

ELSTON, RACHEL.

INTERVIEW

8664

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ELSTON, RACHEL (MRS.)

INTERVIEW

Form A-(S-149)

#8664¹⁷

BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Ida B. Lankford

This report made on (date) September 15, 1937

1. Name Rachel Elston

2. Post Office Address Cordell, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Calvary St.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 22 Year 1871

5. Place of birth Johnson County

Arkansas

6. Name of Father C. C. Stewart Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about father Farmer

7. Name of Mother Frances Acord Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about mother Housekeeper

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 3.

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Investigator,
Ida B. Lankford,
September 15, 1937

Interview with Mrs. Rachel Elston,
Calvary Street
Cordell, Oklahoma

We came here from Jackson County, Texas, the first day of January, 1897. Filed on land within two and one-half miles of the place where New Cordell is now located. We lived in a half dugout and when blizzards came, we would almost freeze and sometimes our stock would die.

El Reno was our closest railroad town and Mr. Elston would freight for H. D. Young, a groceryman, to get our groceries. We raised cotton and hauled it to El Reno and got 5 cents a pound. We had no roads nor bridges and had to ford all the creeks and rivers, sometimes Mr. Elston would haul from four to five bales of cotton and the rivers would be frozen and he would have to break the ice, then put five or six teams to the wagon to get the cotton across the Canadian and Washita Rivers.

When we first came here I would sell hens for 15 cents a piece; a rooster would sell for 5 cents; eggs for 5 cents a dozen; butter 10 cents a pound, and everything in proportion. We would pay \$1.00 for a pair of shoes and make them last a year, we had calico and gingham for our dresses and we wore them everywhere we went.

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I remember one time I bought a hat and wore it to church, my baby got scared and cried until I took my hat off.

We would get in a wagon and go from five to ten miles to church and the roads were so bad that I would have to get out of the wagon and carry my baby and walk. We really had hard times but I would like to go the old days, over again.

I well remember going to church once when a group of people came home with us and all we had to eat was black-eyed peas, no salt nor grease to season them with and we had baked sweet potatoes for our bread and that was all we had and all we could get for several weeks, Mr. Elston got a load of freight to haul and then we got meat, flour, coffee and sorghum and boy, did we eat! One day we went to visit our neighbor and all they had to eat was onions and yellow cornbread but we all sat down and ate and we enjoyed our meal too.

We went to a big Indian dance one night and about two hundred Indians were there, they had tubs of water and hides stretched over the tubs and the Indians would beat these skins with large sticks; that was their music and it just went thump, thump, thump, and they danced all night long. I have seen the Indians eat dead animals that had died of a disease but now

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they are educated and live like we white people do. This younger generation can't and don't believe what we elder folks went through to build Washita and Oklahoma into a better county and state. We walked and plowed the soil, dropped corn with our hands but today we have tractors and everything that is needed.

. If boys and girls received eighth grade education by the time they were twenty-one years of age, they were proud.