

HAYNES, CORA

INTERVIEW

#4533

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

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Field Worker's name Zaidee B. BlandThis report made on (date) June 23 19371. Name Mrs. Cora Haynes,2. Post Office Address Blair, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) South Blair.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 27 Year 18685. Place of birth Georgia6. Name of Father George S. Huling Place of birth GeorgiaOther information about father First County Judge of Greer County.7. Name of Mother Clara Tidwell Place of birth Atlanta, Georgia

Other information about mother: _____

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 9.

Zaidee B. Bland
Field Worker
June, 1937

Some experiences in Pioneer days of Oklahoma
By Mrs. Cora Haynes, Blair, Oklahoma.

Father and Mother got ready to come to Greer County, Texas, and homestead in 1888. I did not want to come as I was ready to be married to Mr. Haynes. So they delayed their trip a little and Mr. Haynes and I were married and Mother and I had started north the next day, October 30, 1888. Father had already come up in 1887 and bought out a claim three miles north of Martha. Father had a neighbor, Jim Allen, who drove a wagon for him just for the privilege of looking at the country himself. He and Papa stopped in Vernon as they came through and bought enough lumber to put up a shack to store things in until the dugout could be dug. They were only a week on the way.

They had brought cured meat and lard as well as dried and canned fruit. Mother wrote that wild plums were plentiful and she believed that she had learned a hundred ways of preparing them for eating. One of the ways was to crush the very ripe plums pick out the seeds and then spread this pulp skin and all on a clean white

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rag to dry; this, when dried, was called plum leather and made delicious pies stewed and was not bad to eat just dry; it was a little tough but a little sugar was always spread over it when drying and it really tasted good in the winter when there was such an abundance of meat and not so much of either vegetables or fruit.

Climate

The winters here were very cold and blustery; everyone suffered more or less from the cold for wood was scarce and had not people lived in the ground like prairie dogs a lot more of them would have died. As it was a lot of the women did die and that was what made people so ready to leave when the drouths came.

1891 was known as the flood year by all old timers. The rivers were all out of their banks all over the country and in many places the stream waters met, making the country through here look like the sea.

Mother brought her home made carpet with her. I helped her make a new one just before they started. Even though they had a dirt floor Mother had her carpet on her bed room floor. One morning when Father put his feet out on the

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side of the bed, he touched the carpet almost up to the bed and it felt cold and wet and when he attempted to stand up something went slosh, slosh. He said, "What in the thunder"? He was to find out that the dugout was flooded, the water standing nearly up to the bed. They had a time dragging everything out to the top of the ground and drying things out.

Light

At first they twisted rags and set them in a dish of grease; later, they could buy candles and later Mangum put in a store where you could buy coal oil, five gallons at a time but mostly it was bought in one gallon cans and used only for the lamps. It cost 25 cents a gallon.

The first time I came out to see them Brother met me at Vernon. He was driving two little ponies to a buck board. We spent the night in Vernon so that we could get an early start and "make it" in one day and not have to camp out all night. I had a three months old baby with me.

We started by sun up and I guess the baby got cold. He cried and cried till at last Brother stopped at a farm

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and told me to go into their hole in the ground and see if the woman in there could tell me what was the matter with the "brat", maybe the baby was hungry or cold; Brother thought that something could surely be done to make the baby hush crying. The lady gave me some milk for him and we got him good and warm and he went to sleep.

We did not get home until dark and Dad was at Mangum. The next morning Brother got up early and started to Mangum for Dad. When I got up I started down into the kitchen. The home had three rooms. The first room you entered from the top of the ground and went down about five steps. The next one you went down only two or three steps from the first room and the last room was about five more steps down from the second. I slept in the first room and as I went down into the third room or the one used for the kitchen the light was not very good anyway and under the last step was some black paper and some one had spilled water on it. I looked down and screamed "A snake!" Mother dug the step out trying to discover the snake but finally decided that it must have been the piece of black paper that I saw. About the time we had

gotten quieted down Brother had gotten home with Dad.

