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

Field Worker's name Zaidee B. Bland

This report made on (date) June 10, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Rhoda Inklebarger

2. Post Office Address Blair, Oklahoma, Route 2.

3. Residence address (or location) As far as you can go before you cross the river north of Warren.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 1 Year 1861

5. Place of birth Smith County, Texas.

6. Name of Father Abraham Eastep Place of birth Alabama

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Harriet Grice 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 _____.

Interview with Mrs. Rhoda Inklebarger
Route 2, Blair, Oklahoma.

In 1886 my husband and I started to Moabette County. We had a covered wagon drawn by two large mules, and any number of loose cattle. That spring was dry and we had a lot of trouble finding water along the route but no trouble crossing any of these western streams for they were all just dry beds of sand. We crossed Coyote Branch of Red River as it was called at that time at Doan's Crossing. We did not find any more water until we got to old Navajo. And were we dry! As well as the cattle. We camped there several days and while there we met a Mr. Parker who lived up in the bend of the river, but who had no neighbors. He asked us to come up there and "squat" as there was plenty of grass and water and it was near the old trail crossing of what was Red River proper. My husband went up with him and had a look around and decided that it was well. He selected a spot to dig our hole and came back to our camp at Navajo. He told me he had decided to let me stay in camp where we were until he got our dugout ready.

My brother-in-law had come with us so I would be sure of having someone at camp with me each night. The first

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day my husband was away, two Indians came to our camp and made me understand that they wanted something to eat. I fed them and then loaded them with sugar, coffee, flour, and things you had to bring with you to this country or go a long way back toward civilization to get. I thought I had done right of course for I was very anxious to be friendly with them. The next day twelve came, I saw that would not do, so that night I told my husband that he could move my camp near where he was working and maybe it would not be so easy for the Indians to find us. Indians will beg anything in the world that you have and if they think you are not looking will take anything you have, even driving off your stock. They will not take a thing when you are not present, however. That was a strange thing to me until I learned that they considered anything taken when you were not present was stealing but if you were where you could see them, you could prevent their taking your things if you wanted to, so would help themselves if you did not object.

We selected a place on the river where Elk Creek runs into Red River for our home. It is my home to this day except seventy acres or more that the river has claimed down through the years. We got three-quarter sections of land.

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My head-right was one hundred and sixty acres. My husband's head-right was one hundred and sixty acres and we bought one hundred and sixty acres, paying fifty cents an acre for it. All of our land lay in Section 12-1N-19W.

My baby Will was born and my husband died within the first year, but I stayed on. Just across the river north lived the Kiowa Indians. With only a river dividing our land, of course I saw more or less of them. "Little Jim" and his squaw lived just over the river from us and they had a baby just the same age of mine. She did not know how to fashion white garments, but wanted her baby to look like mine, so as the years went by I made for their baby whatever I made for mine. The same short dresses, the first pair of pants, and so the families became great friends.

One day the Indian boy died, I do not remember how or why but they brought all his playthings and clothes to Will and seemed to feel as if they partly owned him.

The Chain "C" was the biggest ranch near us and as we were so near the crossing, the cattle often got mixed, and a lot of times the Indian cattle would cross the river too. All my horses were branded a single "A" on the shoulder

and my cattle were branded on their side "A-Bar-A" and we tried always to keep all other cattle from mixing with ours, when we would put them in our pasture at least. We had two shepherd dogs to help us corral our stock and of course I had to keep a hired hand even after Will got to be a great big boy, and, in addition, I did a lot of riding and looking after them myself. The most trouble about cattle getting lost was that they got stuck in the quicksand and if you did not know just how to pull them out, you would be most sure to break a cow's neck. The cowboys were always good to help us pull them out when once we found them. When the waters would get high we would have to patrol the banks and watch for stranded cattle, for they would get stranded on a little knoll and would not swim out unless someone went in and forced them to. I have often swum my horse in to make a cow swim to higher ground and sometimes we would have to take a little calf up in our arms and swim our horses out so the cow would follow. One day I was riding, watching for bogged cows, when I found one right where Elk Creek empties into Big Red River. I saw some cowboys watching me and they saw the cow about the time I did and rode up to help me. The water was so high that it was out of the question to

swim out to her to try to help her out. The cowboys were on the other side of the stream and after studying the situation a few minutes, one of the boys took out a lariat, roped the cow by the horns, and jerked her back into the deep water. I was watching, and thought he might just as well have let her alone as to have drowned her. Will you believe me, when that cow found her feet were loose and she could do as she pleased she turned right around there in that water and swam out onto the land on the side of the river that was home. A cow has a lot of sense and you can't drown one unless she is bogged down, or because she won't leave her calf.

