

McCONNELL, ERNEST (MRS.) INTERVIEW.

#4888

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

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Field Worker's name Thad Smith, Jr.This report made on (date) July 17 19371. Name Mrs. Ernest McConnell2. Post Office Address Chickasha, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) 314 Pennsylvania Avenue4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 22 Year 18635. Place of birth Ohio6. Name of Father Henry Kline Place of birth GermanyOther information about father Buried in Nebraska7. Name of Mother Not known Place of birth FranceOther information about mother Buried in California.

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 4.

Interview with Mrs. Ernest McConnell,
Chickasha, Oklahoma.

My husband and I traveled overland, in a covered wagon, from Omaha, Nebraska, to the southern Kansas line in the year of 1891.

When the Cherokee Strip was opened for settlement, my husband made the run in a spring hack, driving two small Indian ponies. The ponies were awfully tough, and were easily kept but after the run they were never any good. He broke their spirit making the run.

He did not get a claim the first day, but secured one two weeks later after much looking around. He came across a young fellow who was crying. The young man said he couldn't make a living there and besides it was too lonesome; and that he would sell his claim for five dollars. My husband gave the boy five dollars and filed on the claim. It was about eleven miles west of Enid.

My first home on the claim was a wagon box with a wagon sheet stretched over the bows. I had two of these, one to eat in, and the other to sleep in. I had five young children, so you know how crowded we were.

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Mr. McConnell didn't have any money, but he had a well drill, so he left home to drill wells for other people. Some of the settlers didn't have money, but would pay him with food, such as beef, hog meat, or some kind of grain. When he was paid with grain he always had it ground. I have made and eaten lots of bread made of ground kaffir corn. It didn't stick together very well, but it was nourishing. Mr. McConnell charged fifty cents a foot for the first one hundred feet of drilling, and one dollar and fifty cents a foot for the next hundred feet. Most of the wells were about forty feet deep.

For the first six or eight months after moving on the claim, my neighbor, who lived about a mile away, and who had a well, hauled two barrels of water twice a week to me. After so long a time my husband got enough money ahead so that he could take time off to drill a well for ourselves. At first when he went

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to work he would be gone as long as three weeks, at a time.

Our claim was on the prairie several miles from where we could get wood, so the children and I gathered cow chips for fuel.

We got what few groceries we bought at Knif. Our main food was bacon, beans, potatoes, bread and coffee.

The second year we lived on our claim, my husband built a half dugout. The upper part of the wall was made of sod, and the roof was covered with planks and dirt.

The first year we were on the claim we didn't have a school, but the next year a sod school house was built, and my children started to school.

Our community didn't have church or Sunday School for several years. I believe the Baptists had the first church.

I made every garment that my children and I wore by hand.

I saw one bunch of antelope about one hundred head.

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but most of the wild game was gone. We did have lots of coyotes, wild cats, and a few panthers.

Our first year on the claim we broke only five acres of land. We planted watermelons and cantaloupes, and they did well. About the third or fourth year we finished breaking our land and leased some other, including a school section that joined our place. All of ~~this land was sowed in wheat which did well. The next year my husband built a new sod house which I was tickled to get. A year or two later we sold our farm and my husband went into the blacksmith business in Chickasha.~~