

PRYOR, ELSIE

INTERVIEW #13527

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

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Field Worker's name Hazel M. GreeneThis report made on (date) March 20, 19381. Name Elsie Pryor2. Post Office Address Hugo, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month Nine years before slaves were freed. Day _____ Year _____5. Place of birth Close to what is now called _____, Oklahoma6. Name of Father Eli Ellis Place of birth _____Other information about father Slave brought from Mississippi.7. Name of Mother Malinda Ellis Place of birth _____Other information about mother Slave brought from Mississippi.

Both buried on Long Creek, somewhere.

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 _____.

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Hazel B. Greene,
Journalist,
March 23, 1938.

An Interview with Mrs. Elsie Pryor,
Hugo, Oklahoma.

Memories of Slave Days

The first Mistis I remember was named Mary Ellis, she was part Choctaw Indian. I don't remember ole Marster at all. When ole Miss's daughter got married, ole Miss give her a little nigger girl. That was me an' when I was a little thing, too. I don't remember who young Miss married. They didn't tell little niggers nothin', we just found out what we could and did't pay much 'tention to that. An' not much 'tention to what we saw. We wuz jes like little varmint. They'd cut arm and head holes in croker sacks and tell us to put them on and go along to work and we did, too. That was the only garment we would wear. We'd go 'long totin' in chips, and wood and just anything they had for us to do. I was sold so many times I hardly knew who my master and mistis were. First good price come along, away I'd go. They said I was nine years old when the niggers were freed. I din't know 'cause I couldn't

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read nor spell nor nothing. I only knew what they told me and they didn't tell us little niggers much and they'd give us a whack up the side of the head if we asked too many questions.

The first dress I remember having besides croker sacks, was cotton homespun. They gave us dresses for Christmas. It was plain white. Later we got striped ones. They made our dresses for Christmas, too. They didn't waste any sheep wool on us little niggers. We done well to get cotton ones. What they call Kent, now was called Pacola Station for the stage coaches to stop at, that came along that way. There was a store there but I was never in it. They didn't 'low us young-ones in it. They'd whip us if we went near that store. I was still a little thing when I was stolen by Bushwhackers and carried off to Fort Smith in a covered wagon and sold to some white people up there, where I stayed until I was a big girl, then the first time they whipped me I ran off and tramp-ed my way back to my old home in the Indian Territory. I knew that my ole mistis had used to go to Fort Smith for supplies

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and I knew that Kent was south of Fort Smith, so I set out and slept just wherever they would let me, and ate whatever I could get. There was lots of game but I had no gun to shoot anything with. Nobody tried to stop me 'cause I was free, and sometimes I would catch a little ride with somebody who was going south. Finally I got back home and among friends.

I remember before I was freed, Ole Miss would tell us that when we'd see blue coats comin' to take to de woods. If we'd see grey coats comin', give them somethin' to eat and wait on them hand and foot. That was before the bushwhackers got me. The way they got me, I had gone to the spring for water and they just vole me to come along and go with them. I had to, they'd have killed me I guess if I had not. Those bushwhackers had no respect for law or anybody. After I came back from Fort Smith I married Sam Jackson. Then I sure did have a good time going to dances. We danced everything that was on the fiddle. The Schottische, Polka, Mazurka, waltz and the quadrille. Sometime when the fiddle was all we could get for

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music, some of the boys would get a pair of bones, horse ribs or something of the kind and keep time beating on a chairback with them to make more time. Then sometimes we'd have a banjo, too. Some would pat and some would whistle and we'd dance. Then sometimes somebody would get drunk and kill somebody and that would break up the dance. After a few years of that, my husband and I decided that this old world was wicked and that we'd better jine the church. So we jined up with the Missionary Baptist, and then we went to the big turn-outs and meetin's, with the big dinners. Hit got so you wasn't recognized unless you belonged to the church. They used to have big Tom Fuller dinners at them big meetin's. But Lawd! they aint what they used to be. The game is all gone, too. A body can hardly catch a rabbit now, much less a deer or a turkey or a prairie chicken.