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

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Field Worker's name Alene D. McDowellThis report made on (date) July 12, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Elsie Okerson-Brock
2. Post Office Address 110 S. Seminole, Bartlesville, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) 110 S. Seminole, Bartlesville
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July 7 Day 7 Year 1888
5. Place of birth Franklin County, Kansas

6. Name of Father Albert Okerson Place of birth IllinoisOther information about father died at the age of 75 years, buried at Avant, Okla.7. Name of Mother Rachel Hopkins-Okerson Place of birth IowaOther information about mother died at the age of 44 years, buried at Bartlesville, Okla.

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 7.

BROCK, ELSIE (MRS.) INTERVIEW
Elsie D. McDowell
Research Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149
July 12, 1937

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Interview with
Mrs. Elsie Brock
110 S. Seminole
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

Mrs. Elsie Okerson-Brock was born in Franklin County, Kansas, July 7, 1888.

Father - Albert Okerson was born in Illinois and is buried in a cemetery near Avant, Oklahoma. He died at the age of 75 years.

Mother - Rachel Hopkins-^{Okerson}~~Brock~~ was born in Iowa and died at the age of 44 years and is buried in the White Rose Cemetery at Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

I removed from Kansas to the Indian Territory with my parents in 1890, when I was two years old. We came here in a covered wagon and settled two miles east of what is now Sperry, located north of Tulsa, on the Skybuck place.

Our home was a one room log cabin; our fuel was wood; and our lights were kerosene lamps. My father worked for Mr. Skybuck, an Indian. In the winter he worked in the timber, cutting wood and in the summer he helped on the farm. Our nearest trading post was Tulsa. At that time there was a general store, where the post office was also located, and a blacksmith in Tulsa.

Wild game was plentiful in those days, and I have seen a flock of wild turkey light in our yard so thick that the yard could not be seen. They would rest a few minutes and fly away.

Wild animals also played their part in the unsettled country. My father and uncle, Ed Okerson, were working about twenty miles from home one winter. They would come home for the week end and always "hiked". One night they were coming home when they discovered something following them. They soon heard a scream and knew a panther was trailing them. They built a fire, for a panther will not come near a fire, however, it came close enough for them to see its eyes. Before they extinguished the fire they each lighted a dry stick or limb to use as a torch as they traveled. When they stopped to rest they built another fire. It took them all night to make the trip and the panther followed them home.

There were few doctors in the Indian Territory and none near us. We used home remedies and medicines we learned from the Indians. All of our family had the typhoid fever, except my father, one year. At

that time it was considered almost incurable..

My grandmother, who was a good nurse, came from Kansas to care for us. We did not have a doctor. My brother, Elmer, lingered for six months and died, and another brother, Ernest, who now lives in Nowata County is a cripple from the fever. His legs are paralyzed.

There were many snakes here. One day when I was about four years old, I was playing in the yard and a rattle snake about four feet long was coiled in a tight knot near me. It had me charmed until I could not move. My brother heard me laughing and decided to see what was attracting me, when he discovered the snake. He grabbed me and escaped the fangs of the poisonous reptile, just as it was ready to strike.

When I was five years old my parents removed to Bartlesville and settled on the Jim Day place, near the old Day ford, where the old swinging bridge crossed the Caney river, south of town. This was a toll bridge operated by Bill Shinn and it cost 25 cents for a team and wagon to cross.

We attended the old Delaware Baptist church, located

about two miles south of our home. One Sunday Reverend Goodwin, a Baptist minister preached; the next Sunday Uncle Joe Sykes, a Methodist preacher held services. The preaching services in those days lasted three or four hours.

Mr. Day was a full-blood Delaware Indian, Their home was only a short distance South of us. He was a hard drinker and when he would return from town he was always drunk. He would pass our house, riding his horse at full speed and yelling at the top of his lungs. When he arrived home we would hear him shooting up the place, but he never injured any of the family.

My aunt cared for Mrs. Day when one of her children was born, and when she was leaving she told Mrs. Day she would be over to do her laundry the next morning. The next day my uncle passed the Day place on his road to town, and stopped at my aunt's home. She told him about the new arrival and that she was going to the Day home and do the laundry that morning. He laughed and told her it was not necessary for when he passed, Mrs. Day was doing the laundry.

Mrs. Day invited us to her home to a watermelon

feast one evening. The melons were cut in halves, placed on the ground in a circle where the squaws would sit and dig the melon out with their fingers. My mother told them she did not care for melon. Mrs. Day was reared among the white people and did not eat like the others.

Julia Gilstrap-Whiteturkey, who later married Earnest Lewis and is now Mrs. Emmett Dalton was our neighbor and her daughter, Jennie Gilstrap, was my playmate.

When I was about ten years old my parents moved to the Billy Johnstone place, near where the Seventh street bridge on United States Highway #75 is now located. My brother Arthur fished every night and I usually went with him. One night he and my cousin, Fred Hopkins went to the riffles, "gigging." They built a bon fire, for light, for we did not have flash lights then. They were gone two or three hours and returned with the biggest cat fish I had ever seen. My brother was about 19 years old and was about five feet, eleven inches tall, and when he stood with the fish hanging from his shoulder, its tail drag on

the ground. I was terribly disappointed because I did not help catch it. We gave fish to the entire neighborhood. It was strong tasting and was not good.

We bought our supplies at Bartlesville at the Johnstone-Keeler general merchandise store. There was always a crowd of blanket Osages there. My mother often remarked, all the material we could buy was red calico.

My father worked for Billy Johnstone. He did labor of all kinds, including ranch work. Mr. Johnstone shipped cattle and logs from Caney, Kansas, and they used to drive the hogs from Bartlesville to Caney on foot.

My father also operated the ferry boat located northwest of the Cherokee avenue bridge, over Caney river, for Mr. Johnstone for four years. He received \$4.00 per day for this and was operating the ferry when the bridge was built in about 1902. They charged 25 cents for a team and wagon to cross.

I received my early education in a two room, frame school building, located on Fourth street and Delaware

avenue, this was then the extreme south part of town. Miss Blanche was my teacher.

The style clothing worn then was basque waists with mutton leg sleeves and full skirts that drag the ground. I have a brown serge dress that my aunt Mollie Woodroof wore, made with a tight fitting waist and full pleated skirt.

Stephenson Hopkins, who signed the Declaration of Independence, 161 years ago, was a brother of my great-great-grandfather. This dates back five generations.