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BALLARD, THOMAS (MRS.)

INTERVIEW

#12003

366

LEGEND & STORY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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BALLARD, THOMAS (MRS.)

INTERVIEW.

12003

Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns

This report made on (date) October 29, 1937

1. This legend was secured from (name) Mrs. Thomas Ballard

Address 306 A - NE Miami, Oklahoma.

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe of Cherokee Blood

2. Origin and history of legend or story \_\_\_\_\_

From Memory.

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 11

HOME IN MISSOURI

Those who had come ahead had not reached the Indian Territory but had settled on a large tract of land near Springfield, Missouri. They had sort of a plantation. Among these I remember were the Hannan and Blackwell families. He came on our next journey to the home of his friends and they persuaded him to stop there where he remained some years and then decided to come on to the Indian Territory, so again he loaded his family and goods into covered wagons and driving his stock, headed southward. He left my older sister and me with our friends to attend school. We remained there two years and then we joined the family here, coming by train to Prairie City, now Ogeechee. I was twelve years old.

LIFE IN THE INDIAN TERRITORY.

After father reached here he leased a place from Frank Lamar, south of the present site of Fairland at the Mud Springs. Here we had a one-room log house and it was on the prairie surrounded by Fox

Grass higher than my head. We had always lived in the timber and did not like the prairie. The old Cooley place was the only house closer than Prairie City. Downingville, now Vinita, was our closest store in that direction. We had only two teams and with so much work to be done it was not an easy matter to spare the horses, so we only went there after supplies. The trip would take all day and could be made in a day by starting early. We had no roads then, but took a direction and followed the nearest trail going that way. When it became too bad, or the mud too deep, we found a better way around and went on.

We had no churches in those days and our first Sunday school was at the Ballard Schoolhouse after it was established; not the present building, as the old one has been replaced by a larger, better building.

The water at Mid Springs was not muddy, but the ground around it was muddy and soft, a kind of marsh. The cattle and other animals coming there to drink helped to make it muddy.

This was on the Mayesville Road to the Military

Road and here, especially in the Fall, great trains of covered wagons, sometimes twenty-five in a bunch, all loaded with fruit, would stop and camp for the night. We children enjoyed this season for after their camp was made and their supper over and their stock taken care of, the people would gather around the great open camp fire and talk, visit with each other until late. The neighbors did not live close enough to visit often and then there were so many wild animals that we were not allowed to leave the house to go any distance and could not play outside after dark.

#### GAMES

In those days there were lots of deer. They would sleep in the shumacs not far from the house. In the early morning before they were up, Father would slip up that way and hide himself and wait for them to awake and start away. He was always able to kill one.

Wild turkeys were plentiful too, as were prairie chickens and pigeons, though we never thought of them as food. The coyotes came up to the house at night and would

howl around the house and other buildings and for this reason our chickens and all of our horses and cows and sheep had to be fastened up securely at night. Then, too, at night we could hear the hoot owl.

We lived here about four years, then moved to the Old Clause place at the ferry of that name in the timber, and not far from Morse Creek.

From there we moved to the Landrum Place. We had timber on two sides and a big grove of shumac not far from the house.

We had a two-room house with a side room and a porch with a dirt floor. This was on the old Military Road and though the stage had been discontinued with the coming of the M.K.&T. Railroad, there was still much travel. The people going south seemed to travel more together. Then, too, great herds of cattle were driven northward along the trail by the owners and cowboys. Large droves of hogs were driven along this trail but they did not move so rapidly.

Most of the Texas cattle were driven along the trails west of where we lived and most of what passed our way came from Arkansas and nearby. We did not put our cattle in a fenced pasture but each owner had his own brand and after the cattle were branded they were turned out to graze and usually one of the family looked after them during the day and sometimes put bells on them which made it easier to keep track of them.

We fenced our fields. When father came here all was prairie and he had to break the sod with a sod plow. The first year he did not have a very large acreage but each year added to what he had the year before, making the rails and fencing the new field during the winter months.

I have carded many a pile of fluffy cotton. During the Spring and Summer months we had our garden, poultry to raise, turkey nests to hunt, and helped to plant the corn. I have hoed corn and pulled weeds.

Frank Lazar, who was considered a model in our neighborhood, went with some other men from here to



Saint Louis and was killed on the trip. We had no law protection here in this country and the men of families had to stand together and take things in their own hands. We were in a rather secluded part of the country and the men from the neighboring states did not come this far when they made raids into the Territory, neither did the desperadoes that were in the western part of the state come this far east. So it was a surprise to me that a man would be killed in a country that I had been taught had law-enforcing officers to look after things.

The old Lamar home had been a triple log house but it was destroyed by a storm, and a frame house was built in its place.

The old Duncan place was often spoken of as the "Half Way House". Many people would stay over night there. When sister and I first came, there were no schools and later when we could go to school we were so large that pride kept us from school, although Father wanted to send us to Tahlequah. The Ballard School was five miles from us.

AMUSEMENTS.

Before the day of Sunday School and later Church in the school-houses, we had "Singings" at the neighbors' houses. rather would take the family in the wagon. The men pitched horseshoes and later we played croquet.

I attended my first dance when I was sixteen years old. Father took us and it was at the old Kelley farm near the McLaughlin Place. It was a square dance and all those who went danced; the old white-headed people as well as the young people. We had violin music called fiddling and someone "called" as the people danced. There were people there from as far away as Vinita and Southwest City, Missouri.

At the larger dances, the people who gave them would serve supper, and sometimes the ladies would be several days cooking and getting ready as they cooked everything that they had, in fact, just a general supper including both pie and cake.

MARRIAGE

About forty years ago I married Thomas Ballard, a Cherokee, whose home was just west of Bernice and near the Ballard Cemetery, but who had been born on Whitewater. He worked for a time for Mr. Kelley and I first met him at a dance.

We had three children Jesse, Billie Alta, and Lula.

We went to live at Echo, where for a number of years, J. S. Thompson and my husband had a general store, including shelf goods and hardware. They also bought cattle and hogs.

Then my husband bought the interest of Thompson and moved the store to Bluejacket, where we stayed a year, but because of the bad water(alkali) which disagreed with me, we left there going to Afton where we remained ten years and where my husband ran the Hardware Store of Crowell and Blevens. From there we moved to Grove where my husband had charge of the Hardware Store for Mr. Daugherty for three years. After that he purchased a grocery

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store and operated it until he retired from active business. From Grove we moved to Miami where my husband passed away about two years ago.

Mr. Ballard was a member of the Cherokee Council and I know that sometimes he has disagreed with some of them but when he was convinced that he was right, it was impossible to change his mind, and I have known of some of them trying to do so.

ALLOTMENT

Not having been a farmer when it came time to take our allotments, we did not have any land so we bought the claim of Jerry Hubbard, the old Friends Missionary and preacher who had come to northeastern Indian Territory many years ago and who had built a nice nine-room house west of Afton. He had arranged the house so that the upper story was a large hall and here he held meetings. Also he had put out a large orchard and built other good buildings but he was denied a headright when allotment came.

From the Landrum place Father had taken a claim

now known as the old McAfrey place, and had improved it, including a large orchard; but he did not attempt to prove his headright. He sold the improvements to McAfrey and as his wife was dead went to live near his son at Kelso. Here Father built a small two-  
there  
room house and continued to live until his death.