

SIMPSON, GLADYS INTERVIEW.

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SIMPSON, GLADYS (MRS.) INTERVIEW.

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The experience of a native of
Oklahoma, Mrs. Gladys Simpson
of Altus, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Gladys Simpson was born April 23, 1906, at Bennington, Oklahoma. Her parents were Felix Morrison, born in Texas, and Nora Stubblefield born in Indian Territory.

I was born near Bennington, Oklahoma, and my childhood was spent in the eastern part of the state mostly on Indian leases. My grandfather and my parents had been in Indian Territory a long time before I was born. I was born the last year of the allotment and mother had for her nearest neighbor fullblood Indians. The Indian woman and mother made their baby dresses from the same patterns for they were expecting about the same time. There were only two days difference in the Indian's birthday and mine. The Indians begged mother to let them claim twins and let me have an allotment with the Indian for I was about as dark as the Indian and my hair was as dark. I was taught to say Uncle John and Aunt Jennie to the Indians and they were our very dear friends for a long time.

The house where I was born was a two-room log

house with two windows with wooden shutters that opened out and a door of plank that opened in and had a wooden latch with the string always on the outside in the day time but pulled in at night. Pulling of the latch on the inside prevented anyone from the outside getting in. The latch was of wood and fitted into a wooden catch which would have to have been broken for anyone to enter unless the latch was lifted.

We had lots of clean pure water from a spring. A hollow log was sawed up and sunk into the spring and the water ran out of a hole where there had been a limb on the tree. Mother kept her milk and butter down there at the spring. I can't remember much about the milk house except it had a large bottom and there were big flat rocks where mother set jars of butter. Milk and butter were both kept in stone jars. The water from the spring ran under the wall of the house all the time and around the jars and away down the hill keeping everything cool.

My folks moved from near Bennington where I was born to Boggy bottom and leased land from a

white man. They had all they could raise on the land for five years to build a two-room house, fence corrals with rails cut from the woods in clearing and plowing all cleared land. I don't think pa cleared over a hundred acres the whole five years. The trees were so thick and big and the land was so bad to overflow. Our nearest neighbor was a mile away and we had to cross the creek in a skiff to get to see them. Some of the smaller streams had foot logs over which we would have to coon it across. To coon it across means that the log was so narrow we were afraid we would fall if we tried to walk upright across so would get down on our all fours and walk across as though we were four-footed instead of two-footed.

The woods were full of wild cattle and hogs and it was dangerous for us to go alone. Then there were wild animals like cougar cats that made it dangerous, too. There were lots of blown over trees that we could walk up and out on and be safe until the hogs or cows would go away, but we were not safe from panthers. Grandfather always told us to be sure and not run away if we ever met a wild animal

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but to always keep our face to him and look him in the eye.

There was a sawmill camp about two miles from my aunt who lived across Boggv from us. Once when I was over there my aunt sent two of her girls and myself to the sawmill camp after a gallon of coal oil. As we were walking along single file for we were in a very narrow path, we heard something go pat pat in the leaves and we all looked and there was a big cougar cat. He was looking right at us and patting the leaves with his tail. I was the last in line, the smallest of all, and nearest to the cat. Of course, our first impulse was to run when I remembered what grandfather had said. I caught my cousin's hand nearest me and said, "Let's all walk backwards and look him right in the eye and maybe we can save ourselves." We were going as fast as we could walk backwards when the oldest girl stumbled over a limb in the path and fell down. We thought the cat had us for sure but I stood still until she got up. I think we must have gone backwards that way a half a mile when a logging wagon came along and the cat bounded away into the forest.

Then we did run the rest of the way and all tumbled into the superintendent's house. The family washed our faces and talked to us a long time before we could tell what had frightened us.

Everybody marked their hogs and branded their cows. Pa would go out into the woods and drive himself up a cow to milk and when the calf was big enough to be branded he would put the brand on the calf that was on the cow. Once we milked a cow three years before anyone came to claim her. She had three calves marked like her. The owner said she had strayed three years before and he never expected to see her again and was he surprised to have four head of stock all of his brand instead of one.

