

NATION, LOTTIE.

INTERVIEW

10319

121

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

NATION, LOTTIE.

INTERVIEW.

10319.

Field Worker's name Zaidee B. Bland.

This report made on (date) March 24, 1938. 1938

1. Name Lottie Nation.

2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 906 North Jackson Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 29 Year 1895.

5. Place of birth Ellis County, Texas.

6. Name of Father T. H. Robertson. Place of birth Alabama.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Fannie Brown. Place of birth Tennessee.

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 _____.

NATION, LOTTIE.

INTERVIEW.

10319.

Zaidee B. Bland,
Journalist,
March 24, 1938.

Interview With Lottie Nation,
Altus, Oklahoma.

I came with my parents to Greer County, Texas, before I was old enough to remember anything about it but I have heard Mother talk a lot about it. My folks and a neighbor wanted to come where they could get free land so they rigged up a covered wagon and each of them got a horse and, putting their families into the wagon, started out in a search of a home in Greer County, Texas.

When they got to Red River Mother was so afraid she would not cross the river in the wagon but got out and walked across with us children. The first year we lived in a tent right on the bank of the North Fork of Red River east of here. Our nearest neighbors were Indians across the river on the reservation. Papa got all our fuel from Twin Mountain across the river.

Sage grass was as tall as a man and in this grass wolves and other animals could hide and come right up to

NATION, LOTTIE.

INTERVIEW.

10319.

-2-

our door and get our chickens, not a very big wolf but they ran in packs of a dozen or more and would help themselves to a small calf or colt, get pigs out of pens and chickens, turkeys, geese and ducks were never safe anywhere - night or day.

I have seen prairie chickens, a hundred or more in a covey, and one year when we made so much corn that there was no crib room for it ^{and} it was piled in the field, we would set traps for the prairie chickens and sometimes catch as many as twenty at a time; we thought them good eating.

Cattle were everywhere and when we wanted a milk cow Papa simply went out and found one with a new calf and penned it. We would keep the calf in the pen, letting the cow out except at milking time and we never wanted for milk and butter for there were always plenty of cows. We had to keep up our hogs though.

The first crop Papa made had to be made with our one horse but the land was new and everything grew. The next year Papa filed about sixteen miles north of where I live now and dug a full blood dugout to live in. We

NATION, LOTTIE.

INTERVIEW.

10319.

-3-

were glad enough to move into this hole in the ground and found it much more pleasant than living in a tent. We had nothing to fence with, though, and it was the duty of us children to keep the loose cattle out of the crop and we nearly ran our legs off trying to do this.

About this time Mother decided to go to the river plum hunting and wanted all us children to go to help pick the plums. I had heard about the river being high and low and I was very much excited about getting to go, for I could not remember ever seeing the river. I confided to Papa very confidently that when I got to that river I was going to climb right up on its back and sit down - I would not be afraid. They tease me about that to this day.

WATER.

Papa dug a well on our home place that had good water. We had a bucket, rope and pulley to draw the water and considered ourselves lucky to have these and not to have to haul water any more. In the house we had a cedar bucket and a gourd to drink from.

NATION, LOTTIE.

INTERVIEW.

10319.

-4-

I can remember mighty well my first pair of shoes. In 1900 Papa made a big crop and had to market everything at Vernon. He brought home lumber to make our dugout a half-dugout and everyone of us children a pair of shoes. How wonderful those shoes were! We put them on and went out and danced, ran, shipped and jumped, we thought it wonderful. Now we were ready for school.

SCHOOL AND CHURCH.

I do not remember church at all when I was small. The school house, one room, was only about one-half mile from us and we could walk it easily. The first year we did not have any kind of book at all but read from a chart and from words the teacher put on the blackboard. We were taught our letters first and then how to spell before we ever thought of trying to read. We had to know the word by sight and pronounce it first, then spell it and pronounce it again. We stood up and had spelling matches before we ever thought of trying to read.

I can remember the first day of school very well and the kind of dress I wore. It was a calico dress with a

NATION, LOTTIE.

INTERVIEW.

10319.

-5-

white background and some kind of black dots in it. I remember Sister and I both had the same kind of dress and we called it our "Pup-Eyed-Dress".

GAMES AT SCHOOL.

We girls played Drop The Handkerchief, Crack The Whip, Ring Around the Rosie, Jump The Rope, and Chickme, Chickme, Crany Crow. We had great times but the teacher was very strict. I remember once I did not know my lessons as well as I should and teacher made me stand in the corner and then put a boys cap on me and made me sit in the dunce seat. I was never caught again. Sometimes the teacher would make a round circle on the board and make a naughty pupil stand with his nose in the circle for punishment.

