

COLVILLE, . IDA

INTERVIEW

#1256

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

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Field Worker's name Zaidee B. Bland,

This report made on (date) April 27, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Ida Colville,

2. Post Office Address Elmer, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) On farm just west of Elmer.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 5 Year 1860

5. Place of birth Denton, County, Texas.

6. Name of Father Jeptha Stallings Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Elizabeth Stallings Place of birth _____

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 8.

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Zaidee B. Bland,
Field Worker,
April 27, 1937.

An Interview with Mrs. Ida Colville,
Elmer, Oklahoma.

We lived in Denton County, Texas, and cowboys would frequently come by and tell us about the country of free land, so that we decided to move. My husband with several other men came on their horses the year before, located the land they wanted, then came back for their wives and children; the very few who had children. Railroad cars were chartered for the heaviest things to be shipped in to the nearest point to what was our then mythical home on the great rolling plain. Vernon, Texas, at that time was the nearest town to Greer County that both Texas and Oklahoma claimed. Under the Texas law, one quarter section of land was stepped or measured off, then another joining it was measured. On the first quarter we dug our "hole", put up pole corrals and called it home. The other quarter we were allowed to buy at \$1.00 an acre. We were not allowed to bring any cattle of any description that year because of a quarantine against ticks, so we

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disposed of all our cattle and were obliged to drive horses or mules to our wagons and there were several other families who came as we did. The cars were loaded and started. Mr. Colville and I had three wagons of our own, loaded with great boxes of quilts. We women made all the clothing we wore and were advised to carry with us enough provisions for two years at least, so we brought a few chickens, two or three hogs, seed for the crops, lard and cured meat, hams, sausage, jowls, bacon. A family Bible and a song book were included in the treasure chest of every family. I drove one wagon, Mr. Colville another, a man we called the "hired hand" another.

As soon as the grass came in the spring we began our journey north and west. We traveled during the day making early camp on the banks of some stream or near a spring of water. There were no well defined roads; we only knew the direction in which we wanted to go. The horses were hobbled and turned out to eat grass. We cooked our supper over an open fire, the women usually could make enough room in the wagons to sleep; the men

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slept under the stars and as all the wagons were covered with a great spread of canvas, called a wagon sheet, we were well protected from the heat of the sun or rain as were also the household goods and provisions. I do not remember that it rained on us and we forded all the streams but when we got to the Pease River our first trouble began for there had been a head rise on this river only a few days before.

Pease River is a wide shallow stream meandering through a real ocean of sand. Some cowboys offered to ride in front of the wagons and point out the way so that we would not get bogged in the quicksand. When we got to Red River we could not cross at all and we camped several days near what was known in those days as Doan's Crossing. At last all the men in the crowd and several of the cowboys took off their shoes, went into the water, and packed the sand so that we could cross. It took them all day to pack the sand so it would be firm enough to hold up the wagons. Just at sunset we crossed into our promised land. Although we knew it was only a few miles

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farther to the land selected for homes, we made camp and drove the few remaining miles the next morning which was April 3, 1889.

Our home was in Section 11, Township 2, Range 21, West of the Indian Meridian. We dug a hole in the sand seven feet deep and twenty feet long and eighteen feet wide with poles stacked on the sides for the walls and about middle way of one end, two feet farther down a hole was dug into the wall of the dugout, four feet wide lined with stone and built up from the top of the ground several feet, with sticks and mud which became our fireplace. There was one great log across the top and poles or small trees were placed side by side as close as possible to each other. Over this was placed dried grass, then all was covered with dirt. We lived in this dugout as it was called for many years. No shelter was needed for the stock for many months.

The work horses plowed the greater part of the day and then were turned loose to graze on the native grass. Those first years the entire crops were made on grass as the only

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feed for the horses. The men unloaded all our supplies as soon as possible and started back toward Vernon for the shipped goods.

EATS.

Besides the provisions we brought from Texas, flour, sugar and syrup in barrels and green coffee in hundred pound sacks and there was always abundant fresh meat to be had for the taking. Our horse corral was built of poles right on the bank of a stream full of fish. Antelope, wild turkeys, quail and prairie chickens could be seen from the top of our dugout any time.

There were several cattlemen who ran a lot of cattle on the free range. The cowboys killed beef often and always divided the meat. I don't think we were ever without beef. It could be hung high in a tree and it kept indefinitely. The air was so pure it never spoiled and there did not seem to be any flies in those first years. The cowboys never asked us anything for the meat. Sometimes we would knit socks for some of them and if one of them got hurt or sick there was always a place made for him in one

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of our dugouts and he was cared for until he was well or could be sent to the ranch headquarters. We never thought of germs or of a disease being "catching". We took those chances along with all the other experiences which the frontier offered.

The coyotes were the most annoying foes we had among the wild animals. We were very much afraid of them and they were very destructive to all young life about the place. They would come almost to our dugout on moonlight nights. Their howling was very weird sounding and made me feel lonesome. I never heard of a coyote attacking a human being, not even a child, but we were afraid of them just the same. There were no Indians living very near us. Indian hunting and fishing parties would pass near us but never molested us in any way until they learned that we raised watermelons, and after that they would come demanding watermelons and if they did not get them they would seem very angry. If we gave them melons (which we always did if we had them), they would burst the watermelons and eat them with their fingers, right before us. The wild plums were very thick through all the low places and the Indians as well as the whites were

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very fond of them.

Our mail as well as all extra supplies had to be hauled from Vernon thirty miles away across both the Pease and the Red River and we tried not to go to Vernon more than once or twice a year. We had brought lamps with us but had to pay 25 cents a gallon for kerosene, commonly called coal oil now and we had to haul it thirty miles so we were very careful of our lights. Indian hunting parties passed our home most every day but did not often camp or bring their squaws except in wild grape or plum time. When plums and grapes were ripe the squaws always came. They would put up their tepees right in the bed of the river. The rivers were just great wide crooked ribbons of clean white sand at this time of year and I suppose the sand was more free from snakes or spiders than the grassier places were and there was no danger of an enemy sneaking up very near the Indians for there was no place to hide for in the darkest night the least object could be seen moving over the white sand. The Indians always rode horses and went in single file. Twice I saw

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a horse among the Indians with a frame on his back and an Indian was lying down inside the frame. Once a squaw and a new baby were in this frame and once a very old woman who was said to be sick was lying inside a frame. The men, women, boys and girls all rode horses with no saddles but usually with bridles. The reins of the bridles were made of the skins of animals cured and cut by the Indians themselves. The men among the Indians dress very much as the white men did. The Indian women wore buckskin jackets, skirts, and moccasins, which were beaded often in many different colors. There were brilliant shawls among them but I think these were issued to them by the government and not made by the squaws. I am still living on our first settled quarter section of land.