

NEAL, W. J. (MRS.)

INTERVIEW

#8762

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

Field Worker's name Ruth Kerbo

This report made on (date) September 20, 1937

1. Name Mrs. W. J. Neal
2. Post Office Address Mangum, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) 217 West Pierce
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 24 Year 1864
5. Place of birth Florence, Alabama

6. Name of Father Frank Bulls Place of birth Alabama

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Eliza Herman Place of birth Alabama

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 4

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Interview with Mrs. W. J. Neal,
217 West Pierce, Mangum, Oklahoma

Mrs. W. J. Neal, of Mangum, is the only pioneer citizen who has the distinction of having four sons who are also pioneers of Greer County.

Edgar and Fred were born in Hopkins County, Texas, and made the trip here with their parents in 1888. Bruce and Jim were born on a farm near Altus.

Mr. and Mrs. Neal and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. F. B. Bulls, came to Greer County to settle on a claim a mile east and two miles south of the present site of the town of Altus. There was no town of Altus at that time.

The Neal family and the Bulls family remained there six years. Then they returned to Texas and came back to Greer County to settle at Vinson. (Vinson is now in Harmon County - Editor).

The Neal family remained at Vinson until 1911, and later lived at Jester and Hester in Greer County.

They moved to Mangum in 1918.

F. B. Bulls, father of Mrs. Neal, was publisher of the Greer County News at Old Frazier in 1891. He and C. B. Stubbs established the newspaper at the frontier settlement and operated the plant for four years.

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Mrs. Neal has a copy of the eight column newspaper which she ran through the Washington hand press herself. Later, Mr. Bulls disposed of his plant to Major A. M. Dawson of Mangum.

Mrs. Neal has a vivid recollection of the flood which swept Old Frazier away on June 4th, 1891. The vicinity had been flooded with torrential rains for several days prior to the flood and on the night of June 4th, residents recall four different cloudbursts. Heavy cottonwood trees, which had been uprooted, dammed up Salt Fork River near Martha and turned the river into Bitter Creek where the floodwaters inundated the section.

One settler in the town drove a wagon through the swirling waters to rescue a family of eight. He returned on horseback for a girl; but horse, girl and rescuer were drowned on the return trip.

Although Mrs. Neal lived on the high ground south of Altus, water rose from three to four feet deep in homes of the neighborhood. Settlers who lived in dugouts found their abodes full of water and were obliged to bail out their homes after the flood.

After a cowboy had killed an Indian near Warren

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the white settlers were fearful the Kiowa and Comanche tribes would attack them in revenge, and one night during the Indian scare Mrs. Neal saw a burning building from her window and believed that the threatened Indian raid was in progress. However, it was learned next day that the school house had burned.

A group of settlers went to the Indian Reservation to seek peace with Chief Lone Wolf who promised that none of his tribesmen would take part in any raid.

Times were hard in the early days but early day settlers had cows and chickens and so managed to survive the lean periods of the drought.

Settlers traded at Vernon or Quanah; these towns served newcomers throughout this section.

One day a vicious cow attacked Mrs. Neal as she was going to the house. She managed to escape but the animal then attacked her husband who took refuge in a wagon. The family bulldog then came to the rescue, and grabbed the animal by the nose. The cow turned flat on her back and gave a pioneer exhibition of bull-dogging.

One season, the Red River, the Elm River and

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Salt Fork were all "up" and no trip to Quanah or Vernon could be made for provisions. Supplies were running short, but the Neal family managed to have enough to eat until the floodwaters subsided.

Many settlers had their wheat made into whole wheat flour at Vernon but later traded the grain for the finished product.

Diversions of the settlers were dances and Sunday evening singing meetings.

Mr. Neal was sometimes asked to play the violin in an orchestra for some social event.