

REDDING, RUTH

INTERVIEW

13273

451

BIOGRAPHIC
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian Historical Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Grace Kelley

This report made on (date) March 17 1938

1. Name Ruth Redding

2. Post Office Address Henryetta

3. Residence address (or location) Gilliam Addition

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month Day Year 1855

5. Place of birth

6. Name of Father Tom Crittenden Place of birth an Eastern state.

Other information about father

7. Name of Mother Malessie Enloe Place of birth Arkansas

Other information about mother

Note: Be sure to narrate to the field worker dealing with the life and
work 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 .

REDDING, RUTH.

INTERVIEW.

13273

Grace Kelley
Investigator
March 17, 1938

Interview with Ruth Redding,
Henryetta, Oklahoma

Moving to the New Country.

My husband was not making as much money in Arkansas as he wanted to and we were what would be called poor folk. Arkansas was an old state and my husband said that others had already gotten the cream off of it, and that he wanted to help get the cream off of the new country. We did do better too. When we first came here to the Choctaw Nation we just had a wagon and team. We worked and saved and soon had some stock. This was a good stock country and he just turned the stock loose to run in the woods. My husband was really a farmer, not a rancher.

We had a little log cabin on ^{the} bank of the Arkansas River about fifteen miles up the river from old Skullyville. It was a wild but a productive country. There was a bridge at Fort Smith, a ferry at Van Buren and a ferry below Fort Smith where there was no town nor store; this ferry was just for the use of the farmers. We bought our fall supply of groceries and dry goods

REDDING, RUTH.

INTERVIEW.

13273

2

at Fort Smith which was thirty miles away but there was a town closer where we went to buy smaller quantities. There were three or four stores and a post office at Redland but we didn't go there often.

I lived close to Younger's Bend that is known for being the home of Belle Starr. The Belle Starr Spring was close to where she was buried. It was the best spring I ever saw. There was a big canyon not far from the spring and from our place and lots of people went there to pick blackberries but I didn't. I considered that it was the Starrs' place and that I had no business going there, in other words I was safer at home.

There were quite a few outlaws in there but people didn't pay any attention to them. We would look at them as they rode past and we didn't have any idea who some of them were but others we knew by sight. They were not our friends but as long as we went about our own business they didn't bother us. We had sense enough to know that they would be bad enemies if we didn't leave them alone.

REDDING, RUTH.

INTERVIEW.

13273

3

Hunting

My husband was a hunter and there was enough wild game to keep him busy when he wasn't farming. He didn't waste the game though but hunted for our food. He did sell some deer skins and a bear skin but the deer were not killed for the skins.

My husband had to watch the corn fields, kill some of the game and run other game out with hounds or there would have been no corn to gather in the fall. Most of the animals liked the roasting ears better than they did the dried corn. The squirrels, raccoons, wild hogs, deer, turkeys, crows and blackbirds all had to eat.

One day my husband found a bear trail to his corn patch in the Casher Bottoms and a good sized spot of corn had been ruined. He watched the trail until the bear came back and then he killed it. It was a big black bear. None of us would eat any of the bear meat so sold it to different people.

Mr. Redding has gone down to the fields early in the morning right after daylight and there would be

REDDING, RUTH.

INTERVIEW.

13273

4

big old raccoons lying up on the rail fences. Sometimes he killed them and other times they got away.

I have seen turkeys come and light on the fence like tame ones. Usually there were about nine or ten but sometimes there would be fewer. It was not unusual for my husband to kill two gobblers before breakfast. There were wild hogs but my husband didn't think enough of them to kill them. There was too much good meat to kill without those ugly things. I never saw a wild hog but there were plenty of them. I was afraid to get out to where there were panthers and wildcats so I never got far away from the house.

We lived in the Choctaw Nation for two years and then moved to the Cherokee Nation. My husband bought some good hogs and we raised our own bacon and hams. Then we had to have a good smokehouse. We never smoked our deer meat like we did the pork. My husband would stand on a trail and the hounds would run the deer past him so he could shoot them. If it was an old deer it was fed to the hounds. If it was a young deer Mr. Redding built a scaffold and barbecued it. The meat was a finer

REDDING, RUTH.