Once I was milking nine cows and turned them out and they never came home again so I had to raise all those little calves by hand. Of course the Indians were blamed for it and all the neighbors were sorry for me, and there was a good deal of talk on both sides of the river. Several of the Chain "C" cattle got with ours and they were slow about coming to get them. One morning I said to Will, "Will, let's put those Chain "C" cattle out of the herd and if the Indians get them we cannot help it. The Indians got them all right and two of mine also. I had my horse saddled one morning to go ^{and} see if I could locate them when up rode two

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of my neighbors to talk to me about the missing cattle and one said he knew the Indians had stolen them. While we were talking, some Indians rode up also to talk to me about the cattle and to deny stealing them; but before we could get to any kind of an understanding the Indian leader of the party reached back as though he was reaching for his gun and my neighbor beat him to the draw and shot him down right in my yard. He then turned to me and asked what he should do. I replied, "Jump on my horse and beat it to Mangum and let them lock you up until you can have a trial for the Indians will kill you as sure as fate if they get you." He did as I told him to, but the Indians were not satisfied and ganged up to come and kill me and my son for the Indian who had been killed in my yard. Little Jim and his squaw knew about the meeting and while the Indians were getting together in a bunch they hurried across to tell me and to stay with me and my son. In just a few minutes after Little Jim got to my place, I could hear the crowd coming with their war whoops and running their horses. I did not know that Little Jim's squaw could speak English and that one sentence was all I ever heard her say in my life. She took Will in her arms

and wrapped him in her shawl and said, "Indians no kill you, I die for you first." Little Jim got in the door and there was a lot of palaver and at last the Indians rode away but Little Jim and his squaw stayed some time until they knew all danger was passed. Lots of times after that when I would meet an Indian on the trail he would point at me and say, "You not scared of John, you no kill Bob." Seemed like a lot of times they would try to scare me but they never harmed me.

I raised Hereford cows and did real well until I finally gave it up on the account of Texas fever ticks. Our home bordered the trail where they crossed at Trails Crossing and the cattle were always bedding down around my place and infesting my cattle with their ticks. I had such a time with inspection that I finally gave up and we are only farming now.

I was invited to an Indian's wedding among the Kiowas. The interpreter for the whites was to be married so there were a lot of whites invited. The buck's name was Robert, in English; I cannot pronounce it in Indian but it means in their language, "a leader." The squaw's name was Hazel. They all gathered at the mission very much as you would if there was to be a white wedding, except the bride came in

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alone and sat down just as far over in the corner as she could get as though she was trying to hide. When all was ready, the preacher stood up and called, "Robert, bring Hazel." Robert came in front of the preacher and called in a loud voice, "Hazel." Hazel without a word came and stood by Robert and they took hands. They held all four hands as though they were making a ring. The preacher then said, "I am not going to make Robert interpret this for you, for you know very well what it is if you can't understand it." Then he read the marriage service in English just as if they had been white. After the service, food was brought in as though they were having a picnic. The white people mostly stayed in one end of the church and the Indian people in the other. The food was passed back and forth among us, and there was everything to eat imaginable and the cooking was like ours. I could not tell any difference from being at a white wedding. The bride and groom sat side by side and had to be served. The buck had to take a bite of everything and then he passed it to his bride and she would take a bite and they both drank from the same cup.

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The cowboys kept a pack of hounds to run wolves as there was no other hunting sport left for them. They often came by our house and ate with us or maybe got butter, buttermilk or eggs. We seldom charged them but they usually left something. They called Altus "butter-milk station" and my place "Oak Station." Once when some cowboys rode up and asked for eggs I had been setting all my hens and had only two dozen eggs, which I did not want to let them have. They kept begging and at last I went into the house and got the eggs for them. One handed me fifty cents and just about that time my old hen came around the house with her chickens. She had only ninety so the boys gazed at her and one of them said, "Did that hen hatch all those chickens? No wonder you haven't any eggs." I couldn't help but laugh as I had set ten hens and given all the chickens to one hen helping her raise them myself; and hoping the other hens would get to laying sooner than they would if I let them raise the chickens. I explained what I had done and then they laughed. They took their hats off and saluting the hen said, "Here is to you, old hen, you sure must be one busy bird".

Religion

The first sermon I ever heard in this country was

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preached under a big post oak tree by a Free Will Baptist preacher. We made a dugout for our first school and called it Cottonwood. In a few years we built a school house and named it Elk View for it is built on a high hill where you could have such a pretty view of a beautiful valley between the Elk Creeks. We have a new church now and it is about two miles farther back from the creek. It is called New Elk View, and this is the oldest school house left standing in the County.

Animals, for food.

Antelope, a dark reddish brown deer, with a large bushy white tail was the largest wild animal we used for food. I remember I once had a neighbor who had a little son named Claude. When Claude was about four years old he ran up the steps of their dugout to see if the men folks were coming home from hunting, for we heard feet on the grass. He cried so excitedly, "Oh, mummy come quick, come quick." We could not imagine what it was that had excited him so, so his mother started to climb the stairs saying, "What is it, Claude?" He said, "Mummy, do hurry or you won't see them. They are little red calves with pillows tied to their tails." They were antelopes.

