

BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

HUGHES, BURLERSON SARAH KIZZA
Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma
INTERVIEW

Field Worker's name Zaidee B. Bland

This report made on (date) June 9, 1937

Name Mrs. Sarah Kizza Burleson Hughes

Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma

Residence address (or location) 311 East Walnut Street

DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 15 Year 1853

Place of birth Texas

Name of Father John Burleson Place of birth Alabama

Other information about father _____

Name of Mother Sarah Halcome 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 _____.

Mrs. Hughes still owns this half section, E. half 32-3N.-21 W.

FIELD WORKER ~~ALBERT~~ B. BLAND
Indian-Pioneer History S-149
June 9, 1957.

INTERVIEW WITH SARAH KIZZA BURLISON HUGHES
311 East Walnut Street, Altus, Oklahoma.
Born Sept. 15, 1853, Texas.

The Experience of a pioneer of Altus,
Oklahoma.

I have been in Oklahoma forty-six years this
December, and still own the land we proved up on.
I have seen many changes, and we hope all are for
the best, but of course only One knows what it is
all about.

We had two children my husband and I, when
we decided to come north and homestead in Greer
County. We were two weeks coming in a covered wagon.
We drove two big bay horses, and Willie, our fourteen
year old son, drove our loose stock of four milch cows
and several yearlings. We got here in December by
way of Doans' Crossing. We came north two days after
crossing the river, looking for sand and trees. We
stopped the second night about where the town of Martha
is now. The trail was broad where cattle had passed
and we camped in the middle of the road, putting up a
tent. That night one of our now famous dust storms

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came up and blew our tent away, and in addition to nearly freezing to death we were covered with dirt, literally buried alive. When morning came we were not discouraged, but shook the dirt off, had breakfast and Mr. Hughes drove the cattle to water. While watering the cattle he noticed a dugout not far away. This was on Salt Fork of the Red River. The man living in the dugout came out, and introduced himself. His name was Taylor, and he had a whole section fenced that he offered to sell Mr. Hughes for a little better than one hundred dollars. The deal was made; Mr. Taylor selling us the fence, and right to file; and we moved our camping outfit down near his dugout and set up permanent camp, until we could dig a hole in the ground. It was three weeks before our hole was ready for us and Mr. Hughes had built a room on top of the ground for our use in warm weather. We had our door in the south and always left it open for light and air when possible. We had been there only a few days, and while we were having breakfast one morning, a big wolf came and stuck his head down into the door and howled and

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howled. My how frightened we were, and Mr. Hughes jumped up to try and get between us and the door, but tripped over a joist and broke some ribs in the fall. This did not keep him from working, however. The grass was higher than a man's head everywhere, and there was good grazing for our cows, so we did have lots of milk and butter. We kept our calves tied four together to keep them from straying. One day they did not come home, and our neighbor said he had seen a cattle man who lived over on Turkey Creek driving some yearlings tied together. Mr. Hughes got on his horse and rode over to the man's house and got our yearlings back. We brought lots of things to eat with us. That first year we broke out eighty acres of land, just turned the grass under. Forty acres we put in corn as the land was broke, and it never had another plow on the field. The small children and I made it with our hoes, while Mr. Hughes and Willie went over into the Nation to cut wood for people to help us get by. We made eight hundred bushels of corn

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on that forty acres and got one dollar a bushel for all we could spare to sell. Corn and pumpkins were most of what we raised except garden stuff. Every thing we put into the ground grew and made good. We grew wagon loads of potato pumpkins, and gave them away as well as fed them to the cows. A potato pumpkin cut into and baked in the oven is as good as a sweet potato.

The Taylors gave me six hens and a rooster to get a start with chickens. One old hen got so fat she tumbled off of the roost and broke her neck, but I raised lots of chickens any way, for we did not have to eat them, as there were so many wild birds and prairie chickens that came to our feed stacks to eat. We could step out most any time of day and get fowls for dinner when we wanted them. Wild turkeys were not good unless you could capture them and fatten them up. Their flesh was too dark and bitter, caused I guess by what they ate. Quail, prairie chickens, wild ducks, and

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geese and antelopes were good, and plentiful too. Antelope don't look like other deer as they are a much redder brown. They have a white bushy tail which they carry over their backs when running.

We brought with us a Shepherd dog, "Sim", who was a lot of help. He always went with the children and cleared the path of snakes for them. I don't think they ever went any where that he did not have to kill a snake or two. He was bitten so much that he was immune to snake poison.

Wild grapes and plums, and a citrus melon called pie melon were plentiful, and I made lots of both sour and sweet pickles out of the wild pie melon.

We never wanted for something to eat, but had to go ragged for clothes. We had no machine and all drygoods had to come from Vernon, which took several days to go and come as well as being a dangerous trip.

We brought religion to this country. Mr. Hughes was a Primitive Baptist Preacher and he had one creed, "Believe in God and do right daily," We had a lake on

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our place that we always baptised in. Now we have our foot washing once every year. The ladies wash each others' feet and the men theirs. We tie a towel around our waist like the disciples did, and choose the one we wish to wash feet with.

Partners wash each others' feet and then shake hands and pledge eternal love and respect, then we take our bread and a sip of wine. The Lord cares for and prospers his own. In our three days meetings we always have our dinner on the ground where we have our preaching and make all day meetings out of it. I have always killed a calf and most generally roasted a hind quarter for the meeting. I don't want a shoulder or side for I consider my part to donate a hind quarter and pies and preserves according to how the Lord has blessed us. There is always an abundance.

Mr. Hughes was a hard working man and I never shirked. He worked every day and preached on Sunday, and the way was never too hard for him to hold a funeral, visit the sick, or marry a couple. Once when I could go with him

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to hold an Easter service, he had been able to get a new black suit of clothes, and I made him a white shirt and he looked so nice. As he got up to preach everything was so still, and as he opened the Bible to read his text, one of the sisters leaned over and whispered to me, "Brother Hughes looks so nice. He looks just like he had jumped out of a band box doesn't he?" She never thought how that whisper would carry in a real quiet gathering, but every one turned and looked at us and smiled except Mr. Hughes. I don't really think he was much annoyed though. I think I'll be saved as I have always tried to be good. I used to have such bad headaches that one day I felt that if only I could get that great weight off of my head I would feel better. I just took my shears and reached behind my head and cut my hair off, and I can't be sure God has forgiven me but I never have had such headaches since I did that, so I am hoping it was not a sin. We used to have preaching under trees in dugouts or anywhere a few would gather and want to hear the word.

The children walked four miles to school and it was taught in a dugout the same as we all lived in.