INTERVIEW.

13273

5

and closer grain than beef and tasted better but when barbecued the taste of it was between that of roast and dried beef. The extra meat was put in sacks to keep.

I raised three fawns as pets that my husband caught but all of them were killed by hunters after the spots had disappeared.

Unusual Way of Raising a Deer

I raised one fawn on the breast. My boy who lives at Oklahoma City now was a nursing baby when my husband brought a tiny deer or fawn home. I was giving more milk than my baby could use so it was just handier to let the fawn nurse than to try to feed it. It had to be weaned before long though for it would knock me over when it was hungry. By that time it was large enough to put on a pan of milk. It would always let the little boy climb over it as it lay in the yard but if anyone else came near it jumped up and ran off, so I always believed that it knew that it and my son had nursed together.

Circuit Riders

Brother Byrd was a Methodist Circuit Rider who lived at Stigler. He preached to people who didn't have

REDDING, RUTH.

INTERVIEW.

13273

6

schools nor churches. He came to our house and stayed a week and preached under an arbor that all the neighbor men built. The seats were just logs and the only music was our singing. Brother Byrd never expected any pay and didn't get any though we all enjoyed his meetings. Both the Indians and white people attended these services.

The Indians had a little shanty church and their own preachers. We attended quite often for there was always an interpreter who would tell us white people what the preacher said. The Indians had their own songs that were different from ours. Our songs were the same as we have now and the preacher led the singing and it was good singing too.

Picnics and Barbecues.

There were worlds of cattle and when we all decided to get together for a good time we either had a picnic or barbecue and these affairs were better than later ones, at least I have never attended any nicer ones since.

We had one barbecue at Briartown in May and the weather was so cold that we had to have a big log-heap

REDDING, RUTH.

INTERVIEW.

13273

7

fire. The men did all of the barbecuing and the women cooked everything that they could think of at home and carried the food there in baskets. There were all kinds of pies, cakes, potato salad, pickles, etc.

The table was made of planks so that it was almost a square; the end was open so that the women could go inside while the men sit on the outside and the table was loaded down. There were sack races, ball games, anything that was lively and lots of fun was played. There were some barbecues held up on a mountain above Porum. The mountain was called High Early because that was the name of the Indian who lived there. That was a religious picnic and barbecue so there was lots of preaching and singing but I believe everyone had as good a time as they did at the barbecues that were held just for fun.

Newspaper

Porum started when the Midland Valley Railroad went from Fort Smith to Stigler and Muskogee. The first newspaper that I knew about in this country was started at Porum. I don't know who put it in at first but it was later owned by a young lawyer named Miles Price. The

REDDING, RUTH.

INTERVIEW.

13273

8

paper was printed by hand, that is the machine was operated by hand and the papers were folded by hand. When my son was fourteen years old he worked for Miles Price folding papers.

Salt Well

A well for drinking water was dug on a farm a half mile north of Porum. The water was so salty that it couldn't be used about the house. All the stock loved it so that it was kept for them.

Sulphur Well

About the same time another sulphur well was dug eight miles northwest of Porum on another farm. The water in that well tasted like rotten eggs smell. At first we couldn't drink it at all but after a while we got used to it and were as healthy as pigs. We never did need doctors but kept a few medicines to use when necessary, which was seldom.

Schools

We never lived near a school until after Statehood but I know there were some schools in little huts and brush arbors. They had school in the huts in bad

REDDING, RUTH.

INTERVIEW.

13273

9

weather but it was so dark in there that it was held under the arbors whenever the weather permitted. I imagine there were better schools in the towns but I never saw them.

Opening of the Cherokee Strip

My brother, John Crittenden, went to the Run. He was young and wanted to see what was going on but he wasn't interested in the land. I knew lots of people who did get land and plowed and planted their crops. They said that the wind just blew the crops right out of the ground, and blew the land away. Some of them stayed until they could sell the land but others just left it and came back to the country they were used to, down along the Arkansas River in the Cherokee Nation.