

McCONNELL, SARAH
McMAHAN, ANNA

INTERVIEW.
INTERVIEW.

#7123

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McCONNELL, SARAH

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Form A-(S-149)

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

7125

Field Worker's name Grace KelleyThis report made on (date) Aug. 11, 1937 1937

1. Name Sarah McConnell, and daughter Anna McFarhan
2. Post Office Address Henryetta, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) Near Coal Creek, East part of town.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 17 Year 1877
5. Place of birth Mississippi

6. Name of Father Nelson Smith Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Sarah Jane Place of birth Mississippi

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 _____.

Trip to Hearyetta in 1901
Sarah McConnell, Hearyetta

River Crossings

We ferried the Grand River into the Indian Territory at Seneca, Missouri, but the Arkansas River was too shallow to ferry. We had two wagons pulled by horses. The river was too deep to ford but we tried it anyway. One of the horses got down in the quicksand. My husband was driving the first wagon across and I was driving the other, when the horse went down. My husband took his team on across because he couldn't stop in the river. Then he unhitched and brought that team back and hitched it to the end of the wagon tongue. He was standing in the water whipping the horse that was down and the other horses just dragged the horse out of the sand. I was never so scared in my life for I knew he would get down in the sand himself, but we finally got across without any of the others having trouble. When we got across he told me to hurry and make him some coffee. I jumped down out of the wagon and got some sticks and made a fire, got some water out of the river and made coffee. When we tried to drink it we couldn't for it was too salty. That was at Tulsa, but I don't know what the ferry was named.

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When we got to the Slate Ford Crossing on Deep Fork River the river was up and we camped three or four days. There were a lot of poor people there who had only fish out of the river to eat. We decided to cross before we had to eat fish or nothing. The wagon beds were chained on so they wouldn't wash off. My husband took both wagons across and I walked the Frisco Railroad bridge with the children.

We were three weeks coming from Missouri and we arrived at Henryetta about nine o'clock at night. When we started from Missouri the weather was cold and it snowed not long before we left. When we got to Henryetta, the grass was several inches high and the climate was warm. I was satisfied and wanted to stay. People told me they hadn't fed their cattle all winter but had let them run out. The next winter we raised chickens all winter. The winters are getting colder here than they were then. We rented a little log cabin across Coal Creek, east of town.

Henryetta, 1901

There was not a house between Henryetta and Dewar. The original town, about one hundred and sixty acres, was all there was to it. All west was pastures and all south

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and east were small farms. There was a large general merchandise store owned or run by G.W. Burnett and his wife. There was one hotel, a rock one, which is now the G.Y. McKinney Clinic, on Fourth and Trudgeon. The first gin in Henryetta was owned by a man named Whinery and was located where the old lumber yard on First Street is now.

Doctor M.K. McElkannan's homeplace at 409 E. First street was the farm of Hugh Henry (a that H. B. Patton's father farmed. It was thought to be out in the country.

There was no school or church until 1903. The post office was a very small place in the Burnett Store.

Texas Long-Horn Cattle

Those Texas cattle were the poorest creatures I ever saw. They were shipped in here by the carload and just turned loose. Some were crippled, had their legs broken. They would be down, but if anyone got near, they would lunge at them. They were wild and fierce and we were scared of them.

The children carried the drinking water for over a mile from the Gilliam Spring, which is as good now as then, only it has a rock house over it now and is named. One of them got her dress caught on a barbed-wire fence when trying

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to get away from one of these Texas long-horns and her sister tore the dress off her, getting her loose.

The crippled steers were killed and a lot of the others died. Long ditches were dug and they were burned and buried. It was terrible.

Malaria

There was a lot of sickness about that time and the people died all around us. We were sick but none of us died. Everybody was accommodating them about sitting up with the sick. Doctor Shonnigal was the first doctor. Doctor Mooney had just come here. I've seen Doctor Mooney and his wife sit up with the sick when it was the other doctor's patient. He wouldn't say what he thought was wrong nor what to do for he said it was the other doctor's patient.

Stockyards

The Frisco was here then and they built some stockyards to accommodate the cattlemen when they shipped cattle in and out of here.

Snake Uprising

Crazy Snake went to the Hickory Stomp Ground (Old Hickory Ground Town) and started his own government, as

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he wanted this country kept in the old way without any white people having any part in it, and he intended to kill or drive the white people out of here. The white people were afraid and got the Government to send troops into Henryetta. The troops went out and brought the Indians in and kept them in the stockyard until the train came to take them to Muskogee.

Coal Mines

The only mine was the Central Strip. Later, James M. Wise sunk the first shaft mine.

We moved to the Central Camp which had one small box-house and the rest were tents. We had four twenty-four foot tents: one to cook in, one was a "boarding tent", two were tents where the men slept. I guess you would say I had a hotel, for I roomed and boarded the miners. There were eight beds in each bedroom tent.

Doctor Sanderson, W. C., was the camp doctor. Each miner paid a dollar a month for the doctor's wages. Every morning he visited each family and attended the ones who needed him. When no one was ill he visited a few minutes and went on to the next place.

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Horses and slips were used to remove the dirt from the coal. They dug up a burial ground, that was thought to have been an Indian cemetery, of about two acres. The bones were all disjointed. Heads leg and arm bones piled up together. Later they took them and reburied them but I don't know the exact place and I believe it would be impossible to find it.

