

SLAGHT, ELLEN

INTERVIEW

#9390

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BIOGRAPHY FOR
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma
 SLAGHT, ELLEN INTERVIEW.

9390

Field Worker's name Augusta H. Custer

This report made on (date) December 10, 1937.

1. Name Ellen Slaght

2. Post Office Address Geary, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) North Cheyenne Avenue.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1884

5. Place of birth Iowa, Indianola.

6. Name of Father George S. Haworth Place of birth Carolina

Other information about father Died in 1891

7. Name of Mother Hannah Haworth Place of birth Carolina

Other information about mother A Pioneer woman.

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 5.

An Interview with Mrs. Ellen Slaght, Geary, Oklahoma.
By - Augusta H. Custer - Investigator.
December 9, 1937.

I am the wife of Henry Slaght and we are living on North Cheyenne, trying to make a living selling oleomargarine.

My father died when we children were quite small; my mother had the true pioneer spirit and she sold her place in Iowa and taking her five children, came on the train to Kingfisher. She bought a relinquishment on a claim and built a small house of two rooms and moved her children to the place.

My oldest brother has always had very poor eye sight and he did not like to farm. He would go back to our friends in Iowa and work to help us hold down the claim. I had a brother and sister older than I and a brother and sister younger.

My mother had some money when she came to Oklahoma but she soon spent all of this but it gave us a start. We had our house and some chickens and a cow and hogs. That was more than many of the settlers had. They would file on their claims and then go away to work some place and come

back at the end of the first six months. We managed to stay with our place and about two weeks before the six months were up we would get up every morning and look around over the prairie to see how many tents had been put up during the night. These pioneers were coming back to their claims and to what they hoped would be their homes some day.

After we had been on the claim two years my mother decided to visit the old home, and loading us four children in a covered wagon, (my oldest brother Sam was at that time in Iowa) we started to drive back. There was no brake on the wagon and every time we came to a hill we had to get out and wrap a log chain around the wheel to hold the wagon back, otherwise, it would have run down over the horses. It took us more than a month to make the trip. We came back to Oklahoma the same way but Sam came with us. We had no overjets on the wagon and all slept in the wagon box except Sam and he slept on the ground.

My mother rented ground out on the shares and in the fall we all picked cotton. Mother would take her

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share of the cotton to Kingfisher and have it ginned.

She drove her own team and freighted anything that needed to be carried.

There was an old lady whom everybody called Grandma Bowers; she was a cripple and could hardly get around. My sister and I would stay with her and do the chores, feed the chickens, milk cows and slop the hogs for 50 cents a week. I have worked out for others ever since I was thirteen years of age.

Grandma Bowers received a pension and always had some money but she was stingy. She made buttermilk soup and if we did not want to eat this it was just too bad for that was all she would cook. She would put the buttermilk on the stove and let it come to a boil and then add a thickening of flour, salt and sometimes a little sugar. She some times took one egg, beat it up and added cold biscuit crumbed up with a little milk and fried this and that made an omelet for every one who was there.

My mother used to make vinegar spread for our bread. We craved something sour and as fruit juices

and jellies were not for poor folks like we were, we used to have this vinegar sauce to spread on our bread. This was made by thickening a little vinegar with flour and adding a little nutmeg or cinnamon for flavor, with sugar to make it sweet enough to taste good. We thought this quite a treat.

One year my mother planted five acres of peanuts. That happened to be a prolific year for peanuts and the crop was gathered and stored in a small house on the place. There were at least five hundred bushels of nuts. These had to be picked off by hand. They were not the small Spanish variety, but nice large ones. We fed them to the hogs on the vines. Our hogs would shell the peanuts for themselves and eat them.

I and my husband and two small girls went to Cimarron County and bought out my brother who had a claim out there. Mr. Slaughter was having chills and fever. He had only two chills after we went out there, but we had many hardships in holding down that claim. After we had stayed our first six months we started back to visit and work some to get clothing and food. We were snowbound

at Higgins, Texas. There was a camp house for travelers but this was no place for women and children. The bunks were dirty and no woman wanted to try and sleep in those close quarters, so Sister, I and the children slept in the wagons. We were held up there over a week. My sister and I stayed in the wagons and the time seemed long. The men would go up in town to the pool hall and in that way pass the time but there was no place for women and children in that little frontier town.

Another time when we were out on the claim - it was late in the Spring and we had lots of wild flowers blooming but there came snow and sleet. Mr. Slight made a sled and took us for a ride over the prairies and we gathered wild flowers that were frozen and covered with ice but still had their color and form. That was rather a queer experience.