

PATTERSON, MINA.

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

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Field Worker's name Anna R. BarryThis report made on (date) December 27 19381. Name Mrs. Mina Patterson2. Post Office Address El Reno3. Residence address (or location) 306 North Chester Street4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 5 Year 18785. Place of birth Garnett, Kansas6. Name of Father Uriah Wade Place of birth England7. Name of Mother Mary Wade Place of birth Pennsylvania

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 10

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Anna R. Barry,
Journalist,
December 27, 1937.

An Interview with Mrs. Mina Patterson,
306 North Choctaw St., El Reno, Okla.

Mrs. Mina (Wade) Patterson was born in Garnett, Kansas, July 5, 1872, the daughter of Uriah Wade and Mary Wade. It was in Garnett, Kansas, that she spent her early life and attended school. At the age of sixteen, in 1888, she married Lee Patterson. The next year after their marriage, this young couple decided to leave the state of Kansas and seek a homestead in the Indian territory. Her husband at this time was just twenty-one years of age and this gave him a right to file on a claim when the country opened for settlement. It was about the middle of March, 1889, that they loaded their covered wagon with a few farming necessities such as a breaking plow, axes, saws, a box of carpenter tools, bedding and a few pieces of furniture, hitched their two oxen to the wagon, bade their relatives farewell, and were off to start life in a new country. They were forced to travel slowly as the oxen became footsore and before reaching here they had to stop and have the oxen shod

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at a blacksmith shop along the way. When they reached Fort Reno, it was something like ten days before the Opening on April 22, 1889, so they camped on the Fort Reserve until the day of the Opening. Every day people just poured in on the Fort Reserve from every direction, all there for the same purpose, to "Make the Run". Just as evening settled down some one would start hallowering, "Oh, Joe, where is your mule" and this cry would go from one to all parts of the camp. Mrs. Patterson didn't know why they did it but every evening this question always went the round of the camp. Time soon passed while her husband talked and wondered whether he would be lucky enough to get a claim in that beautiful valley. Mr. Patterson was going to make the race on foot, and many times before the opening he became discouraged as he looked about at all the horses and thought perhaps he would have a slim chance to secure a claim. But on the day of the Opening, April 22, he was going to try and take his chance with the rest. So the first streaks of dawn found this young couple out of bed, along with hundreds of others, getting breakfast, harnessing teams, putting saddles on their fastest horses, making ready for one of the biggest races in history.

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It didn't take them long to eat their breakfast of pancakes and bacon, hitch up their two oxen, as they had loaded their wagon the night before, this let them have an early start. The Run was to be made at twelve o'clock noon. When they came to the line of Oklahoma, just west of where El Reno now stands, the line was crowded just as far south as they could see. They soon decided to cross the North Canadian River, and make the Run from the North side so they forded the river about where the railroad bridge now crosses the river north of El Reno. Here the country side was covered with people. Mrs. Patterson camped near this line while her husband made the Run on foot. She felt afraid before the "Run" was made that her husband wouldn't get a claim. At last she hit upon a plan to help him make the race. She happened ^{to} look down, noticed she had on a red calico tie apron; she quickly took this off, tore it into strips, tied some of the red strips of cloth around his arms and ankles, also took a large piece and tied around his head. Everyone became amused at him and soon the news spread up and down the line that Mr. Patterson was a great runner and had won several ribbons at various races. At twelve o'clock sharp, the cannon at Fort Reno roared, the soldiers on the line

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fired their guns and the race was on. As soon as the guns were fired her husband was off, with his red calico ribbons flying in the air. Her husband staked a claim eight miles north of El Reno, and he always said that those red pieces of calico won the race. As men would run along side of him, others would yell to them to go in another direction, saying, "That man (meaning Mr. Patterson) is a foot racer," and they would soon turn their course. That evening Mr. Patterson came back to the line after his wife and the oxen. They camped in their wagon for about a week until her husband could get the crude little one-room shack finished; he secured enough old cottonwood slabs along a little creek to make this little hut. The rafters were made of poles and the sheeting of brush, a layer of prairie grass covered this, and over all sod was placed. Just as soon as Mr. Patterson found time, he plowed up sod, this he cut into bricks about three feet long. Out of this sod he built another room for a kitchen onto the little frame house. The cupboard was an open box in the corner by the stove; the chairs were stools of the three-legged variety. A little

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later Mr. and Mrs. Patterson were fortunate enough to secure one or two splint bottom chairs. Their table made of rough cottonwood lumber soon cracked and warped. Their clothes were kept in the covered wagon to keep them dry as water continually dripped through the roof of the sod-covered house after rains.

