

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

201

#1253

PFEIFFER, ETHEL, DANIEL.

INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Zaidee B. BlendThis report made on (date) May 1, 19371. Name Ethel Daniel Pfeiffer.2. Post Office Address Duke, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 17 Year 18915. Place of birth Indian Territory.6. Name of Father C. C. Daniel Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Artie Freeman. Place of birth _____

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 _____.

Zaidee B. Bland
Research Worker.
May 1, 1937.

Life and Experiences of a
Native of Oklahoma,
Mrs. Ethel Daniel Pfeiffer.
Duke, Oklahoma.

I was born near Terral in what was then Indian Territory. Father had a ten year lease on five hundred acres from an Indian. Father was to build any buildings he wanted to from trees cut from the land. He was to clear off timber and put into cultivation a certain number of acres but I do not know the number of acres agreed upon. At the end of the lease all improvements, buildings, fences, etc., were to become the property of the land owner. Father and my elder brothers cut the trees and cleared the space for all our buildings. The logs were dragged by oxen to a mill not far away and cut into rough planks. The house had four rooms and was covered with clap-board which Father and the boys cut themselves in the woods not far from the house. We lived near the old Chisholm Trail and many weeks cattle would pass in such herds that they would be several days and nights passing the house. Every once in a while a chuck wagon with several extra cow boys around it would pass. I have seen

-2-

droves of hogs or sheep which were so large that you could see neither beginning nor end but there would be thousands and thousands of them. The woods were full of all kinds of animals. I was familiar with the screams of the panther and wild cat, also the bark of the coyote. The wild cats would come right up to our hen house and pull the chickens through the cracks of the house after they had been shut up at night.

Father got a lot of steel traps. He made a large coop and took an old rooster that could be depended on to crow just before day every morning, then took the coop down into the edge of the woods, put the rooster inside the coop so the wild cats could not get him. Father set these steel traps all around the coop in the leaves and when the rooster would begin to crow the cats would come from all directions and Father would grab his gun and start too. He killed many cats; I remember one morning he came in with thirty. They seemed much larger than they do today. Father threw one of the cats across the flanks of his horse to show a neighbor how large the cat was. The cat's claws hung down below the horse's flanks on each side of the horse.

-3-

Our nearest neighbor lived four miles away. He was a full blood Cherokee buck with a white wife. The white wife was determined to make her husband work. She would send him to milk. He would milk and then drink all the milk and carry his wife the empty bucket. He would always think of something provoking to do so she would not ask him to do the same thing again for a long time.

I have two older sisters and one night when a young man who lived several miles from us was going home from our house he passed under a bent tree and a panther dropped from the tree onto the hips of his horse. The horse began to run and the boy to scream. He wanted his father to open the door. His father mistook him for a drunk man and came very near shooting him. The boy rode right up to the door and tumbled right over his pony's head into the door of the house and slammed the door. The flesh was torn from the horse's flanks and hips so that he died and the panther got three pigs and two calves before he left the lots of that family that night.

-4-

My two younger brothers one day came into the house and wanted Mother to come and see something they had found. She insisted on their telling her what it was before we went to see it. One of the boys said; "Its a toad in a gourd". It was a terrapin.

We raised and canned or dried for winter almost any vegetables you ever heard of. I do not remember all the wild fruits in the woods but in the spring there were dew-berries, blackberries, raspberries and strawberries. In the summer there were wild grapes and plums and in the fall red and black haws and persimmons. I remember several kinds of nuts. Pecan and hickory nuts were the kind we liked best. We had a large orchard on the place with apricots, apples, pears and peaches and we always made grape and apricot wine as well as blackberry brandy.

My mother died when I was two years old. My older sisters married and I was left at home to keep house for my father and the boys when I was very young. One day Father came in and said, "Ethel, couldn't you make Dad some good old 'eggy' corn bread?" Of course I thought I could and wanted to have it extra nice so I put in eleven eggs and two cups of meal. We had "eggy" corn bread.

-5-

Our meal was ground at a custom mill not very far away. On Saturday Father or one of the boys would take a sack of shelled corn to the mill and the miller would grind our corn for one-fourth of the corn that we brought to him.

