

HALLUM, MOLLIE.

INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name Zaidee E. BlandThis report made on (date) August 11, 19371. Name Mollie Hallum2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) 706 East Walnut Street4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 19, Year 18785. Place of birth Kings Mill, Arkansas6. Name of Father John Barnes Place of birth Tennessee7. Name of Mother Luisa Spurlock Place of birth Arkansas

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 _____.

Zaidee Bland,
Interviewer,
August 11, 1937.

Interview with Mollie Hallum,
Altus, Oklahoma.

My husband worked all through this country on the railroad in the eighties before we were married; he was with the surveying gang. They were terribly afraid of the Indians and the railroad had to furnish a guard and guns and ammunition for them all. They never really had any trouble with the Indians however.

The gang carried three wagons, eight mules and one horse in every gang and surveyed ten miles in each survey. Every night they made a hollow square out of the wagons and slept on the inside of the square. A guard was always set and one night the guard went to sleep. The mules strayed away and they thought sure the Indians had run them off. It took the men until noon the next day to find the mules. They were heading south to where they were raised and when they came to the river they hesitated about crossing and began to graze so the men came up to and caught them.

Mr. Hallum's folks lived southeast of Fort Worth and every time he went home to see his mother he bragged about

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the beautiful country between the Red Rivers, with luxuriant grass higher than a man on a horse - a paradise for wild animals and birds, land to be had for the filing fee and building of the buildings for a home.

There were eighteen men working this country besides the guards - a boss man who always rode the horse, a cook, three ax men to clear the way of all trees and bushes, a transit man, a level man, a rod man, three teamsters, a draft man, a flag man, a back chain man, a stake driver, a man to mark the stakes with blue chalk and a man to distribute the stakes. Mr. Hallum's gang made location only. Behind them came the engineers to figure the grade and the graders.

They spread their blankets on the grass to sleep and it was nothing unusual for them to get up in the morning and when they lifted the blanket next to the ground to find 18 or 20 tarantulas and centipedes. They never paid any attention to them nor especially tried to kill them, or the rattlesnakes either.

Some of the boys usually kept the camp supplied with fresh meat- antelope, wild turkey, squirrels, plovers and

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quail being numerous. All they had to do was to decide what they wanted and someone would take a gun and go out and get it. The turkeys would feed along the side of the right-of-way as contented as tame turkeys do today; they had not learned to be afraid of man. Antelope were wild but if one was wanted a man would hide in high grass or weeds so that the wind would be from the antelope to the man, stick up a red handkerchief on a bush to attract the antelope's attention and have patience until they came near enough to shoot one. One day they caught the scent of the man before he thought them near enough to try a shot but when they all started to run away he jumped up and shot anyway and killed one and when he stepped the distance he judged it to be one thousand yards. After several years of not sleeping in a bed Mr. Hallum took inflammatory rheumatism and had to be sent into some place where he could get medical attention. He could scarcely move in the bed and could not walk at all.

There were several hotels at Vernon but the one the railroad usually patronized was a big frame two-story affair. They put Mr. Hallum upstairs on a straw mattress, no springs,

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and he always declared the mattress had only three straws in it. He was starving to death for water and could get no attention whatever so began to halloo. There was nothing the matter with his voice and he made it plenty lusty. He attracted the attention of a big red headed cowboy who came into the room perhaps to beat him up, at least to make him hush. The cowboy took one look at Mr. Hallum and saw how twisted and drawn all his limbs were and addressed him thus: "Well, partner you are in a pretty bad fix, aren't you? You sure do look like you are in a pretty bad shape, can I do anything for you?" Mr. Hallum replied, "O water! water! I can't get them to bring me any water - look at this mattress, do you think this is the kind of a bed a man in my fix should have to lay on? I want a pint of brandy and a lot of lemons. I have money in my jeans there to pay for all I need." The cowboy went out and was gone only a little while and came back with the landlord. Mr. Hallum was put on a good cotton mattress, a cedar bucket of water was set by his bed and the cowboy came in in a few minutes with the brandy.

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After three months of the bed and creeping around Mr. Hallum decided to go home. His grandfather had been a doctor and he imagined his mother could help him get well.