United Mine Workers of America, 1903

Brigham Young, the organizer, came to the Central Mines in 1903 to organize the miners. We had no large meeting place so the men asked me if they might use my boarding tent to have their meeting. Of course I said yes and the Union was organized in my tent.

Kansas, Oklahoma and Gulf Railroad

The Kansas, Oklahoma and Gulf railroad came through in 1904, and Mr. McConnell went to work with a slip grading the road-bed between the Central Camp and Henryetta. There were from seventy-five to a hundred men working. They had a camp, tents, everything they needed. When they finished grading a certain distance the camp was moved on to the next place. Some Muskogee and Okmulgee negroes were working.

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on the big cut below where Dewar is now. I've heard, but don't remember for sure, that the negro contractor went broke. Anyway when they got through they stopped at Henryetta. Some moved into little shacks and others went to a hotel. The East end was literally a negro town, the meanest on earth. Some of them went to work at the White-head No. 2, which was on Corporation between Seventh and Eighth streets, but has been torn down and the shaft filled up. We were afraid they would take the town as there were so many of them.

KILLING OF ALBERT BATES

Why Henryetta has no Negroes (Anna McIlan)

As mother told you, the negroes moved in to a lot of shacks and the two-story hotel. They were a mean lot, had prostitute negro women. White men visited them. There was fighting and loud, vulgar cursing every night until we couldn't sleep. I had married Albert Bates the early part of 1907 and we lived next door to the hotel. He had the only livery stable on 2nd street, just across the street from our house, and the only telephone in the east part of town. Some people say a negro killed Albert because

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he refused to hire him a rig but I know better.

When the negroes became disturbing he would go to the telephone and call Higgenbottom, the town marshal.

He would come down and as he was afraid to go into the hotel by himself, he would deputize Mr. Bates to go with him. These negroes thought that if they got rid of him they would be able to do as they pleased.

On Christmas Eve, 1907, Albert came home for lunch, I had all my Christmas baking finished. He ate and said he would go back to the barn and let the two men who worked for him go to their lunch. After they came back he would come back home and we would go to town to buy some furniture and do our Christmas shopping. I stood and watched him as he went over there. I saw the negro put the gun in his face when he got to the door. Albert used some words I can't repeat (cursed) and the negro fired. I screamed to my sister-in-law that Albert was shot and ran over there. I met the negro who was well dressed but he didn't pay me any attention but just ran as fast as he could. I had to wear mother-hubbards at that time and as I held Albert's head on my lap I became cov-

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ered with blood, the man of the town took after the negro and the Wilson boy captured him in Coal Creek. He was taken to the little "Callaboose" where the City Hall is now. (It was later moved to 7th and Meachem and then torn down in March, 1937) I had been taken some before he was caught. When they caught him some of the men came to me and asked me what I wanted them to do with him. I was beside myself and could think of nothing but that he had shot Albert. So I said I wanted them to hang him and shoot him full of holes. They went to the jail and broke the lock with a sledge hammer, broke the door in and dragged him across the street to a telephone pole. Barclay Morgan, who always used strong language, told them to stop and let him confess why he had killed Albert, that if they hang him first they would never know why. He was named Gordan but I don't know the first name. He said that he had never seen Mr. Bates before but a negro named One-Eyed Bill Smith was going to give him three month's board and another called Slim gave him nine dollars and a half. They pulled him on up and

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shot him full of holes. Then they came to see if I wanted to go and see him hanging. I wasn't allowed to go but my mother went for she was as blood-thirsty as the rest of the town was. They let him hang until sundown, then took him down and shipped his body to his mother in Yagar as he had asked before hanging. The rope was cut into little pieces for souvenirs and I still have mine that they brought to me.

Doctor W. C. Sanderson was the Mayor and he rode down in front of the hotel on his horse and with two six-guns strapped on. He talked real bad to the negroes and ordered them out of town before sun-down. Some of them left right then but others stayed a while. Several shacks were burned that night and they were made to understand the white people meant business.

Some of the white people had good negroes they had brought with them when they came to Henryetta and thought they could keep them but were told differently.

The negroes threatened to wipe the town off the earth, so United States Marshals Ledbetter and Patty came and

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deputized almost every man in town and the men who didn't own guns bought them. The women and children were taken to the Reynolds Building as it was the only safe stone building where we could be guarded by the men. Other men were stationed as guards all about town. Two shots was the signal for the men to know the negroes were coming. They guarded the town for about a month or more but the negroes didn't come. Some of them were going to fight for their rights of working the mines; some were just mean, and others went back to Muskogee and Okmulgee. In April, my baby was born, and I named her Alberta. She is now living in Los Angeles.

Mrs. McConnell said: When they came after Anna we wouldn't let her go for she was in a dangerous condition so I went instead. I never looked on a dead man with pleasure before in my life. There is something I never will understand about him. I stood right under him to see him good. His clothes were in strings for he had hid in the underbrush and had been dragged quite a bit. He had been shot all over but there was not a drop of blood anywhere, neither on him, his clothing nor on the ground. Ordinarily I would have been covered with blood

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as I was under him.

Smith was caught, but the officers took him to the Okmulgee jail to be safe from mobbing. He was later killed but I don't know how.

I believe some of these negroes joined Crazy Snake, for he reorganized the early part of 1908, or just a few months later, and they had gatherings and meetings for six months with the intention of driving us out of here.