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BRACE, MATTIE J.

INTERVIEW

#8604

166

BRACE, MATTIE J.

**INTERVIEW
BIOGRAPHY FORM**

8604

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Ida B. Lankford

This report made on (date) September 23 1937

1. Name Mattie J. Brace

2. Post Office Address Cordell, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) R. R. #4

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 16 Year 1871

5. Place of birth Mississippi

6. Name of Father Edwin Quisenberry Place of birth Miss.

Other information about father Farmer

7. Name of Mother Roda Borden Place of birth Georgia

Other information about mother Housekeeper

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 6

Ida B. Lankford
Interviewer
September 23, 1937

Interview with
Mattie J. Brace
Cordell, Oklahoma.

We came here from the Chickasaw Nation, April 10th the year of the opening in 1889; my father filed on land on Big Elk; he built us a dugout with a roof covered with willows and dirt and when it rained the dirt would pour through on the floor.

We would go to Post and have our kaffir corn ground to make our corn bread out of. We had our milk and butter and our meat was of old poor beef. I have cooked the beef so long until it has made me sick.

In the spring we would gather lambsquarters and season them with butter, no salt nor other seasoning did we have in our home. We seasoned everything with butter.

We did not have very many clothes; if I got one dress, a bonnet and a pair of shoes a year I was doing well.

We would cover our wagons in the fall and go to the Chickasaw Nation and gather cotton for fifty cents a hundred pounds and we picked it; we did not pull it, and that is the

- 2 -

way we got by through the winter. When we got back home I would take the old sacks and make my children's winter clothes, getting walnut bark down on the creek to use in dying them.

Then after I had their clothes made I would make their shoes out of the left overs of the sacks. Then the children would be ready for school. They went to school on Old Elk trail in a dug-out.

We lived in the sand hills and every morning we could see the deer, antelope, wild turkey, geese and prairie chickens coming over the hills. It was really a beautiful sight.

We would all go together to church from ten to fifteen miles in our wagons and have good times and everyone would enjoy the sermons.

If anyone was taken sick, we had to doctor the patient in the best way possible. We would gather different herbs and make our own medicine and when a person got very sick we would go for miles to help wait on the patient.

If a person died, we would wrap the body in something, put it in a big wagon and go just as slowly as the

- 3 -

horses would go and take the body of the dead person to the burying grounds.

We did not have any plows but one old sod walking plow and my father would walk and plow and have me to drop his corn by hand, but we raised good crops.

All we would see for weeks would be groups of cowboys with thousands of head of cattle. In the spring I have cooked for thirty cowboys for eight weeks at a time; I would have sour dough bread, poor beef and syrup and they would eat it and say it was good.

I have had lots of hard times but I am proud of Washita County, which I helped to build.

Sometimes I was afraid of the Indians; they would come and ask for something to eat, they would say, "Heap hungry," and then say, "We won't hurt white woman," they all wore blankets and had long hair.

We used to dry meat, it was beef and the Indians always wanted the beef.

When we learned to raise gardens here, we raised lots of things, but we didn't have cans or jars to put our stuff in so we had to dry it. We would dry our

- 4 -

pumpkins and green beans, would make barrels of kraut, and salt our cucumbers down in barrels for winter pickles. Sometimes when we cooked our beans we didn't have any seasoning to put in them. With our garden things we lived through the winter just fine excepting we didn't have money to buy sugar and coffee.

When we first came here I would go into the dug-out and sometimes there would be two or three rattlesnakes on the floor and sometimes there would be some on the bed.

My father would always take a stick or something to the field to kill the snakes with. I well remember one morning I ran out of the dug-out barefooted and stepped on a large rattlesnake with sixteen rattlers, it scared me but I killed the snake.

Our bed stands were made of cotton wood poles and lumber and our table was also made of the same lumber. Our stove was a fire place built in the back of the dug-out and we did our cooking on the fireplace with an old time iron dinner pot and an old time skillet and lid.

- 5 -

I remember very well the first house I ever saw;
it was made of sod and I watched the men build it, they
would plow up the sod, put up the poles and pile sod on
top of sod until they made the sides then they would
cover it with planks. These sod houses were very warm.