

NEFF, LILY M.

INTERVIEW

9651

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

NEFF, LILLY M.

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Field Worker's name Ruby Wolfenbarger

This report made on (date) January 10, 1938

1. Name Lilly M. Neff.

2. Post Office Address Sentinel, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Sentinel

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 16 Year 1867

5. Place of birth Illinois

6. Name of Father Wesley Cornell Place of birth Ohio

Other information about father farmer

7. Name of Mother Malissie Armstrong Place of birth Ohio

Other information about mother housewife.

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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Ruby Wolfenbarger,  
Investigator.  
January 10, 1938.

Interview with Lily M. Neff  
Sentinel, Oklahoma  
Born August 16, 1867  
Father-Westley Cornell  
Mother-Malissie Armstrong.

I was born in the state of Illinois, August 16, 1867. I moved to Texas with my parents when I was very young. In 1889, when the Territory was opened to homesteaders, my husband wanted to come up here and get land; at that time we were doing well in Texas and I didn't want to sell out and make the change. I had also heard stories about the Indians and I was just a little afraid to come up here, but in 1892, we decided to make the move and some of our neighbors wanted to come with us. We had two wagons and about twenty head of cattle. There were six other wagons making the trip. The weather was extra cold and the little children and some of the older women suffered with cold and a woman was taken with pneumonia, and was very sick during the trip. We were on the road about eighteen days as we had to take our time, couldn't find the roads and had to hunt water for the stock. We also had to bring feed for the cattle and horses.

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We located near Duncan where my husband got a five year lease from the Indians. We had to improve the lease. We built a one room log house, we cut the logs from around the lease. We had to put up a brush fence, that is, around our garden but we let our stock run loose. The first year we planted corn and oats and the stock broke through and got our first crop. It didn't amount to very much as the soil was new and had not been cultivated enough to grow any thing. There was much wild game around there and also many fish in the streams of water. We didn't get to go to town but about once a month and the men worked out to help with the family as money was very scarce in the early day. We stayed there about four years, our lease wasn't up until the next year but we traded the lease to a man for a good pony. In April my husband brought a family up here to the western part and while here he went to Cloud chief and filed on one hundred sixty acres, two miles north of Sentinel. While here he built a sod house, twelve by sixteen, for us to live in; the room had one window and a hard dirt floor. In August, 1898, we moved to our new home. The country was not

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like that around our old Indian lease for up here it seemed as if we were all alone as our nearest neighbor was about five miles away. There were many rattlesnakes, coyotes, some deer and sometimes a panther would pass through the country. The children were afraid to get out of the house.

We had to cut and haul our wood from the Iowa country and sometimes the Indians wouldn't let the men get the wood without pay or without giving them a beef. We got our drinking water from the creek, which was about five miles away. The second year that we lived there

we dug a well. We didn't do much farming the first year as my husband had to work out to make money to improve our place. He was a carpenter by trade, he cut wood and hauled it for our neighbors and also did farm work such as plowing and clearing the land. The second year we built a two room frame house. We went to Mountain View and got our lumber and nails. We also put out a large orchard of peach, apple, plum and other fruit trees. We got our trees from Texas. We got our groceries at

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Weatherford and Duncan until after Hobart was settled in 1902 then we got our supplies there. We had a small school at Portland, but the first two years that we lived here we didn't have any school as people were too poor to send their children to school or to build a school house. We went to church and Sunday school when we could and that was not very often. We lived a hard life, worked hard and had few pleasures in the early times. In about 1919, I was offered \$16,000.00 for my farm, but I did not want to sell; later I was forced to sell and I only got \$8,000.00 for my farm. I spent the greater part of my life out there. We pioneers worked hard to make a home for our children, but we enjoyed it all very much although we faced many hardships and dangerous times.