Pa cleared forty acres the first year and built a rail fence around the whole forty and enclosed the house in the fence to make it safe for us children to play in the yard. Even then panthers would come at night and tease the dogs and carry away our chickens. Our garden was across a little ravine from the house, but inside the fence. One morning mother was busy and said to me "Gladys, run down

to the garden and bring mother some beans and onions." I took a bucket and started. Snakes were always interesting to me and we were always taught to leave them alone if they were not bothering us for we were considered too small to fool with them any way. There were a great many harmless ones that should not be killed and we were not supposed to be able to tell the difference. As I was going to the garden a snake ran out of the grass just in front of me. It was a spotted snake and did not run away as most snakes did, but stopped off a little way and it seemed to me it looked back at me as though it wanted to play. I picked up a little stick and tapped it on the head and it flew into several pieces. The head began backing up and got all the pieces together again. I thought that real funny and tapped it again, and again it flew into pieces. I was having a great time as I thought I had found a little train and intended to not fill my bucket full of beans but leave enough room in it for my train. I wanted to carry it to the house and show ma and let my little sisters and brothers see how nice it was to play with. I guess I kept playing too long. There was a neighbor over on a hill hoeing

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and he saw me and came over to see what I was doing. He came up to me and said, "What are you doing?" I was so proud of what I had found that I said, "Playing with my train." He took one look and said, "That's no train, that is a jointed snake." He dug a hole and buried one of the joints and the poor head was running around everywhere looking for the joint when he made me go to the house, and I cried for I was sure I had found a snake train and did not want the poor thing to die.

My uncle had a big black dog he called Bat. Once pa went across the creek and bought two big hogs from a man. When he got to the creek it was up and as he did not wish to swim the hogs across he left them in uncle's garden for it was the fall of the year, and went on home. Some one let out a pack of hounds that night and they chewed one of the hogs up. Uncle wanted pa to know about it but thought the river too high to cross even in his skiff. As he and auntie were standing looking at the water discussing it, Bat stood by their side looking too. Auntie said, "Look at that dog I believe he knows what we are talking about. Let's write a note and tie it onto his neck so it will not get wet and tell him to carry it to Felix's house."

Well that is just what they did. She wrapped it so it would not be a big enough bundle to be noticeable. They fastened it so it would not slip around under his neck and get wet, and then took Rat down to the creek and pushed him into the water and commanded him to go to Felix's house. We were in the yard watching the clouds when Rat came bounding up. Ma said, "What do you know, there is Rat and look at the strings around his neck, I guess some of the children have been playing with him." Pa said, "Let's see what is inside of the bundle." They unwrapped the bundle and there was the note.

The bears would come out of the bottom and go down a corn row and gather the roasting ears just like a man until their arms were full and then crawl across the fence and go away into the woods taking the corn to their dens. I have seen several bears in our corn field at one time, all gathering corn, and we lost lots of corn that way.

The screech owls made the nights hideous some times. An old Indian told me if I would put the broom under the bed it would make them hush. Every night when they would begin I would go hunt the broom and put

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it under the bed. One night Pa noticed me and said, "Whatever are you putting that broom under the bed for?" I said, "To make the screech owl hush." "How would the owls know you had done that?" "I don't know but they always hush if I do it and that is enough for me."

Grandpa gave us a little pig once and someone gave us two little Shepherd pups. We raised them all together by hand in the yard and fed them milk from the same pan. As they grew older the pups learned to run the wild hogs away from the fence and the pig would run them just as the dogs would, squealing as loud as they would bark. The pig would follow us children just as the dogs would. One day he followed us to grandpa's when we were going to spend the day. Grandpa said, "I'll swan, ain't that the pig I give you?" We told him "yes" and he said, "He is twice as big as his brothers and sisters are. Come on to the barn and let me show you."

Grandpa kept missing his corn and set a steel trap in the rail pen where he had his corn stacked. The next morning his nearest neighbor was standing as close to the pen as he could get. Grandpa said, "Howdy, ye be early, ain't ye?" He went ahead and milked and

when he had finished he said to the neighbor, "Come on to the house, the old lady will have breakfast by now." The neighbor said, "I can't, I have my hand caught." "Well, I swan," said my grandpa, "That is too bad, the rats was a carrying off my corn so bad I set a few traps in there for them. I am right smart sorry I ketched a neighbor's hand, I'll go into the pen and loosen it fur you, and come on to breakfast anyway." Grandpa did not lose any more corn.