Mrs. Patterson remembers in these early days how she longed to catch a glimpse of one of her own sex and how often she thought of her old home in Kansas. The burning prairie sometimes made things look hopeless, some women lost their courage. Many women saw their complexions fade as their skins became dry and leathery in the continual wind. Many women became stooped as they tramped round and round the hot cookstove preparing the three regular though skimpy meals each day. There was little to encourage women to primp and care for their persons. Few bothered much about brushes and combs. Many women, hollow-eyed, tired and discouraged in the face of the summer heat, drought and poverty, came to care little about how they looked. The first year or two many wives begged their husbands to hitch up the teams and leave

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this place, which they said was never meant for human habitation.

During these early days two nicknames were applied to the rural folk. Great quantities of sorghum were made each year and consumed by the country people and with many corn bread and molasses was the principal diet. This diet was so usual that it gave rise to a term which was applied to the settlers "sorghum lappers". Still another nickname originated from the fact that the farmer had to follow the walking plow and avoid the clods as best he could so he became known as a "clod hopper".

The early doctors were few and far between. Among the chief drawbacks to the practice of medicine on the frontier were the long distances to be traveled at all hours of the day or night. The irregular hours, broken rest, and hardships of travel told on the physician's health. A doctor, who loved his work and desired to help humanity, never refused to answer a call. He rose from a sick bed to attend to the needs of others, lest they perish for lack of care. Many times at the hour of midnight in the winter a loud knock sounded on his

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door. Aroused from sleep, the physician hastened to harness a team of wild horses and quickly the buggy sped on its errand of mercy. It rolled over the prairie to a lonely cabin fifteen or even twenty miles away. Many times the winding prairie trails grew dim and the doctor often lost his way and finally came to a dugout or sod house, only to find that he had traveled in the wrong direction, which caused a delay to his sick patient. Arriving at his destination with his few instruments and appliances a doctor was expected to be able to handle the case whether it was fracture, contagious disease, pneumonia, gunshot wound or childbirth. There was no trained nurse in white to prepare the patient or help with the instruments and dressings. If the patient was passing through a crisis the doctor watched by the bedside during the passing hours. When the battle was a losing one he became clergyman as well as doctor and nurse, and cared for the spiritual needs of his patient as he crossed the great divide. The doctor's wife kept the home fires burning and a lighted lamp in the window was a beacon to the cold and weary physician as he returned

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to his home late in the night. Perhaps then as he prepared to rest from his long and hard trip, many times another knock would come, and it was the doctor's duty to face the cutting gale on another night ride. A doctor's life was hard then. The causes of many of the diseases such as cholera, smallpox, diphtheria, typhoid fever and malaria were due to the hardships of the new country. In the absence of wells on many claims, the first year, the water was supplied from springs, sloughs or water holes. Then, too, the common drinking cup in the home, the school, the stores and the public square, spread disease once it appeared. Disease germs were concealed everywhere in the sod house or dugout for the dirt floor could not be scrubbed or disinfected, and an attempt at sweeping, or even the children playing on the floor, raised dust which filled the air, the dishes and the food with germs. Lack of sunshine and the presence of many insects such as fleas and flies carried germs and infections. Very few early day homes had window or door screens, and the mosquito and the disease-carrying housefly gained entrance to do their deadly work.

Lowered vitality caused by improper clothing, exposure, an unbalanced ration, resulted in much sickness. Also salt pork, dried foods, corn bread and other food lacking in vitamins and minerals, so weakened the individual that he fell prey to various diseases.

Settlers searched the woods and prairies for "greens" and many new and strange weeds were used. No doubt many of these were injurious to the health of early settlers. Frequently badly chosen dwelling places, together with crowded quarters in dark, unsanitary dugouts, sod houses, or too well-ventilated shacks or log cabins, promoted disease.

During the early years of settlement the women did their sewing by hand and many times they helped milk, cared for the milk, made butter and cheese, and raised a large flock of chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese. Besides this a woman usually had charge of a large garden and did most of the work in it. In the absence of most of the modern conveniences she was obliged to do the best she could with the help of crude makeshifts. Having no refrigerator, she had to cool her milk and butter by lowering them into the well in a pail or tub.

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Mr. and Mrs. Patterson are the parents of five children, all girls; Nelle, the oldest was born in Kansas while Cora Lee, Vivian and the twins, Mayme and Marye, were all born on the old homestead north of El Reno. Mr. Patterson passed away on March 1, 1918, and is buried in the El Reno Cemetery. He served two terms as County Treasurer and two as County Commissioner of Canadian County.