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Form A-(S-149)

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

Field Worker's name Ruth Kerbo

This report made on (date) May 19 1937

1. Name Mr. E. L. Nicholas

2. Post Office Address Mangum, Oklahoma, Route 2

3. Residence address (or location) 15 miles southwest, Langum

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 30 Year 1876

5. Place of birth Perry County, Alabama.

6. Name of Father D. W. Nicholas Place of birth Alabama

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Betty Colburn 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 \_\_\_\_\_

INTERVIEW WITH MR. E. L. NICHOLAS  
Mangum, Oklahoma.

By  
Ruth Kerbo, Field Worker.

Mr. E. L. Nicholas came to Greer County with F. M. Montgomery in 1898, from Milam County, Texas. They had heard of the cheap land and came here seeking a home.

Mr. Nicholas was single and came with Mr. Montgomery who settled on a farm four miles east of Russell.

They were 18 days making the trip in a covered wagon drawn by a team of horses. Their camping outfit was all they possessed, beside the wagon and team.

Mr. Nicholas worked for 50¢ a day and his board. Helped Mr. Montgomery build a dugout 16 feet square, with a ridge pole in the center and boxing planks and dirt on the top for the roof. Rats and gophers would dig holes in the roof and when big rains came water would run in the dugout, sometimes causing the walls to cave off.

In 1900 Mr. Nicholas hauled lumber from Quanah and helped Mr. Montgomery build a two room house on his place 4 miles east of Russell, which is still standing.

There was no water nearer than the Jaybuckle spring that was good enough to drink. Everybody hauled

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from Jaybuckle. Water for the stock was also scarce. Windmills were unknown to the settlers and anyone would have to dig down a hundred feet or more to get water. People drove their cattle from one water hole to another and sold their horses they didn't absolutely need for \$1.00 each to get rid of them on account of the scarcity of water. Finally Mr. Montgomery dug a well on his farm which furnished plenty of water for his stock, but was not good enough to drink. He would not let anyone haul water from his well.

There is a spring of salt water northwest of Reed. In the early days the ranchmen hauled wagon loads of salt from this spring for their cattle. "A wagon load of salt could be hauled from this spring every day," Mr. Nicholas said. This is the Salton Spring.

There was no market for cottonseed, the people would haul some of them home from the gin for their cattle, but most of them just piled up around the gin like the cotton burs do now.

Corn sold for 15¢ a bushel; cattle were \$35.00, and \$40.00 each, good cows; a new wagon cost \$65.00; buggies were \$45.00; walking planters \$7.00; cultivators \$35.00; cotton 3 and 4 cents a pound; fat hogs were 5¢ a pound.

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Later Mr. Nicholas filed on a claim south of Erick, lived there only a short time, then moved back to the Russell community.

"I knew all of those crossings, had to drive cattle over them so much hunting water holes; there was the Kelsey crossing south of Reed on Salt Fork river. The T-crossing 6 miles east and 4 miles south of Vinson. Mulberry crossing south of Mangum."

"I have seen rattlesnakes here as big as a stove-pipe," Mr. Nicholas said "I killed 168 rattlesnakes in one week when I first came here. They were awfully bad in our dugout. There was one that stayed in a hole back in the wall of the dugout for a long time. We were afraid he would crawl out some night, but finally it crawled out and I killed it. It was nearly five foot long, I don't remember how many rattlers it had."

The settlers used to have camp meetings at Russell. The men would go to a willow thicket and cut enough willows to make a shade or arbour. Sometimes they would use cane, it grew tall then. Everybody went to meeting. Some people who lived very far away would bring a camping outfit and stay for a week

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or two. At the night service, the mothers would take a quilt or two under the arbour and spread it down for the youngsters to sleep on during the services. There would be pallets scattered about over the ground with two to four children on each one. After the services were over, the parents would each carry a sleeping youngster to the wagon, and maybe the father would have to come back to get the rest as there were several children in each family. On one occasion in carrying the youngsters to the wagons, one man got one child too many. This caused quite a disturbance in the country until the missing child was found.

There is a family burial ground  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile west of the Wild Cat store on Wesley Lanford's place. It is well cared for by members of the family. This is the Lanford's burial ground.