

DALE, W. T.

INTERVIEW

#4178

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

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Field Worker's name Zaidée B. Bland

This report made on (date) May 26 1937

1. Name W. T. Dale

2. Post Office Address Headrick, Oklahoma, Route 2

3. Residence address (or location) At foot of Navajo Mountain

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 11 Year 1850

5. Place of birth Nebraska

6. Name of Father J. F. Dale Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about father Father homesteaded in Nebraska

7. Name of Mother Louise Cally Place of birth Virginia

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 Eleven.

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Zaidee B. Bland, Interviewer,
May 26, 1937.

Interview with W. T. Dale.

My father, brother and sister had lived in Oklahoma ten years before I moved out here although I had visited them several times.

I did not really move to Oklahoma to stay until November 1897.

I left my home in Texas with two covered wagons, three loose horses and two mules. It was very warm when we left home and there was not much of a road. We had more trouble pulling through the deep sand north of Bowie than anywhere else. We were twelve days on the road, not laying off for Sunday. The road was covered with straw on each side of Doan's Crossing. We crossed nicely.

My quarter, Section 34, 3 North, 19 West, touched the old town of Navajo on the southwest.

I knew that if someone had really filed on my claim it was not under the Oklahoma Law but under

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the Texas law so I took a chance and went to Mangum the next day and filed, and here I am to this day. A load of posts had been thrown on the land as I found out when I cleared the grass away to dig my hole and the man who had thrown them there came to me when he found that I was digging the hole ^{for the dugout} and tried to scare me away telling me that he had filed on my land. I did not scare very easily so he went to Mangum and tried to have me stopped but found that I had filed in regular form while throwing a load of posts on the land meant nothing to the government.

I hauled lumber from Vernon fifty miles away to ceil my dugout and put a floor in it for I had heard too much about spiders and snakes to risk my wife and babies in a hole without all the protection I could give them.

I planted an orchard and bought nine milch cows. The first fifteen years I was here I sold \$1,000.00

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worth of calves. We had to haul all our cotton to Vernon for selling and we got five cents a hundred pounds for hauling ginned cotton to market. I have sold corn for ten cents a bushel.

We did not have much of a market for anything. But we had lots to eat at home. We had sweet potatoes and lots of garden stuff. Sometimes I would take a load of sweet potatoes to Altus or Mangum to sell but they never brought much of a sales price.

One year every man in our community pledged all the cotton he could grow on two acres of land for a school house and every man who went to Vernon was to bring back whatever lumber he could add to the load he went for, and when we got all our lumber on the ground it was paid for and all the community gathered and we men gave our time until the school house was built. The school entertainments and picnics in the summer were the only entertainments we

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had. We had spelling bees, elocution contests and singings at our school house and preaching whenever we could get a preacher which was not very often for we did not have an organized church for a long time and the missionaries had all left with the Indians and cowboys.

S. D. Jones came into our community once and taught an elocution school and gave a series of concerts which were enjoyed very much.

We had to go over into the Nation for all of our wood and were always on the lookout for the marshals. One day I had my wagon about loaded with dead mesquite when I saw two men in a buggy going northwest. I knew that they had seen me for they kept looking back at me and I could hardly resist the temptation of unhitching my horses and making a run for the river and getting over into Kiowa County where I knew they could not arrest me.

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Then I reasoned that I only had dead wood in my wagon and they were not supposed to care for dead wood and about the only thing they would do would probably be to make me throw my load off so I got around on the other side of my wagon and pretended that I did not see them. In a few minutes the two men turned around and drove back to me and "hollered", "Hello", and I turned around pretending to be surprised and said, "Howdy, Gentlemen, what can I do for you"? They replied, "We are looking for a cow camp on Elk Creek, can you tell us whether we are going in the right direction?" "Yes, Gentlemen, you are going in the right direction. Elk Creek is about fifteen miles farther on." I was glad I had not run away.

