Form A-(S-149)

222

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

MOORE, ALVA LEE. (MRS.) INTERVIEW. 9149

Field Worker's Name Zaidee B. Bland

This report made on (date) November 9, 7

1. Mrs. Alva Lee Moore

2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 520 East Live Oak

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 10 Year 1893

5. Place of birth A ranch in Cleburne County, Texas

6. Name of Father Dr. J. Holland Place of birth

Other information about father

7. Name of Mother Sennie Lafon Place of birth Texas

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 _____.

MOORE, ALVA LEE. (MRS.) INTERVIEW. 9149

Zaidee B. Bland
Journalist
November 9, 1937

Interview with Mrs. Alva Lee Moore,
Altus, Oklahoma

I was born in Texas but came with my parents to Oklahoma when I was such a tiny tot that most people think I am a native. Father came to Oklahoma to get more land for he was a cattleman.. I was too young to remember any of the getting ready for the journey but I can remember a great many things about the journey.

He made the trip in a covered wagon drawn by two horses. It seemed to me that there were a good many boxes tied or nailed on the sides. There were our chickens, turkeys,and pigs in boxes on the sides of the wagon, besides the chuck box on the back. Our milch cow was tied on to the back of the wagon, and we took our leisuraly way. There was Mother, Dad, my little sister about a year and a half old, and myself.

Father often took out the gun and killed birds or squirrels for us and sometimes he would let me walk with him. When we came to Red River the water was so high we had to camp on the bank and wait for it to run down. We

were there a week or more and let all the chickens and turkeys out of the boxes so they could have exercise. There was one turkey hen setting and I can remember her hatching the little turkeys while we were waiting and I can remember how gentle the mother turkey was and we could play with the little downy babies a little. At last there was a flat boat or raft built and some one helped us over the river.

We did a good deal of wandering around, I do not know if it was intentional or if we got lost. We all suffered for water. I remember a man coming by us one day and giving sister and me a drink from his canteen but he could not spare any for Mother or Dad. The animals suffered too. When we were going through a long canyon it seems to me we thought it was Devil's Canyon - night came on and everyone was so very thirsty. The team was halted and Dad went in search of water. He came back and all the ropes and the lines were fastened together and he and Mother took a bucket with them and lead the stock and Daddy climbed down the wall of a depression and Mother

stood on the rim. She drew water to the surface and watered the stock. Before she was through it was quite dark and we could not see them at all. Sister was crying and I was singing to her, trying to drown out the howl and yap of the coyotes, when Mother and Dad came at last.

Another day we were without water for camp when Daddy came to a small depression showing in the moonlight. There was only enough water in it for sister and me to drink. Mother thought it a hidden spring and that perhaps by morning the depression would be filled again and when the morning came and we went in search of the water the depression was filled with snakes. Mother shuddered when she remembered that we had possibly drank the water off of the snakes the night before, not being able to see them in the dark. There was nothing we could do about it. I guess Mother and Daddy were really spying out the land for I remember meeting Indians. I think I have been told that they were Kiowas. They were very much impressed with my long curly hair which was a very bright auburn. They made Daddy understand that they would buy me if he

would only set a price. It was a great joke with Mother and Daddy but for years I was so frightened for fear they might steal me when Mother and Daddy would not sell me.

After much wandering we came to a larger town where there was a great crowd and they seemed to be lined up and I can remember the firing of a gun into the air and everyone scattering. That was the starting of some run for land I am sure but I cannot remember them ever telling me what it was when I was old enough to realize what it was. Father never got land and we never lived on a ranch again.

I was started to school at Tecumseh. There again my hair created quite a sensation. I had my very first boy friend there. I remember the school was closed for measles and Mother told me that the yellow flag meant contagion. I remember feeling so sorry for my little friend, Louis, because he had them. I had already had the measles so Mother said I might go visit him and carry him some flowers and I insisted on carrying him yellow flowers for I thought that was the only kind he should have. I had

some kind of an idea that the yellow flowers were some kind of protection from the disease. After he was well and we were all back in school and were getting into line to march in, Louis tried to march by me and I tried to push him away and the teacher saw us and made us both stay in after school, and that broke my heart for I was not conscious of having done any wrong.

Our school house was a two-room frame building and once every month we were all put in one room on a Friday afternoon and everyone had to get on the stage and do something - sing a song or say a piece. When they asked me what I could do I said, "I can sing" and got up and sang the "Little Orphan". It began "My father and mother are dead". ~~I remember I had everyone crying.~~ I guess I must have sung it with a great deal of feeling and earnestness but the teacher took care that the next time she knew what I was going to sing.

Those monthly concerts were as much a part of our school life then as the examinations are now, with a big concert at the end of school, and it seemed more necessary for one to speak his piece well than to make a good grade on examination.

I cannot remember that we ever knew anything about basket ball or foot ball. There was a little playing of ball among both girls and boys but I think it was called "Town Ball" and if I remember rightly the game was more like what is known as Baseball now. We played Black Man, Dare Base, Jump the Rope and little tops and marbles in the spring. There was a lot of flying kites and walking on stilts. "Ring around the rosy" and "Drop the handkerchief" were also favorites. Jumping the rope was indulged in by young and old girls and boys. All of that was in school.

We never had more than a six month school at first but no holidays except Thanksgiving, Christmas and Washington's birthday. We did not always have a going home holiday on Washington's birthday but usually went to the woods for flowers, ferns and violets or had dinner all together and spent the afternoon in putting out trees and shrubs to beautify the school grounds.