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

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Field Worker's name LAIDEE B. BLAND

This report made on (date) ~~April 22~~ May 10 1937

1. Name Mrs. Ina (Sampson) Dowdy

2. Post Office Address DUKE, OKLAHOMA.

3. Residence address (or location) North west Duke

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 5 Year 1878

5. Place of birth Howie Texas.

6. Name of Father J. W. E. SIMPSON Place of birth TEXAS

Other information about father Justice toall in the new country.

7. Name of Mother Loxie Lumpkin Place of birth Georgia.

Other information about mother one half Cherokee.

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 eight. 8

Zaidee B. Bland,
Field Worker,
April, 28, 1937.

THE EXPERIENCE OF AN OKLAHOMA PIONEER
Mrs. Ina S. Dowdy, Duke, Okla.

When I can first remember anything, we lived in what was known to the outside world as No Man's Land.

A man claimed all the land he could hold. My father and brothers had plowed around three sections and fenced some of it. There was free range; and wild cattle everywhere so our fences were often cut.

We lived in a half dugout, one room under -ground and one on top of the ground, made from cotton wood logs hauled from Cave Creek. Our rooms were 20 by 40 feet. We kept the dugout whitewashed inside and out with beat up gyp rock made into a paste by adding water.

Shelter for stock or fowls was always under a hill. Pa would dig away back into the hill making a kind of cave. He would prop the ceiling with logs, making the ceiling as safe from caveins as possible, build on one side at least a long wind break of flat stones piled one on another and then build a brush harbor out front to protect from rain, sleet or snow.

All supplies were hauled from Quanah. Father used oxen to draw his wagons because they were stouter and could get along better through the sand without giving out or getting too hot. Father said they came into this

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part of the country by way of Doan's Crossing, over the river of Red waters. He crossed more than one river that was very wide and shallow, sometimes more than a mile wide, with low banks and sandy bottoms. The waters moved sluggishly along; if one did not bog down, there was not a great deal of danger except at the flood seasons. There was only one river whose waters were blood red. He tried not to make more than two trips a year to Quanah.

There was two half dugouts over on the river from us (I think they call this stream Elm Creek) and they must have been about where the town of Mangum stands now. It was on a main traveled trail, I think called the Chisholm Trail. In one of the dugouts a man did blacksmithing, shoeing horses and repairing wagons. In the other one some supplies were kept that one could barter for when the rivers were too high to get over to Quanah. Later there was an established Post Office in one of these dugouts, called Mangum in Greer Co., Texas.

The nearest big ranches to us were the Z, V. and the "T" Cross. We had quarrels with their cowboys, who were always cutting our fences. Every one who could ride a horse carried a gun (pistol) and usually a rifle after we got to riding with saddles on our horses. I learned

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to ride with only a strap around my horse's belly and I guided him with my knees or by slapping him certain places with my hand.

FOOD

Meat we had in abundance and variety, antelope, buffalo, coons, possums, badgers and porcupines.

We were taught not to be afraid to eat anything and prided ourselves on the fact that we always tasted or took a bite of everything we ever killed. I really think this held good with the exception of one animal, the Pole Cat,

Once when Dad got in with our six months supplies very late in the afternoon as well as late in the season, too late to think of making another trip across the river for several months, we unloaded the supplies into a tent, intending to carry them down into the dugout in the morning. There was a barrel of sugar, one of flour one of dried peaches and a hundred pound sack of green unroasted coffee.

I suppose there was other things but I do not remember them. During the night we heard something in the tent and ran to drive the intruder out, only to find that it was a Pole Cat, and refused to be driven. I suppose

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You know the Pole Cat is a very small animal, covered with black and white fur_sometimes they are pure black. This cat is not afraid of man nor beast. Its only weapon is a bag of evil smelling liquid carried in a bag just beneath a very bushy tail. They have the power of elevating the tail and thrōwing this fluid several feet distant from their bodies.

Before we got this little animal out of the tent, our supplies were thoroughly scented and we never succeeded in cleansing them. The coffee mother washed and washed, then roasted but we never could cleanse it of the odor. The flour, sugar and other supplies in the barrels were also ruined. Of course not a drop of the liquid could have reached the inside of the barrels but just the same the odor did.

I can remember taking a biscuit, or a piece of cake, and going out into the open air and sitting on a log to eat it.

But never anything helped and after more than three months of trying to eat food made with the tainted ingredients, mother dumped the entire food supply onto the prairie for the wild things to eat; and that old pile of things to eat remained in plain sight above the ground for many a day; not one animal would eat it. We ate bread or porridge made of

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Gyp corn for many days with our meats.

Father or the boys would go into the edge of a plumb thicket or any partial shelter and call whatever animal or fowl that was wanted for food and they never came in empty-handed. They never brought more than was needed for food. We would have thought it a sin to kill more than we needed for food or clothing.

NEIGHBORS.

Our nearest neighbor was ten miles away. We women folks never visited

There were plenty of Indians and cowboys around.

The cowboys cut our fences so they were our enemies, and the Indians were Kiowas and Comanches and not our kind, and mother and grandmother would have no "truck" with them. You could get a beautiful Indian blanket for a bushel of oats.

My grandmother's father had been a medicine man in his tribe and my grandmother made lots of different kinds of medicines. If all the remedies failed, she looked around to see who had cursed the sick person.