Grandpa used to tell us a tale of when he was a young man and some of my aunts and uncles were little. He wanted to buy some good corn for meal from a man in the community who was known as the stingiest man in the world. He would not sell, but grandpa insisted for he needed the good corn for meal for his little ones. Little ones in those days mostly had mush and milk for supper and meal must be made out of good corn. The man would not sell although he had all his cribs full and a lot of pens besides. Well when night came grandpa went to one of the pens and filled his sack and took it to mill. Every time he needed to go to mill he would fill his sack out of his neighbor's corn. He kept account of the sacks. He made good corn

that year and the first load was carried to his neighbor. He rode up to his neighbor and said, "Where shall I put this corn?" His neighbor said, "That is not my d--- corn, I ain't bought no corn ofen you, I got corn left from last year." Grandpa, said, "But this is your corn, I borrowed it of you. You refused to sell and I had to have it to feed my children so I took it. Here it is now. What will I do with it?" "If you are that honest take the d--- corn and do what you please with it. I have more corn than I know what to do with now so don't leave it here. A man that is that d--- honest ought to have all the corn he can steal anyway."

We children would eat what mother ate and were always watching her plate to see what she ate. I had one little sister who did not seem to grow like she ought to. She was small and skinny. We had a big fat 'possum on the table to eat. Mother did not like 'possum and I did not intend to eat any. Some one drove up and halloed. We all went to the door except little sister and when we got back there wasn't any 'possum. Little Sister had reached for it and eaten and eaten and thrown the dogs the bones. From that day she began to grow and got fat and has been fat

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ever since. I had a little brother about two years old just walking around good. One morning mother was churning and all the others of us were out playing or doing something. Mother had finished taking up the butter and ^{had} set the butter on the table when a chicken cried and mother went out to see what was wrong. Brother was sitting on the floor and an old kitty was on the floor, too, with four little kitties. When mother got back brother had drowned all four kitties in the churn of buttermilk. That was why we did not have buttermilk for dinner that day.

Once the river changed its course and came right through our yard and the neighbors had to come for us in a boat and then swim our stock out. We lost lots of our chickens that way.

We all went to school in a one-room school house with wooden shutters and we usually went in the summer. The first day I went, I went with my cousin who was older than I. When one of them got up to go for a drink, I screamed out, "Lena, you must not do that, you are in school now, and must stay in your seat." That was what mother had told me, you see.

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We never went to school but two or three months out of each year. We nearly always had a man teacher and as we grew older it was mostly a courting place. We got water from a spring nearly a mile away and everyone wanted to go to fetch the water. O my, how long it would take us to go for a bucket of water. Two girls for the water for the girls, and two boys for the water for the boys. How we would give each other the wink so that the ones who wanted to talk would get to go at the same time. The teacher always made out he cared but I don't believe he did. He would give noon recess and go to sleep and sometime it would be 2:00 o'clock when he would wake up. We could wander around through the woods, go rabbit hunting or any thing we wanted to. We got awfully tired of him sleeping so much and one of the boys said, "I would give anything if some of you girls would throw a nest of wasps into his face and wake him up. He would not suspect a girl and we boys could hide." There was a nest of wasps building in the top of the house and our chance came one day when he lay down on a bench right under the nest and went to sleep.

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The boys caught me a lot of wasps; in a handkerchief and I slipped off my shoes and tip-toed in and shook them out in his face and ran out before he was awakened. I think he got about fifteen stings. He was so swollen for days he could not eat or sleep either. He never found out, for he did not suspicion a girl and all the boys were off in the woods. I explained to him how I had seen wasps lots of times get to fighting that way on a nest and tumble down.

We used to pass our notes in the dipper. We would give the one the wink we wanted to have the note and go get a drink, put the note in the dipper, and set the dipper on the top of the water right easy. The one the note was for came for the next drink and got the note. I met my husband in the cotton patch, and that was where we did most of our courting.

We were as anxious then as people are now to see into the future. We would look in the spring the first day of May for our future husband's picture. Stand in front of a mirror with a candle in our hand eating an apple to see if the face of our future husband would

peer from the glass at us; sleep with a piece of wedding
cake under our pillow, and dream about our future husband.
Then we would name all the corners of a new room after
meeting gentleman friends and the first corner one looked
at would be the man who loved you the best.