Dad came right on down for he wanted to see me. He had one arm full of groceries and in the other hand he had a gallon can of coal oil. Mother and I turned about the same time to give warning about the turn out step. Down he stepped where there was no step and tumble. he came . I grabbed him on one side and Mother on the other. ..e kept him from falling but the groceries went one way and that gallon of oil fell right on the top of the stove. The only thing that saved an explosion was that no fire had been kindled that morning.

Social Life.

Young people found ways to get together some way just as they have since the world began. There could be no public gathering except in each other's homes or out under the trees for protracted meetings in summer or on the banks of creeks or rivers for fish fries but people found the time to court and get married just the same. Dad being the judge was called on to marry the young folks.

There was to be a wedding of two very prominent people in a dugout about fifteen miles to the east of us and

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how I did wish to go with Dad but the baby cried so much that I did not dare to take him and of course could not leave him.

Father described the wedding as being very impressive. Everything in the dugout was pure white, made so with a wash of "gyp" lime. It was a home wedding with everybody staying to eat afterwards. There were boiled and baked hams, cakes, pies, preserves, breads, roasted turkeys; it seemed to me that it took Dad an hour to describe the "eats" alone.

My baby cried so much that Mother decided that it simply could not be colic for we had done every thing for the relief of colic she had ever heard of with no results, so in the middle of a December night we made Brother get up and go out to the garden and get some onions (the onions stayed green the year around in the garden) and we made a poultice and put it to the baby's ear. He went to sleep almost immediately and in the morning the ears were running and we had no more trouble with his crying. It was not his stomach at all but a gathering in his ear.

Drinks

There was always plenty of milk to drink and people did not like this gyp water much and this was the reason why

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there was such a demand for buttermilk. If a stranger rode up to your house he did not ask for a drink of water but for a drink of buttermilk.

Coffee was very hard to keep for you had to go fifty miles or more to buy the green coffee and then it had to be parched and ground. Mother said they were forever without coffee and she learned early from some old settler to take wheat bran and mix it with sorghum molasses and put it into the oven and bake it real brown, almost burn it a little; this broken up and boiled made a very good substitute for coffee.

Transportation.

Everybody went on horseback, in wagons, buckboards or walked when they wanted to get anywhere. I had sent my side saddle to Mother after my baby came thinking that I could not ride on horseback any more.

My mother was keeping two children, a girl and a boy. She lived six miles from Mangum straight across the prairie. I found that she would saddle the horse, put the girl in front and the boy in the back, get into the saddle and trot over to Mangum and get the mail and be back home

in time to get dinner for the family.

After I had been here about two months my husband decided that he would come after me. He came to Quanah on the train and thought he could possibly find a freight wagon that he could come the rest of the way as he knew Father lived on Bitter Creek. He got off at Vernon and hung around a day or two waiting for a freight wagon and got tired waiting so started walking. He headed in the general direction in which he was told to go, hoping to be overtaken by a wagon. No one used any trails; you just headed in the direction in which you wanted to go.

When he got to the river he pulled off his shoes, rolled up his pants and waded across. When he got across he hunted a soft grassy place to sit down to put his shoes on; alas! the grass was there but so were the grass burrs or goats heads as they are called by the natives. He thought he would never get rid of these stickers and just as he did, along came a wagon and he rode the rest of the way.

There was always fresh beef to eat. Neighbors took time about killing a beef and dividing it out. You would

put a cloth around a hind quarter and hang it up in a tree and leave it hang there until it was eaten up. You just went and cut a hunk out whenever you wanted meat for a meal. It never spoiled although I don't know why. There was a kind of little bunny that lived in the holes that the prairie dogs had abandoned which you could twist out with a wire when you felt like you wanted a change in meat diet. These little bunnies were as good as chicken when fried like you do a chicken.

I believe these pioneer people were the happiest people in the world.

We liked the way they lived so well that after ten years my husband and I moved out here, also, in 1898. He came through to Vernon and ad met us. We stayed with him and Mother until we could buy out a claim.

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Saulpa