

CHEELY, ELLA.

INTERVIEW

9207

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

CHEELY, ELLA. INTERVIEW.

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Field Worker's name Ruby Wolfenbarger

This report made on (date) November 9, 1937

1. Name Ella Cheely

2. Post Office Address Sentinel

3. Residence address (or location) Sentinel

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 31 Year 1884

5. Place of birth Arkansas

6. Name of Father Thomas Oliver Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about father Farmer

7. Name of Mother Jo Anna Sterling Place of birth Arkansas

Other information about mother Housewife

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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Investigator, Ruby Wolfenberger,  
November 9, 1937.

Interview with Ella Cheely,  
Sentinel.

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I was born in Fort Smith, Arkansas, December 31, 1884.. I moved with my parents to the Indian Territory when I was three years of age. We made the trip across in a covered wagon driven by a team of oxen. We crossed the river at Fort Smith and that night we made camp and our team got loose and crossed the river back into Arkansas. The next morning my father started back after them. We waited two days for him to return. After he left that morning it came a big rain and the river got up and he couldn't get back across to us. We located in the extreme eastern part of the Territory, where Poteau is now located. There was nothing there except one store and a post office. This was about thirty miles from our home in Arkansas.

The country was very wild at that time and we were the only white settlers in that community for a few months. My father leased eighty acres of land from a full blood Choctaw, who was the only Indian around there who could

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talk in our language. We had a small two room log house with a fireplace in one corner. My father built a rail fence around part of the land. We put half of the land in cultivation while the other we left for pasture. We let our cattle run loose on the outside, about ten head. We dug a well and had plenty of good cold water but we let the stock drink out of the creek. The Poteau River cut across our land and it was full of fish, buffalo and catfish. We could go out any time and get a big mess of fish.

We burned wood as that part of the country was timbered and there were lots of oak, pine, hickory, elm, post oak and many other woods. There were lots of wild turkey, deer, wild ducks and some buffalo.

We planted cotton, corn, all kinds of feed, cultivating the land with a single plow and working our team of oxen; later my father bought horses to work with. At that time money was very scarce and hard to get. Mother had lots of chickens, turkeys and geese. She kept our table well supplied with meat, milk, butter and eggs. We made our vinegar out of sorghum molasses, keeping it in

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barrels. We also put up our cucumber pickles and our sauerkraut this way. We made all of our soap; put up our meat and had our corn ground at the grist mill. We used two flint rocks to make a fire; we had a few sulphur matches but they made such an odor in the house that we didn't use them if we could get by without it.

I remember the first wagon that my father bought after we came to the Territory. He went to Fort Smith, Arkansas, taking a big load of meat, most of which were hams and he traded this for his wagon. It was worth \$60.00. My brother and I rode the rail fence for two days looking for him to come over the hill with our new wagon. He got home on Saturday night. This wagon was green with red wheels with the name "Dude" in big black letters on it. My brother and I thought that we were just about the finest people around that part of the country when we got the wagon. We didn't get to go to town but about once a year and that was usually in the Spring.

We didn't have much law around there. When a person committed a crime he was taken to McAlester, which was a

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distance of about one hundred miles, and tried. If found guilty, he was sent to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to serve his time. The Indians had a law of their own. They had what they called a council house where they tried cases. If one of their men was found guilty, they took him out and shot him.

The Indians around there were very peaceable but they were very lazy and wouldn't work. They raised a little corn, which they cooked with beans and called it "Blue Bread" because when it was baked it turned blue in color. They also cooked and ate terrapins, gathered out on the prairie.

I went to my first school in the Indian Territory but it didn't amount to very much. The school building was a little one room log house and our desks and benches were made out of pine and cottonwood. I had to walk three miles to this school which we only had three months out of the year.

The first newspaper that I ever remember seeing was the St. Louis Globe Democrat. I was fourteen years old at that time.

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We didn't have any kind of entertainments except candy breakings held in the homes. We had lots of fun. We were afraid of the Indians and didn't get out too much.

I lived around in that community until I was eighteen years old.