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BUTLER, LAURA LOWE. INTERVIEW 15865

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

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Field Worker's name Hazel B. Green.

This report made on (date) April 11, 1938

1. Name Laura Lowe Butler.

2. Post Office Address Antlers, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

5. Place of birth _____

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

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 2

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Hazel B. Greene.
Journalist,
April 11, 1938.

An Interview with Laura Lowe Butler.
Antlers, Oklahoma.

I was born January, 1867, at De Queen, Arkansas. My father, Thomas Lowe, was born in Arkansas, as was my mother, Martha Chilcoat Lowe.

I was sixteen when my family, in a covered wagon, of course, trekked from DeQueen, Arkansas, to Doaksville, Indian Territory, over the muddiest of roads. It must have been an unusually rainy spell, because my main remembrance of the trip is mud and rain. We literally camped in mud. It must have been in early Spring because Pa was a farmer and we were moving to a new location, for no special reason, just seeking greener pastures, I guess. Doaksville was a good sized town, with three stores, a post office and two doctors. There were a good many people in the little town and quite a "town" of negroes over across Tanyard branch north of town on Pine Ridge.

I remember we had a neighbor, a white man named Frank Ledbetter, who made frequent business trips away from home.

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and once when he had been to Caddo, upon his return to Docksville he was very ill with a strange malady and almost died. When he had been home a few days his baby took sick the same way and died the next day. My baby sister became ill and died next day and another man died. The first thing we knew they were sick on all sides, of the same disease. They would get sick and die next day. I was the first one to get better after my mother and father and a married sister and her husband had all taken it. I took it before they did and when they got it they turned me over to the tender mercies of a sorry old gal who lived there. She didn't care whether she cared for me or not and, contrary to the doctor's orders, gave me all of the cold water that I wanted to drink right out of the well. Then to keep me quiet, she poured paregoric to me; that and the cold water probably saved me for I got well quicker than anybody. The balance lay sick a long long time. And it served the negroes worse than it did the white people for when it struck them it killed them like flies.

If they had an epidemic of it at Caddo I never heard of it. Dr. Folsom lived over about the Fort I believe, and our

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main doctor in Doakville then was a young Doctor Waters from Arkansas. It looked like he had no heart to stay after his baby died of it. When it was at its peak of killing people, word was sent to Texas for doctors, and by the time they got over there the virulence of it seemed to have let up, owing to the slow way of sending messages and travel, too. When they got there they pronounced it an epidemic of Asiatic Cholera, which had nearly run out. I don't know how bad it would have been, had it been at its worst.

Mr. Hopkins was an intermarried white man, and when his wife and baby took it he sent for me, because she refused to take a dose of medicine from anyone but me. She was just about a full blood Choctaw. Those who were able to wait upon the sick, nearly ran themselves to death. I know once Mrs. Rosenthal sent for me, when she thought her baby, Jake, was dying. I was exhausted and knew nothing to do, but I went and gave him a hot bath and rubbed him a lot and she always declared that I saved his life.

One of the most pitiful cases was a poor woman who had hired a man to move her and her family to Arkansas from Atoka. They got to Doakville and it was raining. He said he just

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knew that streams would be up so they could not cross so he just dumped her and her family of small children right there in front of the little old stone jail. It was never used anyway so she and children sought shelter in it, and one of her little ones was among the first to take cholera and die.

It is possible there were epidemics of it elsewhere, but news got around so slowly that we never heard of it. But that was the most terrifying time I ever experienced.

Mr. Hoppins had the biggest store in town. Judge Tins had one in connection with his post office; a pretty good sized store, too. George Rosenthal's store was pretty good sized. I will never forget where he kept his money-in a little old leather bound trunk out in the hall of his residence. A man could have picked it up and carried it off on his horse. I always suspected that the reason he kept it there was to divert the suspicion of the hiding place, thinking that one would never look there.

They had dances around but I never went to any. We had lived there one year when William A. Butler came over from Arkansas and he and I were married by old Parson Keith who then

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lived east of Doaksville on the Wheelock road. Then we went to Arkansas and stayed until 1889, at which time we returned to Antlers to live.

Antlers was a fairly new town then, about a couple of years old. There was a cotton gin and grist mill across the street from my present home; the cotton press was horse power. We came along right out in front of my house when we came to Antlers. That is Highway No 71 now, then it was a rough road full of oak runners and rocks, and the grass swept the wagon tongues. There were some stores on up the hill, about four I think. "Dick" Locke's store and residence, I believe, were combined when I first came here. There were two blacksmith shops, two hotels, Colbert's and Berry's, a livery stable and then there was the sawmill commissary. There was no school except a little subscription school in somebody's home. The church was Nelson Chapel out at Colonel Nelson's place west of town, then there was the same section house up on the railroad that is there today. There was no bank, one had to take one's money to Fort Smith or Paris, Texas, or bury it in the back yard. Old Captain LeSeuer put in the first bank in the town.

The residences were scattered over the hills around and not very close together either; they were mostly quick-put-up affairs

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with cracks in the floor wide enough to sweep the trash and bread crumbs through, that the children would drop on the floor.

Hogs slept anywhere they wished, under stores, shops or homes, and the fleas would come up through the aforementioned cracks and bite us until we would have to get up and "turn" our night shirt and give it a shake and put it on right quick and brush the fleas off our feet and jump in bed, and try to sleep again with the crawling things getting a new start. I just thought I was rid of them. One could hardly walk the streets at night for the sleeping stock. Some of them were the milk stock of people there in town, some of it would be their teams, and some would just come up with the others and sleep there.

There was a world of game here. You'd just have to go up the railroad track and over the hill to see and kill all the deer you'd want, or turkey either.

Nights the wolves would come up around the edge of town and howl; perhaps they wanted to be near the dogs. There were plenty of them, too; and there was all kinds of small game all around, even close to town.

John Stallerd and a man by the name of Herman owned and

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operated a big walnut lumber mill at the mouth of Buzzard Creek on Red River. They made a specialty of sawing walnut logs into lumber. I used to see them drag in immense ones with big old yokes of oxen. They shipped the most of the lumber out by steamer. Then Stallard was killed by a thirteen-year-old boy whose name I don't just now recall; that was about 1884. Stallard was one of the husbands of the many-times-married Lila Delilah Ervin. I don't know how long the mill operated after his death.