

GRAVES, SALLEY B.

INTERVIEW

#12090

244

GRAVES, SALLEY B.

INTERVIEW

12090

Interviewer, Faye Williams
November 9, 1937

Interview with Mrs. Salley B.
Graves, Wewoka,
Oklahoma, 1204
S. Hitchita

Born Waco,
Texas.

Parents Benjamin Franklin
Mitchell, Mississippi
Cyntha Bostick,
Tennessee

I came to Oklahoma Territory with my father in 1895,
two years after the Run.

We came in wagons and we stopped in Fort Sill. We had
never seen any Indians until we came here. We settled four
miles south of Elk City and our closest town then and near-
est railroad town was Weatherford, which was seventyfive
miles from Elk City.

Our house was a dugout, chinked with mud and chips,
dirt roof and floor, with no doors. It was a very common
thing to kill a snake in the house before going to bed.

We didn't have anything but a wagon and team.

One day a neighbor came over and asked Dad if he had
a cow. We didn't have, so the man said if Dad would fence

GRAVES, SALLEY B. INTERVIEW.

12090

-2-

a place he would pen a cow for us as he had more cows to milk than he needed at that time. He penned five cows for us to use.

Sometimes the cows would come up in the middle of the night and we girls would have to get out of bed and go milk the cows. We had to do this because they might be gone the next morning and we needed the milk.

In May we would put down enough butter to last all through the summer. We would pat it out in flat cakes and pack in a large jar and tie a cloth over the jar and put a heavy board on top to keep out the dirt. This butter would stay fresh all summer.

When we first came to Oklahoma Territory the cattlemen tried to discourage us by saying the land was no good for farming but we stayed there, anyway. We had good gardens and we saved our seeds to plant the following year.

We had a hard time for a few years after we came and sometimes my brothers would go down to the creek and chop logs for fifty cents a day. The second summer we were here my brothers went to Kansas to the harvest and Dad went to Cordell, leaving just us girls there. The only way we

-3-

had to go anywhere was on horseback and sometimes we could not catch our horses. We did most of our trading at a small store named "Crow." This was before Elk City was built.

There was no doctor in that section of the country when we first came there but after the railroad came through a doctor moved to Elk City, but the people doctored themselves in most cases and a doctor was not needed.

Dad was bitten on the finger by a rattlesnake one day and when he came to the house his hand and arm were swelling and I put his hand in some kerosene and we sent for a neighbor to come over. When he got there we laid Dad's finger on a board and split it open with a razor and let him hang his hand down for the blood to run out until his arm began to turn black; then we cut the cord and we were still afraid there was some poison left in the body, so we called the doctor. The doctor came and said that we had done the best thing that could be done and left some ammonia to wash his hand with and that was all he did.

Three years later they began talking about building a city there and laying the railroad. The Rock Island was going to be put through.

-4-

When Elk City first started it was a tent town; everything was in tents. But a few years later they got lumber from Weatherford and there were a few buildings in Elk City when the first railroad came through. One day we looked north and saw the men lay the ties and steel of the first railroad in this part of the country. Negroes did most of the work in putting down the railroad. I saw the first train come through. This railroad continued on from Elk City to Amarillo.

After the railroad was put through times began to get better. We had a well dug and we fenced the place. The boys had to go to Weatherford for the wire to fence the place.

When Elk City began to build up we girls went to town and got jobs in the hotel there. We were paid \$2.50 per week and we worked at this place for three years.

After we went back to the farm we had good gardens and we sold our vegetables to the hotels in Elk City.

The coyotes were bad about getting our chickens and turkeys and we had two dogs to keep them away from the place.

When we first moved to Elk City we had to go three miles to Ural to get our mail. But then in those days we didn't get much mail.

GRAVES, SALLEY B. INTERVIEW.

12090

-5-

After we had lived in this country about four years and father had proved up on his claim, we children filed on a claim in Ellis County. This claim was poor farming land and we had such a hard time proving up on Dad's claim that I never proved up on my claim.

There was a small school house about three miles from home where a few children went to school and sometimes there would be a preacher come in and we would have Church. Then sometimes we would have singing. But most of our gatherings were at parties and dances.

I married Newton Graves in Elk City, eleven years after I came to Oklahoma Territory. We bought a place eight miles south of Elk City. We lived there two years and sold the place, going to Missouri where we stayed nine months and then came back to Perry and bought another farm. By the time we came back the country was becoming settled. It was about a mile to our closest neighbor.

Mr. Graves died in October, 1933, here in the house where I now live with my son.