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G. County
Seven Oaks
Greer County
Living Conditions

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

Field Worker's name Ethel D. Pfeiffer.

Report made on (date) May 22. 1937.

Name Catherine Elmira Conger.

Post Office Address Olustee Route 2.

Residence address (or location) Northwest of Olustee--nine miles.

DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 8 Year 1872.

Place of birth Collins, Missouri.

Name of Father J. A. Russum Place of birth Not known.

Other information about father Farmer by occupation.

Name of Mother Mary Ann Brown Place of birth Not known.

Other information about mother She was the mother of six children; died at
the age of thirty-seven years, and was buried at Collins, Missouri.

or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story
of person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions.
Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of
pages attached 5.

Ethel D. Pfeiffer,
Interview.

The Life Story and Experiences of
Mrs. Catherine Elmira Conger,
Clustee, Oklahoma.

My mother died when I was about twelve years old, and father married the second time about a year later. He only lived three years after his second marriage. At this time we broke up housekeeping and I went to live with my brother in northern Missouri; I was sixteen years old, I lived with him until I married three years later.

I married Joseph Albert Conger at Guthrie, Oklahoma, the 23rd day of February in 1889. We went back to Missouri and lived there for about ten years.

When we made another start for Oklahoma, we had a good wagon and team, altho it was a good outfit, and we had money to make the trip and keep us until we could get work or make a crop, it didn't keep us from having hardships all along the way. We were in constant fear of the Indians and wild animals. We came alone, and the only weapon we had was a Parker Gun, which is now over one hundred years old. We also had a goodatchie. One night when we were camped not far from Blue Jacket, (this was northwest of Guthrie), we heard what was either a wild cat or possum. I was so frightened that I sat up all night. I was afraid they would harm or carry one of the children away.

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On our way we had to cross the Arkansas, Missouri and Grand Rivers. We crossed the Arkansas and Grand on ferryboats, and the Missouri on a steamer.

We found our first work in Custer County at a little place called Seven Oaks, I do not think this place is there now. We got a farm with a wagon. It had a dirt floor and we had to carry water; but found wood plentiful in the canyons, although it was very difficult to get it out. It was free for the settlers, and as money was scarce the neighbors would go in trunks to cut and haul it out.

We stayed in Custer County two years, raising cotton and corn. We made good crops, but had to take the cotton to Weatherford or Independence to get it ginned. We paid twenty cents per bushel for our seed corn.

After our second year we decided to go farther south and file on some land. We came to our present location, nine miles northwest of Olustee, Jackson County, Oklahoma, at that time part of the Indian Territory. My husband bought a relinquishment, the E₂ of the NW₂ and the W₂ of the NE₄ of Section 27, township 2N of Range, 22 W1M. We had a small shack on the farm twelve by fourteen feet,

which we made into a half dugout. We had to get our water from a nearby well.

Our first post office was two miles north of Olustee at a gristmill, run by a man named Lee; and was called Lee's Mill. The name was soon changed to Victory, and we then got our mail only once a week.

I didn't seem to learn how to keep a dirt floor clean. I took sacks and sewed them together, put down a layer of straw and put my sack carpet over this, which made a very nice covering or so it seemed to me at that time, and made the work so much easier.

I brought three plymouth rock hens, and one rooster. I had no poultry house, so my husband, not having any material with which to build nests and coops, hauled some large smooth stones and made some very substantial nests. By buying some eggs to set I raised one hundred and eighteen chickens the first year.

Our school was one-roomed rock school, five miles south of our farm, and all the school we had. The children had to walk that far; that is, all except the two girls who got to go to Olustee two years. The building is still standing, but not in use.

I had two boys who fought in the World War. Millard

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J. Conger was in Company A 123 Infantry and he died while on his way to France from influenza and pneumonia. The body was buried at sea.

Albert L. Conger, Eighth Regiment, Fort Crockett, United States Marine. One boy is in California, one in Colorado, two at Olustee Route 2; one daughter is living at home with me, and the other lives two miles west of me on a farm.

I have always worked hard. I made my own soap, made dye out of sumac berries and walnut hulls, by boiling them in a sack. I would then stain by putting my cloth in the juice, and boiling until of the right shade. I put salt in to set the color. I knitted all of my stockings and gloves. I never had a pair of store bought stockings before I was sixteen years of age. I helped my mother spin and weave.

But I think that of all my life's hardships the worst was on September 18, 1923, when I lost everything I had in a Western Oklahoma cyclone. This loss I estimated to be about three thousand dollars. One of the freaks of the storm was the fact that it picked the feathers from some of the turkeys clean enough for the market. I had one of the neighbors haul away the dead turkeys and chickens in

his grain wagon. There was ^a big load. I lost all of my furniture, new plow tools--well, just everything I had. We saw it coming and got in the dugout. I have not bought back any furniture, only necessities, I do not want any more.

It has been very difficult at times for me to make a living on my little farm, rear and educate my children; but I found in an early day that my farm had isin-glass deposits, which when cleaned, and heated made a substance when ground as white and fine as flour. I learned to make plaques, which I sold to visitors, and took the money to buy groceries, and by some hook and crook I have managed to stay and carry on, as many of the pioneer mother's have done before me.