Fish were plentiful and we usually kept some hooks set out all the time. Once I went quite a ways above our home

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and set out twenty hooks. The next morning I said to Will, "Someway I feel lucky this morning, so you go see what is on my hooks." He went and brought back eleven channel catfish and every one weighed around eight or ten pounds. "Well," he said as he was cleaning them, "Its a good thing you did not go, you could never have brought these beauties home."

Another time my neighbor, Mrs. Hendrix, and I were fishing. Mrs. Hendrix did not like to take the fish off the hook. She said to me as were going along, "Rhoda, if I catch any fish you will have to take them off the hook for me." "All right," I said. I got her settled with her hook in the water and then went about twenty yards farther up the creek and got down under the bank, and walked back nearly to where she was before I put my hook into the water. Just as I got my hook into the water and started to sit down she called, "Oh, I got a fish come quick it must be a big one, it pulls so." I stuck the end of my pole in the mud and ran up the bank to where she was and grabbed her pole, just as a big headrise swept by. It was no fish at all only a turtle, but a very lucky turtle for me for I surely would have been drowned had I not run up that hill just when I did. We never heard a sound, and

it is a mystery to us to this day how it happened that there was not a whisper of a sound, and it had not rained anywhere in several hundred miles of us.

Fruits

There was an abundance of wild grapes and plums, and pie melons. I have hauled wagon loads of pie melons for my hogs and cows to eat. They also make nice pickle preserves and pies. We planted an orchard the very first year of fruit trees that come from the seed as they live longer. The fruit does not get killed in the spring as often and I think it has a better flavor. We had apples, pears, apricots, peaches, several varieties of each, and all kind of berries as well. We have never had much luck with nut trees but cherries do well, as do currants. I do not think there is a vegetable we cannot grow on our place as sweet potatoes do especially well and we usually raise lots of them.

Animals that preyed on our Possessions

The wolves were the most destructive. They preyed on our young horses, cows, hogs, sheep, everything. Chickens were never safe from them except when shut up in the house. You could always tell when a coyote had eaten a fowl, for they always left the gizzard. Badgers, skunks, coons, owls,

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and hawks all came in for their toll of the farmyard. A skunk just bites the fowls through the jugular vein and sucks their blood. I have had a skunk to get into the coop with my half-grown chickens and kill twenty-five in one night.

A badger is the meanest thing. He eats the whole fowl except the feathers and never gets enough. Badgers live in a hole in the ground and are not worth one thing to anybody that I know of; not even their hides are worth anything for clothing.

Bull snakes gave us a good deal of trouble too. There was one that lived for years in a prairie dog town between my home and Warren that grew so big, old, and wise that he became famous. He left a trail that would measure two feet across and we never did kill him until we killed out the prairie dogs with high life; I guess we got him too.

There was one baby died when Will was a little boy. There was no place to bury him, or a preacher to say a prayer so we laid him to rest in his father's orchard. When we got home my husband had our son on his knee while I was fixing supper and he said to him, "Son if you were to die, Pappy wouldn't lay you to rest in that lonesome old country for it might go back to the Injuns someday

but we would carry you back to God's country." One week from that day my husband was dead. Remembering what he had said to our son I could not think of putting him to rest on our land. It was cold and a long way to anywhere but I took his body down to Mr. Doan's at the crossing and asked if I might lay him to rest on his place until the railroad got through. Mr. Doan very kindly gave me permission. It was fifty miles from home but I never forgot and wanted to move the body the very first chance I could.

We got all our mail from Vernon and lots of times did not get it more than once a year. News traveled very slowly, and lots of things happened that we never heard of until years after. In the meantime three cowboys were killed and Mr. Doan let their bodies be laid by my husband until their people could be notified, then one of the boy's parents sent for his body.

The railroad came through and true to my promise, I went down to Vernon and bought a lot and had the body dug up and moved to my lot in Vernon. I felt so relieved to know that my husband now was where other people were resting and where his lot could be cared for. I had paid Mr. Doan to have a fence put around the grave on his place so I

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never thought that any mistake could have occurred.

About six months after I had the body moved a man and a sheriff rode up to my place to arrest me for grave robbing. I never was so surprised in my life, and I could not believe it. I fought it through the courts, and found I had, through error, moved a body not my husband. It was the wife of the man accusing me of grave robbery. I was frantic to know where my husband's body was and as distressed over the mistake as the gentleman could possibly be but I did not want to go to jail over it. He did not want to compromise at all as he was so very angry. It dragged along in court until the gentleman decided to marry again and it was dropped. Now I wanted to find my husband's body. No doubt the cowboy's ^{that} body/was carried to Johnson County was my husband's, but I have no proof and the forgotten lady rests in my lot in Vernon. This is just another tragedy of frontier life but, if I had forty years to live I would hunt another frontier country to help develop and civilize. God and your neighbors are very real and dear to you on the frontier, and life is so full of honest effort that one does not have time to take unnecessary risks or get too discouraged to meet the new day with a smile.