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

Field Worker's name Hazel B. Greene

This report made on (date) May 31 1937

1. Name Mrs. Eliza Cross

2. Post Office Address Hugo, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) In 300 block E. Jackson Street

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1897

5. Place of birth Grant, Indian Territory, Choctaw Nation

6. Name of Father Daniel Roberts Place of birth Smithville, I. T.

Other information about father buried in Grant Cemetery.

7. Name of Mother Sophia Hayes Place of birth Close to Grant, I.T.

Other information about mother buried right in the yard of old

home place in Grant, Oklahoma, close to the old gin.

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 _____.

Note by Field Worker: Mrs. Cross has been twice married. Her first
 was
 husband/Levi Harkins. He died, and she married J.T. Cross, who is now
 living with her in Hugo, Oklahoma.

Hazel B. Greene
Field Worker
May 31, 1937

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Interview with Mrs. Eliza Cross,
300 East Jackson Street, Hugo, Oklahoma
Born 1897, Grant, Choctaw Nation.
Father-Daniel Roberts
Mother-Sophia Hayes.

My father, the Reverend Daniel Roberts (some folks called him Dennis Roberts) was a full blood Choctaw Indian. He was mean, when he was a young man. Just drink and fight, and he got in bad company and got in trouble. He stole a pig, a black pig. He was sparkin' my mother then. She was a full blood Choctaw Indian girl, and lived at Grant, Indian Territory. He went to her and told her he guess he goin' die. He guess he couldn't marry her, he won't be here long. Mama, she know he stole pig, but he didn't know she know. He was 'fraid they'd shoot him, but she told him he might just get whippin'. Well, he was tried and got the whippin'. Thirty lashes on his bare back. That make good fellow out of him, so he 'point hisself United States Marshal. Him and Jeff Fulton marshals together.

Then he marry my mother and go to Sunday School regular and do right. Then he got to be class leader at Sunday School, and then a deacon. It take a long

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time to get to be preacher, but he did. A Methodist preacher, and organized a church, Ellis Chapel, south-east of Hugo, Oklahoma, about fifteen miles.

But that was after my mother die, he organize church. He and Ellis Choate and Ellis Durant. Father gave one acre of his allotment for church ground. And he would feed lots of people, come there and camp for days for hear preaching and District Conference. It was a little log church.

After my mother die, when I was about two years old, Daddy married Ellen Taylor, who lived up in old Cedar County, close to Spencerville. She was the mother of my brother, Joshua Roberts.

We had school at Ellis Chapel and I went to school there and the teacher boarded with us because it was close to the school.

We had just a little log cabin, but she board there anyhow. My mother, Sophia Hayes Roberts, die when I was about two years old, and was buried right in the yard of our home there in Grant, right across street from Al Nelson's place.

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Then my step-mother, Ellen, die when I was about eight. Teacher stay and take care of us few days then Daddy send us to neighbor to stay while he went to Antlers sparkin' another woman to marry her. Her name was Sarah Simpson. She was GOOD woman. We stay with neighbor about two weeks, she got tired of us and told us to go home. I put our clothes in flour sack, and took it and my year old brother, Joshua, on my back and start 'bout four 'clock in evenin' to go home, two and half mile.

I walk and I cry, my back hurt, so much misery. I rest, then I take Joshua on my back and I walk some more. Then I get tired an' I hide my sack of clothes out in woods and cover with leaves so nobody steal or cow carry off, and go on with baby on my back.

Nearly sundown I get home. Daddy not there. Nobody there. House nailed up. I go on down road half mile to my auntie. She want to know why I there, and where my clothes. I told her, "'way down road under leaf."

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She was good to us and send for them, and let us stay. We stay 'bout month, then my daddy marry Sarah, and want to take us home. Auntie was my mother's sister, Susan Fulton, so she want to keep us like she did when mama die, but she would let him have baby Joshua. Auntie, Susan Fulton, want to adopt me. She and Daddy had big fuss over me just like they did when h' first marry step-mother, but Daddy got me. My first step-mother good woman, I hate to see her die, but Sarah was best. She taught me how to work, Joshua, too. (Sarah Simpson)

Daddy raise stock, mostly hogs, and raise corn, sweet potatoes, peas, and cane for our syrup--but lots of corn. And every Monday Sarah would have us beat three gallons of corn. That was to make bread and hominy of. We beat it in a mortar with a pestle. That would last a week, by making shuck bread, sour bread, and peanut bread.

To make shuck bread

Soak 24 ears of corn in wash pot full of water, over night. Next morning, we "gritted" it, sift it, then mix with boiling water, make small pones about

the size of palm of hand, lay on shuck about three times as long and some wider than the pone, wrap and tie with strip of shuck, boil about forty minutes. Sometimes we'd put in a few peas in the shuck bread. We seasoned with ashes of pea hulls. The ashes of pea-hulls was what made shuck bread a greenish color.

