

FSA Photo by Dorothea Lange

Woman of the high plains [Nettie Featherston]
“If you die, you’re dead – that’s all.”
Texas Panhandle, Childress (vicinity)
June 1938





Modern Photo by Bill Ganzel

Nettie Featherston in the four-room
house she shares with her son.

Lubbock, Texas

August 1979

“We were on the road, just trying to find something [for a job]. We stopped at a filling station in Carey [Texas], and this cotton grower come by and seen our bedding on top of the car. He asked if we’d like to go out and pull some bolls [harvest the cotton] for him. We did that all that winter. After that we had to wait for chopping time [in the summer]. My brother went back to Childress and played dominoes. That’s the way we lived, from what he made playing dominoes.

“We lived in a little two-room house. Had a wood stove that we cooked blackeye

peas on. We ate so many blackeye peas that I never wanted to see another blackeye pea. We even slept on ’em, laid out pallets on the pods of blackeye peas and hay. Your kids would cry for something to eat and you couldn’t get it. I just prayed and prayed and prayed all the time that God would take care of us and not let my children starve. All our people left here. They live in California. But we were so poor that we couldn’t have went to California or nowhere else.

“I never much thought about ever living this long [81 years]. I just didn’t think we’d survive. If you want to know something, we’re not living much better now than we did then – as high as everything is.

“I remember those times and it seems like I’m not satisfied. I have too much on my mind. It seems like I have more temptations put on me than anyone, to see if you’re able to bear them or not. And every time I ask God to remove this awful burden off my heart, He does.”

– Nettie Featherston