

JOHNSON, MAY.

INTERVIEW

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

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JOHNSON, MAY (MRS)

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Field Worker's name Lillian Cassaway.
This report made on (date) April 18, 1938. 1938

1. Name Mrs. May Johnson.
2. Post Office Address Anadarko, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) 316 East Central Boulevard.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 18 Year 1881.
5. Place of birth Texas.

6. Name of Father Jim H. Hargis. Place of birth Missouri.
7. Name of Mother Louis Tate Hargis. Place of birth Texas.

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 _____.

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Lillian Cassaway,
Investigator,
April 18, 1938.

Interview With Mrs. May Johnson,
Anadarko, Oklahoma.
316 East Central Boulevard.

My father came from Texas in 1882 when I was only two years old. He was a cattleman and we moved to the western part of the state, in wagons pulled by oxen. We were near Mangum, on the old cattle trail, which was then a part of Texas.

My father made the run when Old Oklahoma was opened. He made it on a mule and staked a claim that is now in the heart of Oklahoma City. He only stayed there a short time, as he did not consider it very good land to farm. He had always been used to bottom land, so he just rode off and left his claim. He then moved to Paula Valley and went to farming. When the Cheyenne country opened up he made that run and staked a claim near Arapaho, on old Barnett Creek. There were very few houses in Paula Valley and maybe two lumber yards. After Father staked his claim in Ouster County he took the family there and

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then he went back to Paula Valley to finish his crop. He stayed there another year after that, but almost made two failures so he came on to the claim. When he moved the family onto the claim they took enough provisions to last a year. Father always raised a big lot of hogs and cattle, and so before we started he butchered enough hogs to last us a year. Then the next year he butchered again and he brought us enough to last another year. After my father came to the claim he raised hogs and cattle and corn. He had his own feed pens and dipping vats. He made enough money off of that place to eventually buy the three places joining him. He used to buy corn and hay and such from the farmers around. I have seen ricks of corn two blocks long and stacked as high as a man could pitch it off of the wagon. It was just like a store, someone was there all the time with something to sell. There was a lot of sage grass around and I have seen it grow so high that a man on horseback could easily hide in it.

Our schools in Custer County at that time were very poor. A Miss Ball Wolf, who had staked a claim, made her-

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self a half dugout to live in. She had to stay on this claim long enough to prove up on it, and wanted to make her expenses so she converted her home into a school. That year we only had a three months school. For two terms we had school in the half dugout for three months. Then as more people came into the country the schools were of longer duration, but very seldom did a school last over six months.

We were scared to death of the Indians. When we children saw an Indian coming, if we had time, we ran and hid under the beds or elsewhere. One day though some came to the house and walked in before we knew they were on the place. They never knocked, it wasn't their custom even among themselves. They asked mother for some chuck-away (something to eat). Mother told them that she did not have anything for them, so they started to the kitchen to help themselves. Mother picked up a shot gun that was lying under the edge of the bed and told them to get out. They were so mad that they went off cursing mother in undertones. They used to go meet the cattle herds that

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the men were taking to market. Sometime there would be so many cattle that it would take all day for them to pass our place. The Indians would go to meet these herds and if there were any cattle that were too exhausted to go on and the cattlemen would drop them from the herd, then the Indians would butcher and eat a big part of the meat right there. One time Father had taken his cattle to a water hole for water, and for some reason the cattle became scared. They ran over each other and some got down in the water, thus drowning. There must have been about a dozen or more and Father made no effort to get them out, for they were a long ways from home. The dead cows had been there several days when the Indians found them. They came to father and told him if he would let them have the cattle they would skin them and give him the hides. He told them all right that he didn't intend to do anything with them as the hides didn't amount to much then. They gave him the hides and ate the meat. They were the nastiest people that I ever saw. One time they camped near our place and we children were very curious to watch them.

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We went as near the camp as we dared. One old woman went out along the creek and picked up all the terrapin that she could carry and brought them and put them in the fire. She laid them on their backs, so they would not walk off, and if they fell out of the fire she had a stick that she pushed them back with. She kept them in the fire until they were done enough to eat, then they ate them out of the shell just as they came out of the fire.

There was plenty of game of all kinds. Deer and turkey were plentiful, also quail. I made a trap as big as a table and set it in our front yard. I put feed inside of it and had a string fastened to it long enough to reach into the house. I sat by a window and when the trap would get full I pulled the string thus we had quail nearly all the time.

Our main amusements were literary societies and also church. We used to go as far as twenty miles to a literary meeting. The debates were very interesting and everybody was there to boost for his side. We used to have camp meetings held out under the trees and everyone would come

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with big basket dinners. Tables were long boards and sometimes they were four or five hundred feet long. Everyone put their lunches together and if any came without a lunch he was looked after and made sure that he had as much as he could eat. In the afternoon we had singing or Sunday School, and in the evening we had church again. Some people came as far as twenty miles to these meetings. We used to go to Foss for entertainment, which was twenty miles from our place and everywhere we went we had to go either in a wagon, buggy, or horseback.

In 1902 or '03 the Washita River overflowed and a number of people drowned. It washed away most of the houses near us but our house remained standing. We had to wade out onto higher grounds as the water got up about three feet in our house.

Father used to drive his hogs to market from Arapaho to El Reno. He always hauled feed for them in a wagon. If he ran out of feed he would buy some from the farmers along the way. He had to go very slow for if a hog got tired it would lie down to rest, and they would have to stop the

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whole herd until it decided to get up again, then they would go on. Father had so many hogs that they couldn't be hauled to market, neither could he ship them, as El Reno was the nearest railroad.