

RUITT, NANCY E.

INTERVIEW

7855

193

## BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project, Fort Oklahoma

194

Field Worker's name Grace Kelley,This report made on (date) October 13, 1937

1. Name Nancy E. Pruitt
2. Post Office Address Shulter, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) West side of town, rock house
4. DATE OF BIRTH:      mth.          Day          Year 1870
5. Place of birth Tennessee
6. Name of Father Robert Saxton      Place of birth Tennessee  
Other information about father
7. Name of Mother Mulda Hammon      Place of birth Alabama  
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

Investigator: Grace Kelley,  
October 18, 1937.  
Interview with Nancy E. Pruitt,  
Shulter.

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When I was twenty-one I was left a widow so I came here with my father. We came on the railroad to Eufaula and my father got a farm eighteen miles from Eufaula. There were only three white families in that vicinity and they lived five miles apart.

When we first came here, the Indians wouldn't meet you in the road but would ride around you. I don't know if they were afraid or what their reason was. After we got acquainted with some of them, they made good friends and neighbors. When they would kill a beef or hog or cut a bee-tree down, one of them would bring some to us and hold their gift out toward us and grunt. The younger ones could talk English but the older ones could not. They would come to see us and sit for a couple of hours without talking, just looking at us. We would try to talk to them and they would stick out their lips and point at us. The boys told us later that they did that because they couldn't understand us.

-2-

When an Indian man and wife went anywhere, he walked first and she followed him. When they rode in the wagon he rode on the seat and she sat on a blanket flat in the back of the wagon. One day a couple went to town-he was sitting on the seat, the wagon was empty, and she was riding on the coupling pole. When they came past, going back home, she was riding the coupling pole. I don't know if she rode the eighteen miles there and eighteen miles back on it but it looked that way. They always had a blanket around them.

I was at Charley Riley's House when his wife was sick and died. They got an old Indian man to come there and doctor her. He took some roots and boiled them, took the roots out and blowed in the water the roots had been boiled in with a long quill. Then he said something and blowed into it again--for three or four times. He took a cup of the water and gave it to the sick woman as medicine.

My cousin went hunting for squirrel on Mill Creek. The wild hogs took after him and put him up a tree where he stayed a night and day or until the hogs left and he could safely go home. They killed his dogs. Everyone

-3-

turned their hogs out and fenced the farms in. Whenever you wanted to kill a hog you just went out and killed it and were not particular whether it was yours or not.

Mose Saxton took the mail from Wufaula to Wetumka. His home was half way between, and on the Singer Prairie. He would go to Wufaula and stay all night; the next morning he would go home and change horses and go on to Wetumka where he stayed all night. The next morning he came back by his home and changed horses and went on to Wufaula. His home was his "stage stand." The hack was closed in and held a few passengers.

Mr. Singer was a merchant at Wufaula at that time and had a big ranch and an awful bunch of cattle. I'm not good at numbering cattle but there were over a thousand I'm sure half way between Wetumka and Wufaula. These cattle were so bad that you couldn't pass through there afoot but had to ride.

Tom Deales first had a store at Wufaula and then moved it to Wetumka. Clay Saxton freighted for him and others. He had a wagon and four teams hitched to it at the same time. His teams were horses but some used oxen. He

-4-

hauled flour, coffee, meat, hogs or anything the merchant ordered from Eufaula just as a train takes things from one town to another.

One time I watched some negroes who had four wagons, with four oxen to each wagon, crossing a creek when it was up. The four oxen would pull the wagons across the creek but when they came to the other bank it was so slick that they couldn't get it out of the water, and the water was so fast it would about take the wagon down the stream. They unhocked the teams from one wagon and added them to the one they were trying to get across. The last wagon was so heavy that they had eight yoke of oxen to pull it across and out of the creek.

There was a ferry on the Canadian between Indianola and Eufaula.

I knew several of the Light Horsemen but don't remember the names of any but Duke Berryhill of Hitchita.

Bass Reeves and Grant Johnson were colored officers, U. S. Marshal and Deputy, I believe, at Eufaula. They could talk Creek and the Creeks liked negroes better than they did whites. I suppose is the reason they had colored officers.

PRUITT, NANCY E. INTERVIEW.

7855

-5-

This Bass Reeves had the name of being a good officer and when he went after a man he got him. One time he went after two mean negroes and knew when he left that if he didn't kill them they would kill him, for it would be impossible to bring them back alive. When he found them they were lying under a tree asleep but before he could get to them one awakened and got up. Bass started talking to him and gave him a letter to read. By that time the other one was up. When the first had read the letter Bass told him to let the other one read it. When he turned to give the letter to the other one Bass shot him and then shot the second before he could draw. That looks like a cold blooded murder to us now but it was really quick thinking and bravery. E

The killing of Mary Lord caused trouble. Joe Lord had taken a load of corn to the Pottawatomie country as they were moving there. His wife and three children stayed at their home in the Seminole country. Two Seminoles got to talking about where they could go to get a drink. The one named Logan was a new-comer to that place and didn't have a saddle. Tom McGissley said they

-6-

could borrow a saddle from Joe Lord for he knew him well. When they got there Mrs. Lord said the only one there was a borrowed one and she couldn't loan it as it wasn't hers. She gave them a drink of water from the bucket and they went on away. That night Tom McGissley suggested that they go back and rob her as he knew she had some money. When they got back there she was rocking the baby by the fire. They broke the door open and she had a gun in her hands. One of them took the gun from her and hit her over the head with it. By that time they were out on the porch and one of them threw the baby back into the house. (The other two children had hidden under the bed) Then they dragged her around the house. After they were gone the eight year old child ran to a neighbor and told the story. A mob of whites gathered up a bunch of Indians and the two children identified the guilty Indians. A big fire was built and Logan confessed to everything, putting the blame on Tom McGissley who wouldn't confess anything. They were tied but standing. Tom bowed his head and jumped into the fire, which had been built for the purpose of burn-

-7-

ing them. Their arms were burned off to the elbows and their legs were burned off to their knees. They were buried on Henry Taylor's place.

About fifteen of the mob were given a sentence of fifteen years each for this act. One of them went to No Man's Land to escape arrest and I talked to him after he had stayed there twenty-five years and he told me it was a rough place to stay.

Wiley Taylor, a Seminole, and another were sitting on top of a fence talking and got to talking about the trouble. The other one condemned the whites and Wiley said it was what the two Indians deserved. They got mad and found themselves on the ground fighting and Wiley was on the bottom. He drew his knife and used it but the court decided he was protecting himself.

Right after they were mobbed, the whites got scared and went to Tecumseh. The Indians got scared and went the other way into Newoka. He knew nothing of the trouble so my husband took a load of cotton to Tecumseh. As it was fifteen miles it was dark when he got there and heard about the trouble. He hadn't seen a white person nor an Indian on the way as they had all left, some not even taking the

-8-

time to shut their doors. The hardware store loaned everyone guns and they picketed the town. My husband was worried about us and afraid to come home for fear he would meet the Indians when they came to Tecumseh. The next morning he came home before breakfast and was so relieved to find us all right.

We turned the hogs into the hay and put the other things where the wolves couldn't get to them and went to the Pottawatomie country for a week. The Indians were as scared as we were and had no intention of starting trouble but were afraid we would hold them responsible for the actions of those two and were as glad to be let alone as we were.

Mary Lord had five hundred dollars sewed in a pocket in her petticoat when the neighbors searched after she was killed.