When Mr. Hallum got home he had fallen off so much that his step-father did not know him when he met him at the depot. He stayed home long enough this time and bragged so on this country that when he was able to come to work again his step-father and his only sister's husband and two nephews accompanied him and filed on land over near Dunbar south of Headrick.

During those first hard years of getting settled Mr. Hallum stayed with the railroad and sent his mother and sister cash to help out. When Altus was laid out they all bought a good many lots; the lots around the square sold for \$25.00 before 1900 and lots farther out sold for much less.

Later, before he got ready to settle, he decided to invest in his own name so he and two other railroad men got ten days leave and went up near the present town of

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Blair and plowed around three sections of land then came into Altus and bought a town lot three ^{blocks} west and one north of the square, paying \$100.00 for it. They never proved up on the land, however, but when Mr. Hallum got ready to settle down he bought one of the one-fourth sections his mother and step-father had filed on from them for \$700, paying for all improvements as they were put on.

One year of batching was all Mr. Hallum wanted. He drove a good looking rig so one day he got in his buggy and drove over to our house and said, "I have come to make you a proposition now Mollie. We have waited until neither of us are too young any more and I know that I want you for my wife and homemaker. You know me and if you are willing to put up with what you know me to be I believe I can always make you a living, even on the farm." I was willing so when the missionary came again to preach for us we stood up and were married after he was through. It was a surprise to every one. Mother had a big dinner cooked for us and we went to his sister Emma's house to spend the night and on the next day we went to his quarter section and set up house-keeping. We had a one-room house that was not ceiled, but

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Joe (Mr. Hallum) went to Vernon and got the shiplap and ceiled it at once so it would be snug for the winter.

My people had not been quite so lucky as Joe's for they had no one working for ready cash all the time. My brothers had to use an old flint rock gun to shoot with a lot of times and father made the fire from flint rock and a little powder for a long time for matches were high and could not be bought nearer than Vernon.

Mother taught us girls to weave and spin, make cover-lids carpets, as well as cloth, to knit gloves, socks and sweaters. I still have a loom and make carpets and have woven about 100 yards this year.

Our room was 16 x 20 ft., a little box house set in the yard where I cooked, and we had a dugout for all storage purposes and to be slept in if there was a cloud.

Joe still liked to hunt and would go over in Otter Creek bottom and sit on a stump and look around and shoot all the squirrels he wanted without ever getting up.

South of us nearer the river lived an old Mexican man all alone in a dugout. Once when he was down on the river looking for ducks two mountain lions or Mexican

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lions began to stalk him. He wound his way slowly back toward his dugout with them following him all the way. He slipped in, got his gun and shot them both and the experience caused a lot of comment.

One day when Joe was over on Otter hunting he had both his .22 and rifle with him and as he sat there shooting squirrels he saw something move away up near the top of a very large elm tree. He could not tell just what it was but immediately began to think of those lions. He decided to take a shot thinking if it was a lion he had two guns and could surely get the lion before the lion got him. When it came tumbling down it was the largest coon any one had ever seen and as fat as mud. He had all the squirrels he wanted so came on home by Emma's home. Emma's husband, John, had gone to Vernon for supplies. The coon was so big and fat and looked so inviting that Emma said, "Joe give me that coon. You know we have eaten about every thing but a coon and John said positively he would never eat a coon, but it sure looks good." Well, Emma took that coon and cooked it up good as the old time women knew how to cook, seasoning it up nice, and that coon was good.

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We had big picnics and fish fries and sometimes the Indian braves would take part in our sports if they happened to be camping near where we were having our picnics. We would have foot races which the Indians would usually win unless it happened to be a fat man's race - a fat Indian sure can't run. Sack races were sometimes won by the Indians, too. Did you ever see a sack race? You step into a gunny sack and tie it up around the waist and try to run. You usually forget to take small enough steps and land on your nose. An Indian would lie down and rest his gun on his toes and take aim in shooting at a target while a white man would stand erect to take aim so the white man usually won in target shooting.