I learned to ride a horse when I was very young for I often had to go with the men or be left at home alone so I early learned to ride fence and rope a cow. The woods were full of wild horses, cows and hogs. When work was slack the boys of the community would round up a bunch of the wild horses, make a corral of poles sometimes, and sometimes of their ropes and spend a day or two just riding wild horses. It was great fun to watch them. I attended lots of dances. Sometimes the boys would get pretty wild for there was always plenty of good wine and whiskey. If any thing happened serious, like anybody getting shot, all the boys would hide and some of them would cross the river over into Texas until the trouble would all blow over. When a bunch of boys would be hiding out they would sometimes come out for something to eat and would always be disguised so that no one would know them until they were sure the coast was clear. We never refused food to anyone and sometimes

-6-

a man would pull off his disguise and we would have the surprise of our lives. Once I was setting a meal for an old gray-bearded man. His beard was so long and white I remember that I thought, "My, that man must be nearly a hundred years old". While I had my back turned to him he took off his disguise and he was the son of one of our nearest neighbors.

Dad was good to every one and never refused any favor a neighbor asked. Once a neighbor came and borrowed a horse and brought her home after he had had her a year.

I was seventeen years old but had never been to town. One day Father was taken very ill; there was no one home but him and me. I did not know what to do as I had either to leave Dad alone and go for a doctor or load him into a spring wagon and take him to the doctor. I decided I would take him to the doctor. I did not know where the town was, I knew only the general direction and I knew the nearest town was supposed to be eighteen miles away. Dad was already unconscious. I hitched the fastest ponies we had to the wagon and how

-7-

I got Dad into the wagon I do not know to this day for he weighed nearly three hundred pounds, but get him in I did and drove and drove - it seemed to me all night. It was in the afternoon when I got started and when the moon was shining bright I topped a little hill just when I had decided I was lost and there was the little village nestling in the valley.

Every man and boy packed a gun or pistol and I did too for I so often rode alone. I often took a shot at wild animals and killed lots of squirrels. We never ate swamp rabbits, coon, possum and animals like that as so many people did.

Once when I was eighteen years old Dad had gotten a thrasher and had to have all the boys to help him and I had to stay two weeks all alone and attend to the stock and another time I got across the river when a rise came and it was a week before I could cross. I had to stay with some Indians. They were so nice to me and wanted me to eat with them but I could not bear to eat from the same dish they all put their fingers into so the old squaw seemed to realize and she would serve me in an old battered pan

-8-

she had picked up somewhere. I had the toothache one night while there and the old squaw put something on my jaw that eased it right away and I went right to sleep.

I rode a little pony I called Shorty. He was very wise as to the ways of the woods; he could smell a rattler I believe a hundred yards away and would never go along the path where one was.

One time when I was alone I wanted to visit a friend who lived thirty miles away and I drove the distance at night to avoid the heat of the day. I would come in from riding fence all day when the men folks were away and turn my horse into the lot and go to the house and get my supper without any thought of being afraid. I could kill an antelope, throw him across my horse to take him home or tie him up in a tree, skin him and cut out a piece to cook over a campfire as quickly as either of my younger brothers.

After Mother's death Dad traded a lot and would often be gone a long time. Once he had been gone a long time and we were afraid he was not going to get home for Christmas. He never left us much money when he would go away but we had plenty to eat and a wild turkey all ready to roast.

-9-

The weather had been so bad that we just knew that Dad would not get home. There was a pretty bad mud hole right near our house and several times people would come to the house to have the boys get the mules and pull them out. When they pulled one man out the man said, "Here Sonny, is two-bits, it's nearly Christmas and I expect you can use it." That gave the boys an idea and the next day they harnessed the biggest span of mules on the place and went down to the mud hole and offered to pull any one out for a quarter and that night they had \$2.50 and one of them got on his horse and went to town the next day so when Dad did come in, as he did the day before Christmas bringing us presents, we had some for him too.

Once Dad was thirty miles away working with a bunch of men when he was taken ill. They sent one of the men out for a doctor and as he had to pass where we lived he told the man to stop and tell me, so this man knocked on the door and when I went to the door he said, "Miss, your father is very sick and I am going for the doctor. He said for me to stay here until morning and then go on and get the doctor and perhaps you would like to come to the camp with the doctor."

I replied, "You can stay here but first go hitch to the

-10-

spring board the two horses you will find in the corral. I'll go on for the doctor and then go on to Father to-night". The ground was covered with snow and ice and I was not sure the doctor would want to start out at night but he wrapped up in a lot of quilts which were in the wagon and lay down and slept and I drove all night through the sleet and snow and we got back to Dad in time to save his life and I was glad.

I was born among the Indians but was never afraid of them. I thought they were our friends and I knew ^{we} were their friends. They never stole from us or tried to scare us in any way but were always ready to divide their food with us and we with them, and we often exchanged presents of game and meats and I would show them how white people would do things, but I never tried to learn how they did things for I thought our way the best.

