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Zaidee B. Bland, Interviewer.  
September 16, 1937.

Interview with Mrs. Emma Virginia Hofman.  
Route 2, Headrick. Born January 21, 1861  
Father-James B. Rutherford  
Mother-Blanch Ann Slentz.

I was born in Wisconsin but at the age of two years  
~~mother and dad migrated to Montana with me, and the pio-~~  
neer adventure was breath to my nostrils.

I married early in life and the great ambition of my  
heart was to own land. Mr. Hofman was a good worker and  
~~could do a great many things well.~~ He carpentered and  
sheared sheep as well as farmed. We purchased a large  
wagon, put good bows and a sheet on it, loaded it with  
the necessary camp equipment and Mr. Hofman's carpenter  
tools; his shears ~~for shearing~~ for sheep shearing, then  
bought a light hack, and a couple of small ponies for me  
to drive. Mr. Hofman drove large mules to the wagon, and  
any place we might camp became home.

I knew William Jennings Bryan personally, Mr. Hofman  
having worked for him on more than one occasion.

We wandered south, usually renting a place and making  
a small crop while Mr. Hofman worked around and near where

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we were camped. Always I had my mind on Texas and free land for homesteading. We worked our way through Colorado shearing sheep, then through New Mexico and into Greer County, Texas.

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As we crossed the Red River a man stopped us, and wanted to rent us land. He had a good dug-out on the place and made an attractive proposition. Mr. Hofman said to me, "Get out of the hack and come and let's see the place he wants us to live in". I said, "No, I am not getting out of this hack until we come to a spot that we can file on, and we will dig our own hole and live in the ground; but I will not live in any one else's hole"

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The river was up and one of the men standing near said, "I'll drive the hack across, and you may ride in the wagon with your husband?" He reached for my lines and I said, "No, I have driven these horses from Nebraska and they know me and will pull me through, you may go in the wagon?" They drove in and stuck in the quicksand. I got

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tired of waiting and drove around them and came on across and wandered on north. I came to this very spot and made camp. Mr. Hofman came on hunting me and we stayed there and dug our hole. I would not sleep in the ground though, so I put up a bed down there and traded my bake even for a three legged wood/<sup>cook-</sup>stove and cooked and ate in the hole, but would never sleep in the ground. I had a two burner gasoline stove that I had used a lot in our wanderings, but could not get gasoline in the west so never could use it after coming out here.

They were just beginning to build Navajo and Mr. Hofman took his tools and wagon over and went to work at once. All lumber had to be hauled from Vernon and he helped build houses and hauled, or freighted from Vernon.

I stayed on the claim with my two little girls and let him go and work. I think he has helped build houses in every town in this southwest. He would usually stay home in the spring long enough to help plant a

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little crop, and then go away to the work he loved. The girls and I stayed here alone night after night while we were proving up. I have never had a mortgage on the land and Mr. Hofman built a room for me to sleep in long before we proved up on the land. Our hole in the ground never had a door. I hung a rag carpet over the door to keep out wind and dust.

The coyotes were so thick they would come right up to the hack and smell around; and the children were afraid to go to school for they would hardly get out of their way. The children would sometimes throw the coyotes food crumbs from their lunch baskets like you would a dog.

One followed one of the girls nearly to the house one afternoon and her father got his gun and went out and shot it. We tanned the hide and made a rug to put by her bed. I could go out and kill an antelope if we needed meat. There were abundant rabbits whose meat was as white as chicken, and of which we were very fond.

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We could twist one of them out of a hole in the ground , where they would burrow, anytime and since they were very destructive to fruit trees and gardens we often hunted them when we did not really need them for food. We had a bird dog named Jim. Everything that we would

~~kill we would dress and cook and offer it to Jim. If Jim ate, it we would; if he wouldn't, we wouldn't. He would eat anything I ever prepared to eat except possum.~~

I caught a possum in the hen coop, and dressed him. I ~~let him lay all night in salt water and the next morning~~ roasted him so nice and brown with sweet potatoes in the pan. It surely did look good to eat so I fixed Jim a plate of the possum, but Jim would not eat it, so neither did we. I never tried cooking another possum.

We always slept under the wagon if it was pleasant weather. One night the biggest coon I ever saw came nosing around. We got clubs and everything after him, and I finally got a shot at him, and killed him. His

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pelt made a pretty neck piece after we tanned it. I was here all alone one afternoon when a badger came galloping up to help himself to a fowl. I hit him at the base of the head with a club, and laid him out. When the folks got home I had his hide already stretched on a board to dry, as a badger makes a pretty back for a chair.

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One morning we were sitting at the table rather late when we heard hounds. We all came up to see what it was all about. It looked like a bunch of boys and dogs with a coyote cornered. Mr. Hofman said, "I'll get my gun and go help." It turned out to be a bear. Mr. Hofman shot it and all the neighbors had bear meat to eat, for it was rare that a bear was seen in this country. One of the men made a rug from the pelt.

#### Food.

We always had a lot to eat for we planted an orchard early. All vegetables grew well for me, and I canned and

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dried all we ever needed and always had some to spare. Potatoes were always kept from one season to the next in the kiln in the ground as was cabbage, collards, turnips and other roots that were good to eat. We always cured our own meat and rendered our own lard and made all the soap we would need the whole year, in April.

My girls both went to school at Navajo and we have several medals for elocution and good spelling and writing.

The Indian trail went right by our door and I have often fed the Indians but never learned to talk to them, and was never afraid of them.

Since the Indians are not here to eat the terrapins they are more than a nuisance. I have not been able to have a cantaloupe in several years for they eat them off the vine as soon as they come on. They are very destructive to a garden by eating peas, cucumbers, tomatoes, beans, and in fact most everything. Mr. Hofman used to go out every morning early with a tow sack and gather



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them up and bring them to the house and dump them into the cement tank, where the horses drank, and drown them for that is about the only way you can get rid of them.

~~One day we caught one and cut an "H" on his back and~~  
put him in the buggy and took him two or three miles west on our way to town to see if he would come back home. In two days we found him in the garden again.

I feel as if I did more to prove up on our land than Mr. Hofman did, for I have lived right here all these years. I want to be home every night, and I have always taught my girls they could have their friends and chums and visit in the day time but home they must be at night. I have never been afraid to be alone and am not now; but like to have some of my grandchildren stay with me now that Mr. Hofman is dead. I shall never leave this place, for it is mine.