My brother was left with twin boys when his wife died. One of the little fellows was so tiny and weak no one thought he would live and I begged Joe to let me take him. My mother was old and she could not care for two very well and he was so little and sick he needed extra care, so brother gave him to us. We named him Wilmer and he is living today. When Wilmer was five years old we had a near neighbor who had a lot of girls but only one boy, called Robert. He and Wilmer

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were great pals and always wanted to go everywhere with Joe. One day Robert was over at our house when Joe hitched the big team of mules, Judge and Jack, to a wagon loaded with two-thousand pounds of cotton in the seed to carry to gin and Wilmer and Robert began to beg to go. The load was so big we were a little afraid for them to go but they promised not to play while on top of the cotton so Joe let them go as he was only going over to headrick, five or six miles away. The boys got to playing a little and Joe had been scolding them when they came to a little rough strip of road. When he was through it and looked back to see how the boys were, Robert hollowed, "Uncle Joe, Uncle Joe, Wilmer has falled off." Joe stopped the team as quickly as possible and ran back to where Wilmer was lying in the road. Wilmer had a broken collar bone and his jaw bones were broken and his chin was lying on his chest. Joe picked Wilmer up, thinking, of course, he was killed. He pushed up his chin and Wilmer said "Daddy I am killed, I can't never eat no more." That voice sure did sound good to Joe. They carried him to Headrick to the drug store and got the only

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doctor there was and sent for me. Of course, there were no hospitals or anything and the doctor said it was such a badly fractured break that nothing could be done for him. We taped it up the best we could and carried him over to the hotel and got a room. I fed him through a quill and stayed up with him myself three days and nights and then carried him home and some way he lived. If we pioneer women did not have doctors and hospitals to help us in those days we had a large faith and nature usually helped when she was not hindered too much by dope and bindings.

I have heard Joe tell about the first time he ever killed a squirrel with a gun. His grandfather had given him a gun for a present and every one was laughing at him, telling him he was too small to shoot it, until he was so mad he grabbed his gun and went off down back of the orchard where one could usually see a squirrel any time. He put the gun through a crack in the rail fence and waited and in a few minutes along came a squirrel and pop went the gun. The squirrel came tumbling to the ground and Joe left his gun, grabbed the squirrel and ran to the house to show it. Of course, when he got there every one was surprised and

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proud of him until one of his uncles discovered he did not have his gun and said, "Joe where is your gun?" Joe dropped his head and said, "Well I guess it is through a crack in the fence back of the orchard," and it was. The killing of the squirrel was an accident, I guess, and the joke of leaving his new gun completely spoiled Joe's triumph of his first kill.

When we went on the big fish fries usually one hundred or more went along and the men did the seining. We women cooked up a lot of cakes and pies and bread, took skillet, a lot of lard and salt and prepared to spend the whole day. One day when the men were seining some of the boys said, "Here is a big one from the pouncing he is doing." Sam Wagner, one of the boys said, "I'll get him" and reached into the net and pulled out a water moccasin as big around as his arm and before he could turn him loose the snake bit Sam on the lip, which broke up our fishing. Sam ducked his head and washed his lip, then we went to the nearest house. No one was at home but we broke in and washed Sam's lip with coal oil, put soda and everything we could think of on the place and his lip never even got sore.

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Another time we went fishing down on Stinking branch on a place belonging to a man who was supposed to be a little cranky. We seined before dinner and got one Channel cat that would weigh about ten pounds, which was large for so small a stream. Some one proposed we send it up to the owner of the land, which we did, and he seemed very pleased. After dinner the men seined again and the fish were piled out into as many piles as there were families and numbered. Every one turned their back to the piles and some one called the number of the pile and whoever wanted that pile said "I'll take that number. While we were choosing piles the owner of the land came up and saw how many fish we had caught and he got so mad he began kicking the fish everywhere and told us to get off the place and never again would he let any one seine on his place.

I was always right handy with the scissors. I always cut my brothers' hair and as they grew older their friends came to have their hair cut. After I married I got to shaving Joe, too. Of course, I never thought of being a barber but I had cut hair for and shaved a good many men in my life. Joe nor I either believe in women having short hair. After

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I came to town Joe got an old barber chair some way and before I hardly realized it lots of the old time neighbors who had moved to town began to come over and ask for a hair cut just as they had done when we were young.

I don't have a license or diploma but I still cut a lot of hair for the old timers and enjoy it. Of course, I don't charge, I wouldn't be allowed to, but I enjoy cutting their hair just as of old.