Grandmother never tired of telling how once the Chief's daughter ran away and married into their enemy's tribe. The Chief had all his daughter's clothing and possessions burned or buried and commanded the burial ceremonies be gone through

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for his daughter as though she were dead and was being buried. It was not many moons before news leaked back that the princess had been very ill ever since her marriage and nothing would do her any good. All the charms and cordials that either tribe knew had been tried and failed. My Great Grandfather (the Medicine man of the tribe at that time) went to the Chief and told him it was the curse and burial ceremony that he had had for his daughter that was the matter; if he would forgive her and receive her back into the tribe, she would recover; if he did not, she would surely die. The Chief was persuaded to forgive and the daughter recovered.

Bear Grass root, was a sure cure for all kinds of coughs or consumption. (It is now called "T.B.; tuberculosis). The roots were dug and peeled, then covered with water and boiled until the root was very tender. This liquid was strained through a sieve made of willow twigs and honey added to make a thick syrup. Sometimes this was boiled down to make candy for convenience in carrying from place to place when the tribe moved.

Balmomy was used for Liver Medicine.

A cordial made from Blackberries or from their tips (that was the bud or end where they bloom) was used for loose bowels. Queens Delight or Stalingia was a blood medicine or used as an astringent.

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DYES

Grandmother always made all of our dyes. Poke berries made our ink and dark red, Sumac, our light reds; Pecans and Walnut bark and hulls, all shades of brown. Copperas was always used for all yellow or orange.

I am not sure where the copperas came from to us. I think it was bartered for from wandering tribes who knew where to find it in the earth.

SCHOOL AND CHURCH

I think Father must have considered himself a kind of missionary for he was always organizing Sunday schools, and expounding the Scriptures. He hauled the lumber from Juanah with an ox team for our first church and school house. It was called White Flats.

We planted and raised a lot of things I cannot remember, beans, cabbage, turnips, collards, sweet potatoes, and sugar cane were always paid especial attention to. I cannot remember much about canning in that early day but we dried or preserved in the ground a lot of things. We sweetened more things with syrup or the sugar that formed in the barrels of syrup, than any thing else. I think I must have been grown before I ever saw white sugar.

Cabbage we made into kraut or buried in the ground;

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turnips and sweet potatoes were piled in great mounds, corn stalks placed around them forming a teepee looking shelter and then covered with dirt except the very top of the stalks were left for the potatoes to get air. Most any kind of root would keep in such shelter until it began to put out sprouts in the spring. We thought tomatoes poison and also Irish potatoes were not considered good until dug and dried.

Many weeds that grew wild around us were good to eat. Lambs quarter, sour dock, wild onions, sheep sorrel, poke salad, pepper weed.

Vinegar was made by letting cane juice sour, or from apple core and peel.

Grandmother would take pepper weed and other herbs that I do not remember and stew them in vinegar. This liquid was then bottled for basting or pouring over our meats while they roasted on a string in front of the open fire. A copper kettle was placed under the fowl or piece of meat to catch the drippings and some one had to sit there and turn the roast from side to side pouring this sauce over it to season. It was terrible to be out of salt, and we were often. The water in this country was brackish enough to boil down but we could never make it

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do for salt.

Wine was made from wild grapes, we made a kind of catsup out of grapes that we used over our meats, that was better than the tomato catsup we can buy now. Brandy was made from peaches. Lemons were unknown to us. For a summer drink we boiled wild (sand) plums, strained the juice, diluted it with the coldest water obtainable, sweetened with syrup or honey. In winter the dried plums were used. This drink was not only very pleasant to the taste but was used when patients had a fever. Small children and old people who seemed to have fever from no apparent cause were put on this drink. If a patient developed fever from wounds, he was put on this drink until his temperature became normal.

Gyp corn always made, no matter how dry the season. This corn looked not unlike the present day kaffir corn. The head was similar in shape and the grains in size, but the color was very noticeably different. Gyp corn was gray, sometimes almost white, and when ripe we ground it between two rocks and we thought it made good eating. In addition to sour dough bread every one knew how to make, my folks made a kind of yeast cake that was used as we use the bought yeast now. I am not sure how many kind of leaves were used,

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only one kind was used each time. Fig leaves and peach tree leaves were used more often than any other. These were boiled, the liquor pressed out, mixed with raw meal until thick, let dry in the sun then put away in a safe place from rodents and moisture, and used to supply the rising power for bread and sweet bread as we called all cakes.

Quail, prairie chickens, wild turkeys, antelope, coon, possum, and fish were the meats we used generally. Coyotes were very numerous but I do not remember to have been afraid of them.

We had our little wind storms as we do now. Once when Father came home from market he brought us all a tin cup and plate. Were we proud of them. It was very warm and we had had our plates only a little while and came out, on top of the ground to eat, it was so very hot in the dugout. Along came one of these little playful prairie twisters. Away went our tin dishes and we never were able to find them though we sought many days.

I think everything that grows is good for food if we only knew how to prepare it.

I have seen lots of shooting and some men wounded but I never saw any one killed nor have I known one to die from his wound.

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Grandmother's Great Spirit, the Father of all, and Father's God of Wrath did not mix very well in our training, so none of us are very religious but are honest, and truthful and would only give an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth. We were taught to never forget a kindness nor an insult.