

CHRISTIAN, ESTELLA J.

INTERVIEW 9642

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

CHRISTIAN, ESTELLA J. INTERVIEW 9642

Field Worker's name Zaidee B. Bland,

This report made on (date) January 11, 1938

Name Estella J. Christian,

Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma.

Residence address (or location) 702 North Julian Street,

DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 20 Year 1857

Place of birth Mount Vernon,

Name of Father John A. Richmond, Place of birth North Carolina

Other information about father _____

Name of Mother Frances Harris Place of birth Georgia

Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and history 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 7.


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Zaidee B. Bland,
Investigator,
January 11, 1938.

An Interview with Estella J. Christian
702 North Julian Street,
Altus, Oklahoma.



We all lived in Texas, at Mineral Wells, but Mother wanted to come to a new country for the children to grow up in, believing that they would have a better opportunity of gaining wealth. We had friends in Ardmore and as the railroad was extending the rails on north from Ardmore into Kansas, our friends in Ardmore reported that there was a lot of work.

Mother fixed a covered wagon with all the things that were needed for camping out for several weeks, hitched two large mules to it and she and her three unmarried children were ready for a prospecting journey. My husband and I had three children and we fitted out a wagon such as Mother had, hitched two horses to it and we started out. We were about three weeks on the way and camped out every night. We always tried to camp near running water. One evening we stopped, unhitched the horses and turned them into the cane to eat and while Mother and I were getting out the food, my husband

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made a fire for cooking the evening meal near an old stump. As the stump began to get hot and burn many stinging lizards came crawling out; the earth was covered with them. We had to catch the horses, harness them and seek a new camping ground. I got very tired of sleeping out on the ground and one night when we came to a little old log school house or church on the banks of a rill where there was water, I said, "Oh, let's camp here so I can sleep in the house".

We camped and after supper I spread my quilts out in the house. When all the camp got quiet and I was just dozing off to sleep I thought the spirits had me and I screamed and screamed. It was an army of big old wood rats coming out from under the logs for their nocturnal marauding. There were a few graves on the hillside near and I thought sure the dead were coming out for a walk in the moonlight until my husband could get a lantern lit and show me what it really was. I slept out under the stars the rest of the night and all the other nights.

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Mother's mules had been raised in the lot and pasture with cattle and should have known what they were but when we began meeting wagons with three yoke of oxen hitched to them the mules would stand right up on their hind legs and snort and buck and try to run. It would scare Mother nearly to death and sometimes it would take quite a while to quiet the mules and get them to going smoothly again.

One night we camped near an Indian village and I was so scared I did not sleep much for a lot of Indians came around our camp; for curiosity, I am sure, for they were just as nice as they could be; just asked us where we were going. They acted real civilized.

We passed lots of spots where they were starting towns but did not stop until we got to the spot we were headed for when we left home. After looking over Ardmore Mother decided she would like to locate, so obtained a long-time lease from an Indian on a half block of land. Mother paid this Indian \$40.00 for this lease and it

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held good until Indian Territory became a state, then Mother had to buy it all over again. I have one brother who still lives on one of the lots Mother leased from that Indian. After Mother had obtained this lease we turned right around and went back to Mineral Wells to sell out everything and come to the new country to live. When Mother had sold out and come back she had to live in the schoolhouse until she could have a house built. She had a simple home built - two stories, three rooms above and four rooms on the first floor. She had brick flues made and used stoves for cooking and heating.

She now settled down to help make a city and state. She lived here the rest of her days and is buried there. Mother brought with her from her former home four immense mules and two wagons that were built for hauling. My oldest brother became her contractor. She hired men for drivers and began to haul anything and everything. She cleaned up several thousand dollars with her teams and wagons.

The Baptists organized a college. It was a very small

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beginning, for they taught in two rooms. My oldest sister at home obtained the right to teach in this college. In March the wind became very high but we had not learned to be afraid. The wind became very boisterous one day just after one o'clock and picking the entire schoolhouse up it turned it around once and set it gently onto the ground. Not a soul was hurt but the teachers and pupils were scrambled together and all thrown against the wall and were badly frightened.

I wrote a poem about this March wind. The poem follows:

THE MARCH OF OKLAHOMA

The March wind, This Oklahoma kind

Thrills the very earth.
For it comes in a riot to announce its birth.
You have no proof you won't be tried
To hold down your petticoats with a long stride.

The feather on your hat - you tucked so tight
Rises like a porcupine quill and takes a wild flight
When you last admired them so airy and fair
You now behold them scaring high in the air.

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Oklahoma wind claps and raps until you look like
a pole
Hoops up your skirts and lets in the cold.
If men meet you seem to turn in disgust
They are not impolite - their eyes are full of dust.

That is our salvation for when the wind frolics
It carries dust with it in billows and scollops.
If you ladies have shopping - just go along
For in Oklahoma the dust joins the wind in the storm.

For I am sure when you are up town
Every person you will meet will be looking down.
For sand will fill their beautiful eyes
They will never know you no matter how hard they try.

March wind, the Oklahoma kind
Cares not a fig as it leaps and it bounds;
Your doors and your windows - you boast are so tight
"My", the dust blows through, like smoke from a pipe.

If you have nice things - take my advice
Keep handy rakes, hoes, brooms and such devices
For clearing away papers, tin cans and such like
For up here in Oklahoma they get on a strike.

Things you cherish and thought truly yours
Will leave you and line up at your neighbor's door
And paper, - no difference its last abode
When the wind is high will blow up to your nose.

Now March wind is bad when it blows for a week
But I judge it is only to make women meek
For it pops the hemstitching right out of your clothes.
In nighttime clothes remind you of scary ghosts stories.

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Now let me admonish you - when the wind blows,
You had better "skedaddle" to your little ground hole,
For up here in Oklahoma - you might wake up to find
Yourself posing beneath a Kansas grapevine.

My husband traveled the first eight years after we came to Oklahoma Territory. I made a lot of trips back and forth after the railroad was completed. Once a cow got on the track and derailed a freight train just ahead of the passenger train I was on and we were delayed so long that carriages pulled by horses were sent for all the passengers and we were carried unto a little town on the other side of the river to wait until a train could be sent out of Fort Worth to pick us up. I had two small children with me and had a time. I even lost my ticket but the conductor passed me on to Fort Worth, anyway.

On our trips through in a wagon we had a lot of quail to eat. We forded all rivers but one; we were ferried across this river in a big flat boat.

My husband had two old schoolmates who lived in Altus. Mr. Christian's health was very bad and he continually had to seek higher altitude. Once when he was in southern Missouri he wired me, "I am dying".

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"Come at once". The children were small and I could not go very well so I wired back, "Sell or give away your samples and go to your friends in Altus, where it is high, and I will sell everything and join you. If you die before I get to you I guess some of your friends will surely ship me your body - seeing that one of them is an undertaker." Well, here we are still and my husband lived to be eighty-six years old. He has only been dead a little while, a few months. This is surely a healthy country with all its gyp water and dirt and dust.