

HENRY, CAROLYN C.

INTERVIEW

13794

183

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13794

Billie Byrd
Journalist
May 2, 1938

Interview of Carolyn G. Henry
Okemah, Oklahoma

Early School Teacher

I came with my father and mother, two brothers and two sisters to the Indian Territory in 1889. My father and mother were teachers in the National School in the Creek Nation and when I was eighteen years old I began teaching. In 1896 I taught near Morse, or as it was known then as Norberg, which is about twelve miles north of the present Okemah, Oklahoma, in Okfuskee County. I boarded for a while at Felix Hopwood's, old friends of ours, then I boarded at the hotel at Norberg and Mrs. Sarah Loveland was manager of the hotel.

The Patterson Mercantile Company had a large store there. George Balston was manager and George Harvison, bookkeeper. There is where I met so many of the real old timers of what is now Okfuskee County. Besides those named there were the Lee Tanners, the late Cad Lowrimore, the Gaghagens, Marion Riley, Musgroves, Manwarrings and quite a few others.

HENRY, CAROLYN C.

INTERVIEW.

13794

2

I had known Theodore and Lyda Manwarring before they were married, and one time, not having seen Mrs. Manwarring for some time, I wanted to visit her. She had a young and beautiful cousin visiting her and George Harvison had been casting eyes over that way so we joined forces and early one Sunday morning we started over to spend the day. As near as I remember Theodore was running a store at what is now Okfuskee or near there.

As we were riding along horseback we saw a pretty little striped cat sitting in the middle of the path with no disposition to move. Well, we did not dispute the right of way. We took, as the children say, roundance, and way around at that, so as not to take any chance on taking the perfume visiting with us.

My family lived at Barnett's store near where Bryant is now and I spent the week-ends at home, riding back and forth by horseback and by the way - a side saddle. I did not pass a single house on my trip, but I could see several in the distance, the old Bean ranch about two miles to the north and some negro houses to the south.

HENRY? CAROLYN C.

INTERVIEW.

13794

3

One Christmas in the '90's, I think about 1897, a crowd of youngsters, seven or eight, that was a crowd in those days for one neighborhood, had an invitation to a Christmas dance and supper at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Crawford. I remember the place as being southeast of where Okemah is now. Dr. Rhodes and Wilburn Rucker got a large team of mules and a new Springfield wagon from Wilburn's father and the crowd all met at our house to start on our twenty-mile drive. It took a good team to travel that distance on what we called roads in those days. When we came to a real steep place all but the driver got out and walked up the hill, but we arrived on time and such a celebration as we had.

I well remember Rash McKinnon and his violin and the farewell piece that he played had us almost in tears. (Rash was afterwards sheriff of his county - Okfuskee). Those were the good days for they were happy days.

I can hear the swish, swash, swish of the tall sage grass as a crowd of us galloped over the prairies where Okemah stands today. It just does not seem possible that over forty years have slipped by, so much happiness, so much sorrow, so many changes, but that is life.

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INTERVIEW.

13794

4

We lived in Weleetka in 1903. My husband and brother, W. A. Harper, were deputy United States Marshals under Paden Tolbert. There was a dispute over the Castle, Okfuskee County, townsite and the boys were stationed there for a while. I camped with them for several months.

I lived here in Okemah in 1912 when my father, W. T. Harper, was county clerk. At the time of Statehood in 1907, in order to start the machinery of Government, that is after the Constitutional Convention had named the counties, Governor Haskell named my father the first county clerk. By the law, he could not succeed himself, so Ed Stine was the first elected county clerk. Then my father was elected the second and third terms, 1910-1914, inclusive. I have lived in Okfuskee County practically ever since.