For sour bread.

Beat corn, fan husks away, beat the corn pretty fine. Pearl corn is best for sour bread. Soak in hot water. Then next day beat into meal, then mix with hot water, put away in crock to sour, take out as desired and pour in pan and bake.

Peanut bread.

Parch corn, then heat it, and beat peanuts, sometimes roasted, sometimes raw. Mix with the sifted corn, and some salt. The peanuts would supply moisture, so as to make into balls. Put away in crocks, it would keep long time. Eat without baking.

My stepmother taught me that I could take sweet potatoes, some syrup, sweet potatoes and eggs, and make sweet potato pies. I had never heard of them.

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She'd make us go out in the woods and get hickory nuts, crack them and put the "goodies" in the cooked hominy. Sometimes we'd cook pumpkins with the hominy. Just cut up about a half a wash pot full of pumpkins and cook with the hominy, mix and stir as they cooked.

Dried peaches and hominy was another good dish.

Hominy cooked nearly done, then add quartered sweet potatoes. We always raised lots of blackeyed peas, and cooked them with hominy, too.

Daddy said flour bread was not "healthy" for us to eat, so did not buy any till I was about eight years old, then very little. I had tasted biscuit away from home and I would just wish for biscuit.

We had an ash-hopper out behind the smokehouse where we poured our hickory ashes. When it was full of ashes we'd pour buckets of water over it, and let it drain slowly through into a trough at the bottom and into a wooden tub. It would be lye then.

We always had lots of hog meat, so had lots of scraps to make soap of, but if we wanted extra nice soap we made it of mutton-tallow.

I went to neighborhood schools, then to Goodland Academy three terms. I just finished the sixth grade and wanted to go to school some more, but Daddy said it was time for me to settle down and get married. So I did.

While I attended Goodland school the last nine months an old full-blood Choctaw Indian Presbyterian preacher stayed at my daddy's house and labored for nothing. He would not charge my daddy anything, just laboring like in Bible days. So Daddy said that I must get married and settle down and I thought I just had to do what he said to do. And this preacher, Levi Harkins, was the one he selected for me. That was the Choctaw way, select husbands for the daughters. I had never gone with a boy anywhere. So we were married. He was a full-blood Choctaw Indian raised at Atoka. He died in 1927, and buried at little place called Bentley. He was forty years old, I about sixteen.

Our eldest son, Levi, sixteen years old is going to Jones Academy, this fall. David, fourteen, is going to Goodland Academy, near Hugo, and Mary, nineteen, is going to Haskell Institute, Lawrence,

I speak the Choctaw language, and they want to get education, and get away from the old Choctaw ways. I'd like for them to know the language.

Soon after I married, I could not walk. My hips seemed to be paralyzed. A witch doctor said I was bewitched and had my husband to go to town and get 25 cents worth of star tobacco and a red handkerchief. He brought it home, she went through some kind of ceremony with the red handkerchief and then dug a hole in the ground that would fit a little iron pot that she had. She put this tobacco in the pot and boiled it, then set it in the hole in the ground and had them bring me out and lay me over this steaming pot and covered me with another white sheet. After four mornings of this, I could walk.

My father and my husband evidently believed in witchcraft. After four mornings of these treatments by the witch-doctor, she told them that she found in that iron pot a red flannel string, tied in lots of knots, and that that was between my hips and kept me from walking, and that if we didn't leave here that I would be bewitched again, so we moved away from here.

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My father's father was an Indian Doctor, and didn't have no "maiden name". They just called him Nashoba, and I think that means wolf, like runs around the country. My father didn't like that name, folks teased him and call him "little wolf" and little Nashoba, and he arrange in Washington, D. C., to change his name to Daniel Roberts. Then lots of folks call him Dennis Roberts. And he came off over here from Smithville, where nobody knows his name was Wolf.

My father said witches would fly all around the house and look like a ball of fire, and would strip the clothes off of one they wanted to bewitch sometimes. We children didn't dare get out in the yard to play after night. We stay in the house and study our Sunday School lesson, so the witches would not get us.

Note by field worker.

Mrs. Eliza Cross is a nice looking full-blood Choctaw Indian woman, and can speak both Choctaw and English languages fluently, yet she would frequently lapse into the broken English when speaking of the early day customs, and sometimes speak in Choctaw.

Mrs. Eliza Cross' Pea-hull seasoning:

Put pea hulls in clean wash pot, set on fire and burn to ashes, crush and sift, and put away in cans to use in shuck bread and other things that require that kind of seasonings.

Ed. No change has been made in the manner of Mrs. Cross' speech as written by the Field Worker as the Indian expressions seemed to add value to the biography.