Once when some of my neighbors went over to get wood the Indians caught them and held them and we were pretty badly frightened about them. Lots of Indians came over to Navajo every time they got paid off to gamble and drink. About twenty-five Indians

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came over the very day we were all gathered at the store to talk over the matter of our neighbors who had not returned so the citizens just held two Indians as hostages. The sheriff did all that he could to make us turn these two Indians loose for he was afraid it would cause real trouble. Finally he said, "Well, if you won't turn the Indians loose be sure you do not hurt them!" We sent one of the Indians back across the river to tell the other Indians that when our boys came home we would turn their bucks loose.

Our men came in in about two days so we let the Indians go.

One summer my wife's sister came to see us and one of our sudden storms came up. All the bedding had to be rolled up and pans and everything we could get our hands on must be set to catch the water that leaked through our roof.

I guess my sister-in-law was pretty badly scared for she got right up on that big roll of bedding and

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sat down and watched my wife trying to protect her things from the water. After watching her awhile she said to my wife whose name was Carrie, "Carrie, you have more patience than I would have, I am going home tomorrow?"

She went home but the first letter from her brought enough money in it for Carrie to pay for the lumber for a room above the ground with a real roof on it.

We still cooked in the dugout and once when my wife was ill I took her down and put her on a bed so that she could tell me how to cook. I got her fixed comfortably and turned to go up the steps to go over to the store to get something she wanted when she screamed, "Tom, look the roof of the dugout is falling down, don't you see that middle post is giving away?" I took hold of the post to show her how stout it was when the whole thing began

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to come down. The children began to scream. I gathered my wife in my arms and started up the stairs again and we all got safely out of the dug-out.

My brother, H. P. Dale, who was one of the judges of the Oklahoma Supreme Court in 1880, and my brother-in-law, founded the town of Navajo. My brother-in-law was called "Buckskin Joe" although his real name was Joe Works.

The town of Navajo was established in 1885 by putting up a building and getting a little stock of goods and the rest of the town just naturally grew around that store.

Judge Jim Harlin had a brother who was dissipated. He was drifting about in the West and in some way Judge Harlin heard he was out here somewhere and wrote to me to know if I had heard of him. I had. He was right here in the little town helping in a little store. We all appreciated his education

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and our saloon keeper who was a fine man would not sell him too much whiskey so he was sober most of the time. It was through Judge Harlin's brother in Navajo that we got a post office there.

There were not a great many wild animals when we came here although I killed one bear right here in my orchard. The bears used to be pretty bad to get our young pigs and they would sometimes get a calf but the wolves gave us the most trouble. They would eat anything alive that they could catch--pigs, chickens, colts and calves. We cannot raise turkeys yet because of the wolves. The turkeys stray too far away from the house and the wolves catch them. Antelope used to be very plentiful. They would bunch up like sheep and we used them more for food than anything when we first came unless perhaps fish or quail.

The mountain in front of the town, while it is really in the Wichita Range, is called the Navajo

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Mountain because the Navajos who lived away out in Arizona used to come here and fight with the Comanche and Kiowa Indians and once there was a big battle right on this mountain which you can see from my front door.

The Navajos were defeated and retired westward but one poor old Navajo was left on this mountain. We never knew why he was left. We never knew whether he was wounded or whether he stayed of his own accord but anyway there he was and he continued to live on that mountain for many years. So the mountain became known as Navajo to designate it as the one on which the Indian lived and where one must be careful in hunting or perhaps stay away from it altogether.

When the store was opened at the foot of the mountain naturally it was called Navajo .

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We have a graveyard here that is older than any graveyard anywhere else in the country; some of the graves were in this cemetery before the Civil War. I do not know whether these graves are those of Indians or not.

We used to have a Navajo Mining Company, Limited, here. The officers of the company used to tell us citizens that the word "limited" meant "limited in chuck". We citizens thought it meant that the men who organized a company to dig for gold in these mountains were "limited" in brains.