

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

MOON, SARAH E.

INTERVIEW.

#9739

Field Worker's name Zaidee B. Bland

This report made on (date) January 20, 1938

1. Name Mrs. Sarah E. Moon

2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 321 N. Lee Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 2 Year 1886

5. Place of birth Arkansas

6. Name of Father Ulysses G. Bolton Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Ballzora Lovette Place of birth Kentucky

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 _____.

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Zaidee B. Bland,
Journalist,
January 20, 1938.

An Interview with Mrs. Sarah E. Moon,
321 N. Lee Street, Altus, Oklahoma.

My father made a trip to Oklahoma in a very early date, looking for a location. On this first trip he decided that the country was too dangerous for him to bring his family into it to live. Also there were no schools.

On this first trip all streams had to be forded or crossed on a ferry boat. He crossed the Arkansas several times on a small ferry boat that was not on the main highways at all. There were not many roads and he often got lost. With him in the wagon were two of my uncles (Pa's brothers) and a young man, a son of one of his brothers. One evening when they had wandered around quite awhile and seemed to get no where, they came up to a small house. They knew it was the home of an Indian because it was built with the back of the house to the trail. They had quite a dispute as to who would go and talk to the Indian. Not one of the four knew much Indian language, only a few words. It fell to Pa's lot to go. He went around the house to the front and in

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the door sat a big fat Indian. He tried in the best language and signs that he could muster to ask the Indian in what direction was the nearest town or white settlement. The Indian would only grunt and shake his head. Pa got disgusted and turned away. When he got to the wagon he said to his brother, "We just as well go on the way we are headed, I do not know where we are and if that Indian knows he won't tell". He crawled into the wagon and as they started away he thought he would look back just to see what the place looked like and the old Indian had come out of the house with a gun and was taking aim at them. It did not take them long to get out of sight for they felt really alarmed.

Before they had gone a great ways, four or five miles, they came to a little settlement, McCurtain. It was just about dark and the people were gathering together for night^s services, there was a camp meeting going on. Pa and all of the men folks in our family were good singers. They went to meeting and sang for them. Here they enjoyed several days.

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after leaving McCurtain they again became confused about directions and began to wander around, not knowing in what direction they were really going. In going around the mountain they came upon a little log house. They went to this door and knocked. Pa was greeted by an old negro woman dressed in her Sunday best, you could tell. Before Pa had time to speak the old negro woman addressed him thus- "I's gwing to de church of God, I's saved, is you? Pa said, "I hope I am". The old black lady shook her head and said, "No child, dat won't do, Does you believe in the Lord God and loves his son Jesus?" By that time my uncle was getting frightened and took the conversation away from Pa and answered, "Yes Auntie, we are great believers in God." The old negro screamed, "You does believe in God, well glory be, Hallelujah". Pa said it sounded more like a screech than anything else. It was late in the evening and it developed that the negroes were holding a meeting, so Pa and his brothers camped right there and sang for the negroes that night. Pa afterwards said if it had not been for their singing of Gospel songs they might not have gotten home alive.

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Pa loved the country but would ^{not} bring his family out just yet, but uncle sold out in Arkansas and moved on over to Tulsa County. One of the uncles went down to McCurtain and put in a grocery store.

Pa was not satisfied and when it was rumored that a train was to run through he sold everything and we took passage on a train out into the wilderness of Indian Territory.

Now my Pa had been converted at the age of seventeen and was a member of the Regular Baptist Church. His father was a minister in the Baptist Church and was one of the preachers who was present when the Baptist Church split and one branch of the church was called Missionary Baptist and the stand patters were called Regulars. Father's mother was a Homeopathic Mid-wife and has delivered many babies in Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky and Indian Territory. My grandparents had seventeen children of their own that lived to be grown and had families of their own.

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Father had to walk five miles to school for every bit of the schooling that he got. He was really a self educated man, studying at home by a pine knot fire after he was married. He went to the first school I ever attended to finish up some of the work under a teacher, that he could not finish alone. He took the state examination for a teacher in the state of Arkansas and began to get up subscription schools and teach a few months at the time, either summer or winter, whenever he could get together a few pupils.

About this time he became burdened with the thought of how very badly the renegade whites of Indian territory needed the Gospel preached to them.

He now had five children of his own, but that did not discourage him. He sold everything he had and bought all of us tickets, who were old enough to pay, on the train and came over into the Indian territory to be near his brothers who had already settled, and with a full determination in his mind that he would preach the Gospel to the cut throats,

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bootleggers, thieves and robbers of Indian territory.

He felt that the Indians had a form of worship of their own that was good and that the United States government was looking after their welfare, but the poor degraded whites needed the Gospel preached to them.

We stayed with our uncles some time until Pa obtained an Indian lease. Ben Haiky leased him a lot of land. Pa lived in his own hired house and began to preach to the people. At first he could not get a crowd together but good singing won the day. He could get a good crowd together every time it was announced that there was to be a singing. After a year or more of just meeting and singing Gospel songs he asked a brother preacher to come and help and they held a revival meeting. There were over two hundred souls added to the church and a church was organized.

He organized more than a dozen churches in the eastern part of the state before he took a regular pastorate. Pa was really the Father of the Baptist organization in the eastern part of the state.

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The last church he was pastor of was at Bixby. An uncle of mine is pastor of this church today, although he is seventy-two years old.

We did not have camp meetings as some of the other churches did, but called our meetings Protracted Meetings and the brethren visiting for the purpose of attending the meeting were always taken care of in our homes.

The baptizing was always done in a creek, preferably running water. I think the prettiest sight I can ever remember was the day I was baptized. There were three or four hundred to be baptized and we took all day for it. It was in a creek that had a lot of big trees on the bank. The crowd stood about under the shade of the trees and sang Gospel songs as company after company of us were marched down to the water's edge and were buried under the water. I can't remember so much about having much to eat. I suppose we did have dinner "On the ground" as it is called but I do not seem to remember that part so much. I do remember the washing of the feet of the Saints very vividly. Washing of feet was part of

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our communion service and preceded the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine. There were regular linen towels made for this purpose long enough to tie around the waist and hang down far enough to be used to dry the feet. The benches in the church were all turned into two long lines. One side for the gents and one for the ladies. There were two lines of each facing each other with a row of wash bowls set down the center aisle. You washed the feet of the lady who sat in front of you, and she washed yours. If you had a misunderstanding with anyone you had to make it up before you were allowed to partake in the communion or if the church was in a wrangle it could not have communion services. Each separate organized church had a foot washing once a year and invited all Saints of like faith and order in good standing to partake.

I have attended baptisms and communions where there would be more than a thousand people standing around under the trees helping with the singing. It was certainly a grand sight.

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Every preacher of this denomination had to live in his own house and tend to his own business without help from the church. The only collection that was ever allowed to be made was for the purpose of getting literature or song books and sending a representative to the General Baptist Assembly each year. Mother spun and wove every bit of the cloth that made everyone of our clothes until after I was married. She stayed at home with us children and tended the farm and sent us to school when there was a school, while Pa was out converting the world to Christ. But Pa could do no wrong, so we were raised to think.