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AHRENS, EDNA

INTERVIEW

19287

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

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INTERVIEW.

9287.

Field Worker's name Amelia F. Harris.

This report made on (date) November 23, 1937. 1937

1. Name Edna Helm Ahrens.

2. Post Office Address Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 1500 South Walker.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 26 Year 1866.

5. Place of birth Logan County, Kentucky.

6. Name of Father A. F. Helm. Place of birth Virginia.

Other information about father Dead.

7. Name of Mother Elizabeth Ann Helm. Place of birth Nashville,
Tennessee.

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 this form. Number of sheets attached 5.

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Amelia F. Harris,
Journalist,
Nov. 23, 1937.

An Interview With Edna Helm Ahrens,
1500 South Walker, Oklahoma City.
Her husband filed on a claim near
Kingfisher, April 22, 1889.

I came from Logan County, Kentucky, April 21, 1889, especially to make a run for a homestead. I had read so much about the run that I expected the country to be like a garden of Eden and I thought that all I would have to do would be to come and get my land. I was all "pepped" up over the idea, never dreaming that you had to provide your own way to make the run. I stepped briskly off the train, gathering up my bags. I started down the road looking for a good hotel, rooming house or any place that would furnish a roof over my head, but each place I went to was filled to overflowing. I was very tired from walking so much and my grips were heavy, too, so I made up my mind to stop at the first shady spot I saw if I had to sit on the ground.

Luck was with me for I hadn't gone far until I saw a small wooden box under a tree. I hastened to it and there I parked and I had not been there long until a man (Martin

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Ahrens) walked up and said, "Lady, can I help you in any way?" I said, "Yes, tell me where I can find some place to stay". He said, "Are you alone?" and I said, "Yes, I came to file a claim but from the crowded condition of every thing I am afraid a lone woman has very little chance". Mr. Ahrens said that he was a widower and needed a housekeeper and that he was going to try for a homestead, too, and asked me if he was successful would I marry him and I said, "Yes".

He then took me over to some of his friends, who were camped by the roadside where I was made welcome and the next day Mr. Ahrens was successful in filing on a homestead near Kingfisher and returned for me and we were married by a justice of the peace and started for our claim, in a covered wagon in which were a few necessities for immediate housekeeping.

Mr. Ahrens had three children; two boys aged eleven and thirteen and a little girl of nine. We reached the claim about dark, pitched a tent and prepared our beds, all tired out.

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Mr. Ahrens was a contractor by trade and as soon as he could get the lumber he built for us a two roomed box house; we had to haul water from a small spring branch on our farm but we fared fine. The first thing we did was to plow up a big garden and the children and I planted and grew a good garden and there was plenty of wild game and the boys soon learned to be good shots and kept the table well filled and before our garden vegetables were large enough to eat, I would gather wild onions, sour dock and lamb's quarters or wild greens and we all worked hard. Mr. Ahrens built houses for all the neighbors some paid him in money and others paid him in work on our farm and everything we made went towards improving our farm. We lived on the farm until 1906 and sold it for \$20,000.00 and bought a farm and a house in Norman where the children could have better schools; we had been sending them to the neighborhood schools which were three miles from our farm.

We moved on our new farm two and a half miles south-east of Norman and lived here for six years until our home burned down one day while we were in Oklahoma City, shopping. We then sold this farm and bought a corner lot on Third and

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Harvey Streets in Norman where the Federal Bank is at the present day. We paid \$3,000.00 for the lot and in 1912 sold it for \$20,000.00. Mr. Whit M. Grant, a very wealthy man filed a homestead on the east side of Walker

beginning with Chickasaw street and taking in the Canadian River on the south; Mr. Grant had this hundred and sixty acres platted into town lots and built a fine home and everyone thought the best residences in Norman would be on the south side. We purchased a corner lot at 1500 South Walker and here I have lived for thirty years.

On October 16, 1923, the Canadian River went on a rampage and we had the worst flood in Oklahoma history. This flood was the result of excessive rains in the upper regions of the Canadian River and its tributaries and millions of dollars of damage was done. This flood completely washed Wheeler Park away and before all of the animals could be rescued the water washed the cages up in tree tops and it washed the Santa Fe track straight up the river. We stood on our porch and watched the seething water; it didn't overflow my yard but everybody within

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a half mile of the river was forced to leave his or her home and stay away until the water receded.. The first night we spent in the old Santa Fe depot and later we were placed in rooming houses and we had to have special permits to visit our homes and we had to have a permanent release to go home for good. I have copies of these flood permits. Here is a copy of one of them:

"To officers and National Guardsmen please pass
bearer through line by order of Ray Frazier.

Chief of Police".

National Guardsmen were stationed on both sides of the South Canadian River to keep venturesome people away from dangerous places near his home on this river.