

COWART, DORA

INTERVIEW

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Interview with Dora Cowart  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Investigator - W. T. Holland  
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My father, Edward Dearmore, was a native of Tennessee. He came west, to Arkansas, before the Civil War. He was married to Elizabeth Barnett of Franklin County, Arkansas where I was born, in 1866.

In 1884 I was married to John Suttle and immediately thereafter we moved over into the Territory. We came to Spiro, in 1884, and rented land from Tom Enworth, a Choctaw Indian. We paid him part of the crop, or share-cropped with him. We paid one-third of the corn and one-fourth of the cotton we raised.

Our first home was a log house twelve by fourteen feet in size. This house was only five logs high and the roof was of boards and since nails were scarce, the boards were laid and held on by poles. We had a stick and clay chimney and a dirt floor.

I did all my cooking on the fireplace for years. I had a Dutch oven, some skillets and a tea kettle. We lived comfortably even though we lived in a shack.

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I bought wool in the fleece and made rolls and spun thread from that on a spinning wheel and knitted our stockings and socks. We could buy calico and domestic from our country store.

In our rental contract, we were given one acre of old land to cultivate for every acre of new ground we cleared. So my husband worked hard in the winter clearing land and the first year he cut enough logs to build a better house.

This house was about 14 x 16 feet in size and had a board roof made from boards rived by my husband.

We had a floor in this house but it was of rough lumber. The chimney was of stick and clay construction.

We did not have any openings in our house except the one door which was kept open most every day, in order for us to have light.

Twenty acres of land constituted a crop in that community, which was planted mostly in cotton, and the balance in corn. Our land was near the Arkansas River on the south side and was fertile land.

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We bought a "hog claim" from the Indians, which entitled us to kill all the wild hogs we needed for our meat. These hogs were really wild, too. They grew fat in the Fall of the year, as there was plenty of timber in the river bottom and in the Fall, plenty of mast, which consisted of acorns and hickory nuts. This "hog claim" cost from 50¢ to \$1.00 per year.

Hunting these hogs was an interesting and exciting experience as they had to be shot. The men would get their guns and their hounds, mount their horses and the hunt was on. It was too dangerous to hunt these wild hogs on foot, as the hogs were ferocious and it was too dangerous to hunt them any way but on horseback. These hogs were fat in the Fall and the meat was well flavored.

We did not have any schools in that section.

We rarely ever had any preaching. The Indians had religious services occasionally but we never attended these services. We were so far from any post office that we rarely ever wrote any letters, or received any and a newspaper was a thing almost unknown to us. About the only books we had, was the

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Bible. We were busy all the time and did not think of being lonesome. We did not have many white neighbors, so we did not visit much. The Indians were friendly though and were good neighbors, in every sense of the word.

Fortunately, we were in good health, so we did not need a doctor. If we had it would have been hard to get one as they were few and far between. We used home remedies for any mild sickness and operations were almost unknown in those days.

We raised a large family and with all we enjoyed our lives and did not consider our circumstances as hardships, as we lived about as our neighbors lived.

We made the best of the material at hand and went on enjoying life and raising our families, which were usually large ones.