chopped

cotton. That year we had fine crops and the best garden. Mother would can vegetables on rainy days, or maybe quilt; she was never idle a moment. She made all our clothes, washed and ironed with a flat iron that you heated on a wood stove, she carded the cotton that she put into the quilts. My parents worked very hard while on the farm and lived there for seven years, then sold the farm for \$7,000 and moved to Norman.



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