

ROSS, ADAH I.

INTERVIEW

#8252

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Interviewer, Ethel Mae Yates,
August 19, 1937.

Interview with Mrs. Adah I. Ross,
Elk City, Oklahoma.

Born July 12, 1871, Indiana.

Parents William Kipler, Indiana.
Rachel Kipler, Indiana.

I, my husband, two children, my brother... Kipler
and his family came from Nebraska to the Territory in the
year of 1895. We left our home in Nebraska on the eighteenth
day of April and got here on the twenty second day of May.

We camped out every night and cooked on camp fires. We
would pick up sticks along the road and carry them along
for fuel and sometimes we would have to cook with buffalo
chips. Roads were very poor in those days. People just had
to start out across the country and sometimes they would have
a trail to travel by and sometimes they would not.

We came through Kansas, crossed the Arkansas River at
Nickerson, Kansas, and came into the Territory at Manchester,
crossed Salt Fork and came on to Muskogee and south to
Lover.

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We ran across some horse traders. Another man and three sons named Pearson traveled with us one day and camped with us one night on the Cimarron River. The next morning our horses were gone and we were sure that horse thieves had gotten them but later in the day we found our horses about a mile from camp, eating hay out of a man's haystack.

The next night we camped at Kingfisher. We came from Kingfisher to El Reno. We had six dollars when we left Nebraska and we spent the last dime of it in El Reno.

We were coming to the Territory to get a home, but when we were on the Kansas and Oklahoma border we met lots of people leaving the Territory who wanted us to turn back and told us if we came on we had better bring lots of shoe leather with us for we would need it.

We then went to a little place twenty-two miles west of El Reno. It was called Northville. We sold a team there and then bought a lease and a crop for six dollars. This was south of Geary near the Obyote hills.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians had at one time bought calico and had gone up on the top of these hills and

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decorated them for Jesus to descend upon when He came but some boys went upon these hills at night and tore the decorations all down and this almost put the Indians on the war path.

We moved into a dugout that was on this lease. It was thirty feet long and sixteen feet wide and had a fireplace in one end of it. We have brought in logs, six and eight feet long, and burned them in the fireplace. We would turn these logs end-ways and when they would burn off we would push the logs up until they were all burned.

I have sat and written letters on one end of a log while I was warming by a fire that was on the other end.

We had to haul water for a mile in a barrel until we could dig a well.

This place where we were was three miles southeast of where Geary now is. There was no town there then.

We farmed and the way we planted our feed was to drive a bar full of nail holes and tie it on to the plow every third furrow and for cotton we would list the land and then we would take a small barrel and punch holes all around it.

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am we would mix cotton seed with ashes and put this mixture in the barrél and roll it up the furrows and then cover the seed with a hoe.

My husband was a well digger by trade and had to be gone away from home most of the time to make money for us to live on as crops were short and prices low.

One time when he was away three of our hogs had gotten out and one evening, it was about the middle of the afternoon, and I and I babies were alone when we began to hear loud whooping and yelling and I just knew it was the Indians coming. I stood there and shook until my knees popped together and was so frightened that I did not know what I was doing. The noise kept on coming closer and one of the hogs jumped up at the window. The hogs had started off and the neighbors dogs were after the hogs and the boys were after the dogs so this was the end of our Indian scare. We never had any trouble with the Indians.

If it had not been for the Indians we would have had to go without clothes during the first few years we were here.

One day I went out and tied the only cow we had out to graze and some way she got the rope twisted and choked

herself to death. We went and told the Indians about her and they came over and traded us blankets, cooking vessels and clothing for her carcass.

The Government would give the Indians blankets and other household goods and they would trade these things for meat, vegetables, butter, eggs, feed, or anything else that you would trade to them.

We did not have any schools in there then and did not know what it was to go to Church. There was an old missionary who would come and preach to the Indians but they could not understand his language.

There was a negro who lived near by named Amos Birch who could speak the Indian language and he would interpret for them. We would go up on the Canadian River on fishing trips. We would go and camp for three or four days at a time, and while we never caught many fish we had great times.

For Sunday pastime, my husband would hitch a horse and a mule to a buggy and we would go over into Prairie Log Town, where Geary now is, and hunt rabbits.

One time a fire broke out and when it was put out and all of the grass was gone the rabbits would come up in the

timber in droves. We have had at one time a five gallon barrel of rabbit hams salted down.

I remember one panther chase. There were some boys and dogs chasing a panther up a canyon and right at the head of the canyon called Lower Mouth Canyon a family was living in a dugout. These people heard the boys and dogs coming, hollering and yelling and they knew that they were headed that way so they ran and shut the door and just about the time the door was shut a panther leaped over the dugout and kept going.

It was in the evening and our dog came up out of a canyon. It was howling and had been scratched all over and I knew that a panther had been clawing the dog so I got my gun and tried to get the dog to go to the canyon. He would not go. I knew that my husband was coming that evening so I held my gun and waited for him to come. I was afraid that I might shoot and miss it and waste the cartridge.

As I have mentioned before, my husband was a well-digger by trade. He dug wells by hand and when he would strike rock he would blast, and one time he was digging a well and had struck rock. He fixed the fuse and set a match to it. Some men drew him out and just as they got his feet from over the

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well the blast went off and blew rocks fifty feet in the air.

This was in Canadian County; we lived here, had two children born here and two of our children died here. I was full of life and really enjoyed living in a new country.

We lived on this claim four years, and then came over into Custer County and filed on a claim eleven miles northeast of where Elk City is now.

We made a sod house about fourteen by thirty feet. We cut logs for the ridge poles and made the wall about eighteen inches thick. We made them of sod, then fixed the roof of poles, brush and grass and then covered it with sod and fixed one door and two windows and we put glass in one window. We fixed the barns in practically the same way. I have a picture of our sod house.

We put out a nice little orchard, mostly peach trees, and we raised good gardens, some cotton, corn and feed.

The cemetery was on the land of a man named Thomson and this cemetery was known as the Thomson grave yard.

We never had any trouble with the Indians but the rangers were mad because the people were coming in here and taking up the land.

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My husband was gone most of the time after we moved here. He drove a freight wagon from Weatherford to many other places. A neighbor family and the children and I went over to Helder to Church and when we got home, thirty head of cattle had broken into our garden and orchard. I told one of the boys to go and catch a horse, that I was going to drive these cattle over into Roger Mills County where there was a herd law. I got on my horse and drove these cattle over the line and then started back home. I got off of my horse and took the bridle off and hit him with it and told him to go home. I was afraid to go by the road for fear I would meet some of the men to whom the cows belonged. I walked across the pasture and had some canyons to cross but was not much afraid as I had my forty-five with me.

The rangers kept on bothering us and the cattle kept on eating our crops so I just sat down and wrote to the President at Washington, D. C. and asked him why he would open this country for homesteads and then let the rangers stay here and destroy all we could raise. About two weeks later I got a letter stating that a herd law bill had been passed

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in Custer County, and after that we began to raise something.

We lived there seven years and sold our place for seventeen hundred dollars.

My husband freighted from Weatherford and on one trip it had rained and rained and the Washita River was "up." My husband had been gone a week and got a word from him and we were afraid that he was drowned. When my husband got back he told us that he had been camping on the Washita River when an Indian man came to him and began to grunt and wave his arms back from the river. This Indian was tryin' to make my husband understand that a rise was coming in the river and that my husband must move back. He moved back, and the next morning the Washita River was out of banks and water was everywhere.

In those days the mail system was very poor and when it was necessary to send a telegram someone would have to get on a horse and start across the country to the nearest telegraph station.