At home we children always played dress up like a lady and wanted to dip something black like snuff as grandmother did. We would make us a stick tooth brush and reach into the back of the chimney and get soot on the brush and play snuff dipping. One day as we were playing this way I leaned over too far and my dress was

NATION, LOTTIE.

INTERVIEW.

10319.

-6-

caught on fire. I started to run outside but Mother caught me and smothered out the flames.

FOOD.

I have seen Papa grind okra seed for coffee and it seemed to me that the drink made from ground okra seed was good. Papa made a corn gritter out of a big old piece of galvanized iron. He took a nail and drove it through the iron and made a grater and we would grate our own meal on this. We would also make lye hominy and some kind of dish from wheat just as we made the hominy out of corn.

I have seen Papa take a hand full of turnip seed and strew them on the ground and take his plow and turn them under. He called it sodding them under and we would have turnips and greens all the Winter.

We made so much corn and had so many cotton seed that we often burned them for fuel.

We cut all feed by hand and shocked it and my sisters and I could hold our own with any man in the field cutting and shocking.

NATION, LOTTIE.

INTERVIEW.

10319.

-7-

Mother cooked on the open fire with a skillet and lid and iron pots. Sweet potatoes were the best baked in this skillet with the lid on. It seems that we always had good things to eat. I remember on Saturday we would cook up a lot of things for over Sunday; cakes and pies were just as good cooked in this skillet as they are now in an oven. There was a great pest of rats that year and we had to put everything on the table every night and see that no chair or anything was left for the rats to climb up onto the table or we would not have any food left by morning. This Saturday Mother cooked a lot of pies and cakes and piled them all on the table for safe keeping but some way on going to bed I forgot to see that all chairs were removed. During the night the rats came in and drug every single one of those pies right across my pillow in front of my face into their hole in the wall without waking me at all. We were all so disgusted we hardly knew what to do. It seemed strange they did not wake me up for they must have been busy the greater part of the night to have stolen so much food and stored it away.

NATION, LOTTIE.

INTERVIEW.

10319.

-8-

I can remember the very first circus that ever came near enough for us to attend. It was at Altus and I think I must have been about sixteen years old and I was so excited. We were with a married sister and my brother-in-law got all our tickets, and in seeing the side shows and mingling with the crowd my brother and I got separated from the rest so we bought us some more tickets and then when we got on the inside we bought reserved seats and did not know enough to find where our seats were located but sat on the buzzard roost as it was called.

Mother never went to town more than once a year when I was growing up and we children never thought of going with her. I must have been nearly grown before I ever was in any kind of a town. We simply did not know anything about towns and never thought it proper to go.

Our first chicken house was built out of cornstalks. Papa sat the cornstalks upright and tied them together with wire and this made a good windbreak and protection from wolves.

When we washed we hung our clothes on little bushes to dry. Mother made all our soap and I did not know you could buy soap until I was grown.

NATION, LOTTIE.

INTERVIEW.

10319.

-9-

We had wooden bedsteads and ticks filled with the prairie hay for beds. A big looking glass hung on the wall. We used kerosene in our lamps for lights.

Papa brought poles from over in the nation and made some corn cribs but the loose cattle were so bad to steal the corn through the cracks that papa got some high life to put on their tails to make them run away. One day he made a mistake and put the high life on a cow's head and it made her run backwards. It was the funniest sight I ever saw, though very destructive. She backed through fences tearing them down and over the hen house and pig pen.

We had great fun in the summer fishing and wading in the river.

When Papa went to Vernon he just started out across the country, for there were no roads. He would always be gone three days or more and it was great fun to watch for his return for we knew he would be sure to bring us a surprise. We were a happy healthy lot. I never remember of any of us being sick and taking medicine as I do now.

NATION, LOTTIE.

INTERVIEW.

10319.

-10-

About what was considered the greatest tragedy that ever occurred was one day while we lived in the half-dugout. We left a half-grown puppy tied outside the window and the window open. I do not remember if we were in the field or plum hunting or fishing; any way we were not at home. The puppy jumped through the window, knocking from a shelf the old family Bible that had every one's name and ages in it from away back, for it had been in Papa's family for a generation or two. When we got home the puppy had had a great time tearing that book to pieces. Papa got a new Bible when he went to Vernon and fixed the record in the new Bible the best he could remember it but we have always felt that the new record was very incomplete.