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Greer County
Preacher
Camp Meetings
Frontier Religion

INTERVIEWER ZAIDEE B. BLAND
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INTERVIEW WITH F.S.H.CLARK
Julian and Elm. St.
Altus, Oklahoma.
Born Nov. 20, 1854, England
(Mistress of the Seas.)

I was accepted as a minister of the gospel and ordained as soon as I was old enough to pass the test of sound doctrine : Being born in England I came to Canada before I came to the United States. I worked my way west and then down the coast through Washington, Oregon and California. In California I started east asking for naturalization papers in Colorado, but took my final steps as a citizen of the United States of America in Greer County, Texas.

I was appointed Moderator of the State Conference of New Mexico, and there I met Brother Morgan who had already planned to come to Greer Co., Texas, and get land for a homestead. Brother Morgan was already married but being a roving preacher I stayed single a long time, and saw no reason why I should not take up land. I was a regularly ordained minister of the gospel of Christ and

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accounted sound in doctrine. I would not accept a regular charge from the conference, however, preferring like Paul to "dwell in my own hired house" and make my living with my hands except free will offering that might be tendered me. I traveled by foot mostly. When the state meetings would convene if it was not convenient for me to go with some of the brethren, I could go by stage or train if it was in a district where the trains ran. The Lord was always good to me; while I never made a charge for any of my services there was always plenty donated for my few needs and some to spare. I believe I have married more people in the southwest than any man alive. I have married thousands and so far as I know there has never been but one divorce when I tied the knot. I have married them for a thank you, sometimes not even that. Sometimes five dollars, sometimes more. Seldom less, if there was any money offered at all. One time a man gave me a mule. It was a good mule, too. I rode him for years and years

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and drove him, too, after buggies came in and I possessed one. I have tramped this whole southwest. Swam swollen streams to get to the place I wanted to go to hold a meeting. Waded streams, been helped over by brethern who had horses or a wagon, and twice in my life when I was trying to get across a swollen river and the harness broke and the nag was walking out and leaving me, I jumped from the buggy to the nag's back and got out safely, waiting until the river was down and getting a wagon and team to pull the buggy out, in a day or two, or sometimes it would be a week. I was sometimes called a "~~Circuit~~ Rider Preacher," but I really did very little riding and a regular Circuit Rider was taken care of by his conference and usually received a salary in addition to the donations of his flock, while I only received free-will offerings.

On November 2, 1890, I came to brother Morgan's house and filed on a quarter section joining his. This was S. E. quarter, section 6--3 north--19 west, Indian M. I proved up on this quarter and lived on it until 1930 when

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I lost it by a "trick in a trade," when I was trying to move to town after I felt I was too old to preach or work any more.

I have preached in jails; mining camps; log school-houses, under brush arbors, under cottonwood trees , in dugouts, to half a dozen gathered together in His name - to thousands when I was holding a revival; in cow camps on a hill side where there might be one to listen, and organized churches and Sunday schools.

I have watched churches change government practices and even doctrines, for instance, when they accepted infant Baptism in the place of circumcision as the early churches practiced, and many other changes but none I think so important perhaps as that one.

I was a stone mason, I have dug wells, built houses, plowed and planted, and done most any kind of manual labor to get along, during the week, and preached on Saturday and Sunday, besides the protracted meetings I have helped hold whenever there might be a call in summer or winter, spring time or fall.

Old time camp meetings and protracted meetings were a good deal alike. Camp meetings were usually held in mild

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weather or the summer time and so named because the majority of the attendance came prepared to camp and stay two or three weeks and often longer. These meetings were always held where there was abundance of water and shade. People would come in covered wagons, bringing with them all the necessary equipment for a prolonged camp, sometimes bringing a tent, but mostly the women slept in the wagons while the men took a quilt and slept out under the stars wherever they chose to spread their quilt. The coffee and meat were cooked over fires made in the open. The women folks usually brought enough bread to last or would go to some near house and cook a fresh batch. Every one had cured meats, bacon, hams, sausages, and lots of chickens; and then there was wild game to be had. Prairie chickens, quail and doves were the larger, but many smaller birds were used for pies. Some times the whole bunch would repair to the banks of a nearby stream and the men would seine for fish and we would have enough fish for all for the day and night. There were very few times some brother would not kill a beef and pass it around

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I have seen the power of God work in our meetings in many ways. I have seen so many shouting at one time that we could not hear the singing but would have to hush. Women are more emotional than men and usually there were more women shouting than men. I am thinking of a Union Meeting now that five denominations were represented. We five preachers would take days about preaching and confine our preaching to salvation by confession of sins and pardon by Baptism, repentance, and the workings of the "HOLY GHOST."

Once a week we would open the doors of the Church and each preacher would take his stand and the candidates for baptism and church membership would give their hand to the minister who was representing the church of their choice. Then each preacher would take the ones aside who went to him and instruct them in the doctrine of the church of their choice. Methodists and Presbyterian would offer three ways of Baptism, namely, SPRINKLING, POURING, and IMMERSION. Personally, I believe in immersion but would baptize any way the candidate wished.

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Once when we were holding a meeting in the winter and the power of God was turning many toward a better life, a man well into his thirties was converted one night. The next night it was past eleven o'clock when he came forward and asked for baptism that night. We were all surprised but he insisted that the Lord said for him to not delay but be baptized at once for he might die. The nearest place we could immerse him was seven miles away and frozen over. The ice was not very thick however. I invited all who wanted to go to come along and quite a crowd got on their horses and into their buggies and wagons and went along. I waded in and broke the ice and baptized him and he went home happy, although I think it was well after 12 o'clock before we got him under the water and I know it was nearly daylight when we got home. It was all in a days work and I was glad to see one so earnest about a better life and anxious to get started on the right road. There was never any daily collections taken up

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at these meetings but sometimes a meeting would be called and a statement would be made like unto this; Brother Soand-So has been with us so many days and worked faithfully for the salvation of souls. Now let's have a free will offering for Brother SOand-So to help him on his way. Every thing donated would be given to him and next time it would be the other brother.

Meetings used to always consist of two parts; conversion of sinners and ⁹sanctification of the Saints (those who had been converted before). I don't think any of the churches separate the manifestation of the Spirit now as they did then.