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## Louise B. James: Teacher, Non-Fiction Writer, Mother

Tena Bailey

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**I**n the sandy sage country north of Woodward, Oklahoma, a professional writer nestles in her underground home and researches the history of her beloved Oklahoma.

She's a native, Louise B. James, who grew up on a dairy farm near Norman. Although she has graduate degrees in history, Louise insists that she is "very country," and her non-fiction productions express rural America, its history, and its people.

She has one published book to her credit, and her stories have been featured in many magazines, including *CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA*, *TRUE WEST*, *OLD WEST*, *OKLAHOMA TODAY*, *COBBLESTONE*, *FARMJOURNAL*, *FAMILY CIRCLE*, *COUNTRY PEOPLE*, and *WESTVIEW*.

Her book, *BELOW DEVIL'S GAP*, was published in 1984 by Evans Publications, Inc. Authorized by the Plains Indians and Pioneers Historical Foundation of Woodward, the book unfolds the breath-taking history of Woodward County.

Joining Louise in this journey through the annals of history, the reader views the earliest settlers of Western Oklahoma, the Indians, as they are confronted by the white pioneer movement in their land. The ranchers are observed as they drive herds of cattle into Indian Territory to take advantage of the rich, high grass. The reader watches the influx of frontier farmers and the development of Western Oklahoma society.

Louise has an office in her home where she writes from 8:30 to 4:00 p.m. She believes it is important to keep regular office hours and be available to her editors.

"I always knew I would write when I grew up," the brown-haired lady said in an interview. "Seven years ago, I decided it was time."

When she wrote her thesis for a Master's Degree in 1967, *CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA* printed two chapters of it. "It was a thrill to break into print," she said. The thesis was about the Chickasaw Indians. She received her first check for writing in 1978 when the Woodward Daily Press published her humorous version of a Santa Claus parade. Since then, she has written consistently and earned a steady income.

After completing college, Louise was employed as an Oklahoma History teacher at Guthrie Junior High School. She taught for thirteen years, and she prepared her own teaching materials during her last eight years in the classroom. She found the textbooks boring, and she delved into books and records to obtain material that she copied and presented to the students. The blue-eyed teacher spent much time in the archives of the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City, where she obtained treasures of information.

"I really wanted to do a book of compiled history," Mrs. James said. "After we moved to Woodward in 1977, our tiny daughter seemed to need me at home. I made a conscious decision to give up teaching and write. I started working on that book."

Still, Louise hasn't seen that particular book, which contains historical plays and skits, published. Instead, she began research for *BELOW DEVIL'S GAP* in 1979 and

# LOUISE B. JAMES

## Teacher

## Non-Fiction Writer

## Mother

by Tena Bailey



*Louise James and Arabian gelding, Bozzarus.*

completed the manuscript in December of 1982.

"It took longer than I had expected," Louise lamented. "I was reaching back farther than I had planned with the Indian history. There was just more available than I had anticipated when I started investigating."

She laughed about coaxing her family along on a historical expedition to find the confluence of the Beaver River and Wolf Creek. Dick, her husband, who is a game ranger, and children, Mark and Barbara, followed innocently when she left their vehicle to walk a bit to the crucial point of water ways.

"It was a hot, muggy day," Louise moaned. "It was ninety degrees, and there was no wind. Barbara was wearing her sandals, and we didn't take any water. Really, I had thought it was just a little way, and I was doing research for the book. Even now, my family has not forgiven me."

Research is exciting to Louise, whether she is looking for information about people or information about history. She enjoys interviewing ranchers and other individuals, getting acquainted with unique personalities. She sticks to non-fiction, and she hopes to write another book on history. At the close of the interview, she said, "I never run out of anything to write about." 