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BARKER, LOREN (MRS.) INTERVIEW 12850

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

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Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns

This report made on (date) January 31 1938

1. This legend was secured from (name) Mrs. Loren Barker

Address 28 J-NE Miami, Oklahoma

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

If Indian, give tribe Cherokee

2. Origin and history of legend or story From memory  
and my parents

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

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Nannie Lee Burns,  
Investigator,  
January 31, 1938.

An Interview with Mrs. Loren Barker,  
28 J -NE Miami, Oklahoma.

My father, George Fields, a Cherokee, was the son of Zeke Fields, who after coming to this country from Tennessee settled on Cowskin Prairie near the timber.

My mother was Bettie Silversmith Fields, a Cherokee, the daughter of Aggie and John Silversmith. She was born and raised south and west of Grove and near Dodge.

I, Mary, one of the younger children, was born at the edge of the prairie where the timber and the prairie meet on May 3, 1893.

Early Life

My father lived in a two room log house at this same edge of the prairie. The logs were cut and the house was built as most of them were in those days. After a sufficient number of logs had been cut with the help of his folks and the neighbors they raised the logs and laid them in place and then after a clapboard roof had been put over the

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rafters, they chinked the spaces between the logs.

Settlers made their own floors by splitting logs and dressing the top sides and had home-made doors and were indeed fortunate to have even a small window as most of the houses had only wooden shutters for windows and these, of course, had to be kept closed in cold weather.

Most of the light in the house during the winter came from the fireplace and on the warmer days you would notice that the door was open. This was to let in both light and air, though the latter was not so badly needed.

We had the old crane and cooked on the fireplace though after I was large enough to know much about it we had a cook-stove but even then in the winter when we needed a fire for heat we often boiled our dinner in a large covered iron pot at the fireplace. Most, if not all of the furniture at first was home-made and we were proud when we began to get a few pieces of store-bought furniture.

Father was a big farmer for those days and raised mostly wheat and corn. This supplied the family with bread. The wheat was hauled over the state-line into Missouri and sold

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there at the railroad. All was not sold, however, for Father would keep enough for our flour; this was ground at the mill and usually hauled home and stored. Also enough seed wheat was kept to sow the coming fall. We could grind our corn meal at home and in this way we always had fresh meal. During the winter we made and ate much hominy. We also made our lye by storing the ashes in a hopper and then pouring water over this and letting the water seep through. In the spring we made our soap for home use, using this lye-water and the cracklings of the meat from which the lard had been melted. During the winter we soaked our corn in this same lye solution to take off the skin and to take the eye out of the corn. After the corn was soaked and skinned then came the many washings at the creek to take out the lye.

The barns and the sheds were built out of logs in much the same way, except that the cracks were not chinked and often the roof would be of straw put over framework of poles that served as rafters. The fences were

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worm fences and the rails were split and made by the menfolks during the winter. During the winter men would also go to the woods and cut and saw and split enough wood for cooking purposes during the summer. Also during the winter season new fields were cleared if they had timber or bushes over them and then they were fenced.

We did not have the big ploughs that you see on the farms now and often the corn rows would be laid out by a man with one horse to a single shovel plough and then some of the family would drop the corn and another one of us would cover the corn with a hoe. Besides the cornfields, there were the truck patches and the garden to get ready and to plant during the spring. Mother superintended the planting of this. Here Indian corn was planted, also a plentiful supply of beans, potatoes, pumpkins and later we added cabbages, tomatoes, beets, etc. For winter use, our beans were gathered and shelled and the dry beans put away. The pumpkin was cut in strips and rings and dried. Our potatoes and also the sweet potatoes,

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beets and cabbages were buried, first covered with a deep covering of wheat straw and dirt was thrown over this thickly enough to prevent the contents from freezing.

#### Meats

Wild game was plentiful and we could have fresh turkey, venison, rabbit and squirrel at anytime that we wanted it. When the cold weather came, they would kill a number of hogs that had ranged on the outside and had fattened on a little corn and much mast. This meat was salted, the fat was rendered and the grease poured into large jars to cool and harden which would be our year's supply of lard and some of the lean meat was ground and made into sausage. In the spring the hams, shoulders and middlings were hung up and a slow fire of hickory chips was built under it and in this way the meat was cured and then left for summer use. Then there was lots of fish and you could have fresh fish anytime that you cared to go after them.

#### The New House

The old log house with its red-wood clapboards burned



and then Father built at the same location another house of native lumber and this time we had more windows, chimneys and board floors.

My father stayed here during the Civil War; he was only a little boy and has often told us that then they had to make their bread of shorts and were lucky to always get that. Grandfather was a soldier under Stand Watie.

School Days

We were busy around the home during the summer but during the fall and winter we went to school. We attended the Butler School and walked three miles to school. We had to get up early in the short winter days and would start soon after daylight. As we went we would be joined by other children on their way to school. We carried our dinner in a big bucket and one of the older ones of the family carried that and we younger children with nothing to carry would run and play along the road, sometimes ahead of the older ones and sometimes we would get behind but then the older ones were watching us to see that we came on. We had to cross a creek on the road. Sometimes we could

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walk across on large rocks and sometimes when the creek was "up" the larger children would have to carry the smaller ones across and if it was too high to get over that way someone with a horse would put us all across. We went to school in all kinds of weather and did not mind it. Sometimes it would be snowing, sometimes raining and sometimes the sun would make us shed our coats. In the short winter days it would be dark when we would get home. We would not have to help with the chores and soon a warm supper was ready and we enjoyed it after a day at school. I went to the Eighth Grade in school here.

#### Amusements

In those days, we had Sunday School and Church at the schoolhouse until a church was built that they named the Sycamore Chapel. Then during the winter we had dances which all of the family attended and you would see all sizes of folks on the floor at the same time in the old square dance keeping time to the fiddle's music. We

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seldom went to town as Mother and the older ones did most of the buying for the family. Books to read were very scarce and we seldom saw a newspaper and when we did it would perhaps be several weeks old. We had singings, quiltings, apple peelings, pumpkin cuttings. We had no buggies and either walked or went horseback or in the wagon.

#### Marriage

When I was fifteen, I married Pearl Smith who was later killed, leaving me a family of two small boys and a girl. I continued to live near my old home for some time and then I decided with my small family I could do better in Miami, so moved here. But before this at a dance near Southwest City, I had met Loren Barker who lived in Missouri near Joplin, whom I married fourteen years ago last March and we have continued to live in Miami since that time. Loren Barker and I have three girls.