

REDLINGSBAFER, IDA RIDENOUR. INTERVIEW 9547

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Industrial and Labor Project for Oklahoma

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REDLINGSHAFFER, IDA RIDENOUR. INTERVIEW. #9547.

Field Worker's name Elizabeth L. Duncan,

This report made on (date) December 13, 1937

1. Name Ida Ridenour Redlingshafer,

2. Post Office Address Salt Fork, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 26 Year 1882.

5. Place of birth Leasburg, Indiana

6. Name of father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of mother _____ Place of birth _____

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 Ten.

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Elizabeth L. Duncan,
Journalist.
December 13, 1937.

Interview with Ida Ridenour Redlingshafer,
Salt Fork, Oklahoma.

On November 26, 1862, in Leesburg, Indiana, I was born. I was one of a family of fourteen children and my father was a wagon and carriage maker. When two years of age I moved with my parents to Bourbon, Indiana, just ninety-five miles east of Chicago. There I grew to womanhood and was married at the age of twenty. When twenty-eight years old I, with my husband and three children, started to the West knowing that the Cherokee Outlet, or Strip, joining Kansas on the south, would soon be opened for settlement.

We settled on eighty acres of rented land seven miles west of Arkansas City, Kansas, and three miles north of the Oklahoma line.

We resided in southern Kansas for three years and then the long looked for day came on the 16th day of September, 1893. At twelve o'clock noon the signal was given and the race was on.

There was a party of four who made the race together, consisting of my husband, my brother from Indiana and two

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very dear friends from Kansas. Knowing the race would be attended with much danger to the men and horses, I felt I did not have enough nerve to witness it. I had a neighbor who had more nerve than I possessed and she persuaded me to drive three miles to the Oklahoma line and both look and listen.

Neither my husband nor my brother was successful in securing a claim. On the morning of the 17th of September my friend and I decided we would drive as far as we could and get back the same day to see what the strip looked like after the run. We drove a team of mules to a wagon and took with us a keg and a barrel of water and a wash boiler full of bread and plenty of butter. We handed out bread and a drink of water to many disappointed men who were walking back to the state line, leading their horses, which were too near dead to carry their riders. We saw many horses lying dead on the prairie, having been ridden beyond their endurance. The weather was extremely hot and dry and many a man smiled

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when we gave him a drink of water and a slice of bread and butter.

Having failed in staking a claim in the race, in the February following we found a man whose wife refused to go out on the frontier with him. This man and his wife had starved out in western Kansas and she did not want to try it again, so we bought his relinquishment on a claim which was the northeast quarter of Section 9, Township 24 North, Range 3 West, Garfield County.

We filed on it on the 23rd day of February and on March 23rd, 1894, we had finished our journey about five o'clock in the evening of the third day. There we were in our little two-room house made of boards and on one hundred sixty acres of land. This was our first home.

The 21st day of March, 1894, was the first day of our journey. The mud was so deep in Kansas that we traveled only fifteen miles the first day. We went into camp on the banks of Shoofly Creek, near Hurdwell, Kansas. A bitter cold wind was blowing from the north. We made a

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sort of windbreak with canvas wagon covers and our bed consisted of a few horse blankets and bed comforts spread on the frozen ground. The canvas windbreak extended along only the north and west, while the south side and east end remained open. We set a large cook-stove in the east end of our canvas house and burned two bushels of coal, hoping to get some heat from that source. A large wash pan of water was left standing nearby, full of water, and it froze a solid cake of ice.

There were eight of us to crowd into our scanty quarters. All slept with their clothes and wraps on. I said slept. No one slept. In the morning we shivered while we ate a cold breakfast. Our horses shook with cold, too.

We started as early as possible on our second day. We had dry roads when we got into Oklahoma. Traveling went well until we came to the Arkansas River. As there were no bridges, we had to ford the stream. We had five

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wagons heavily loaded. Two wagons hung up in the middle of the river.

We hired a man, living near, to help pull the wagons out. Somehow he lost his sweet temper and began saying something backward. It may have been his Sunday School lesson, or the Lord's prayer, but it did not sound like either to me. When we got out of the river we paid him his charge and thanked him very kindly and went on our way.

That night, which was our second night out, a dear little woman who was staying alone with three small children while her husband was up in Kansas trying to get food for his family, let me and our three children and my sister, who was with us, sleep in her house. They had a claim on Deer Creek and plenty of wood. So we were made comfortable for the night; our men slept by a camp-fire down in the bed of Deer Creek.

The next day was our third and last day out. We arrived at our claim about five o'clock in the evening.

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The first day on our homestead was Easter Sunday. I had taken a thirty-dozen case of eggs with us. We invited Mr. and Mrs. Henry Clay and family to spend the Easter Sunday with us.

We took a hundred large Plymouth Rock hens with us. They soon began to die. We lost all of them, and when our thirty dozen eggs were gone we had no more for a year and a half.

This was our first experience in frontier life.

My husband immediately started to break sod, planting corn and kaffir corn. In all he managed to get about twenty acres planted. The summer was very dry. However, the corn made roughness with which to feed our four horses and two cows through the winter of '94. In the same fall Mr. Redlingshafer sowed the twenty acres to wheat and it came up nicely. There came an early freeze and the ground being new and full of grass roots, it completely killed the wheat.

So we again held the empty sack for our second experience.

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My husband kept on breaking sod and disking his ground and in '95 he sowed forty acres of wheat and planted thirty acres of Indian corn. The corn was a very even stand and he finished cultivating it at noon on the 28th day of May. The wheat was ripe and ready to harvest, when at six o'clock on the evening of May 28th a hail storm swept across the country and pounded our corn, wheat and garden into the earth. There was not enough left to feed a chicken once. At that time we had eighteen head of hogs, no money, no feed. Mr. Joe Knoffloch bought the hogs, paying us \$19.00 for the whole bunch.

This was our third experience.

We were facing winter with no money and no source from which to obtain any. No hogs for meat, no chickens, no grain and five stomachs to fill.

Mr. Norman Osburn was in the wake of the hailstorm, too. So he and my husband went up to Kansas and borrowed a fanning mill and with a team and wagon drove around

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over the country, getting permission of the farmers to go in and gather up the wheat that was left around the newly threshed stacks. By three weeks hard work in the heat, dust and dirt, they succeeded in each getting six hundred pounds of flour and selling some which was not fit for flour to the feed stores for cash, which made \$3.00 for each man.

My mother, whose home was in Indiana, was visiting me at the time the hailstorm came along. She knew the elephants had stepped on our pocket-book long before this, so when she returned to Indiana she sent us one hundred fifty pounds of genuine buck wheat flour and a sack of dried apples. She and my brother sent us two boxes of clothing. another brother sent us three gallons of genuine maple syrup.

This was an experience of a different color.

It is said that necessity is the mother of invention. At least it proved to be in the early days of Oklahoma. We could raise wonderful watermelons. So

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quite a few women would extract the juice from the red portion of the melons and boil it down to a fine syrup. We could raise sorghum cane very successfully; also, we grew poor man's apples. We would take sorghum cane to Mr. Snavelly's cane mill and get sorghum molasses made, giving him a certain toll for the making. We then could use sorghum molasses instead of sugar and make poor man's apple preserves.

Another food which we would prepare was to cook kaffir corn all day and eat it with sugar and cream. We liked it equally as well as pearl barley.

These are a few of our experiences and also experiments connected with our frontier life in northern Oklahoma. It was not all joy, nor was it all sorrow.

In 1897 we raised the best wheat crop it has ever been our good fortune to produce. We sold it for from 90¢ to \$1.25 per bushel. We then began to improve our farm and built up a home to be proud of. Our neighbors prospered also. The community no longer held school

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and Sunday School in sod structures, or in barns, or under the trees on a dry creek, but we would meet in real houses, built of genuine wooden boards.

I shall never forget the box suppers, pie suppers, parties, Sunday School, and preaching services it was our good fortune to enjoy. If I could go back and live any period of my life over again, it would be my pioneer days in Oklahoma.