

VAN ALSTINE, JIMIE (MRS.)

INTERVIEW

10517

106

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

VAN ALSTINE, JIMMIE (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10517

Field Worker's name Ethel Mae Yates.

This report made on (date) April 19, 1938

1. Name Mrs. Jimmie Van Alstine.

2. Post Office Address Elk City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 1600 West Broadway.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 20 Year 1881

5. Place of birth River Side, Texas.

6. Name of Father Jimmie Roach Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Randy Roach Place of birth Tennessee.

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 Thirteen.

VAN ALSTINE, JIMMIE (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10517

Yates, Ethel Mae - Investigator.  
Indian Pioneer History - S-149.  
April 19, 1938.

Interview with  
Mrs. Jimmie Van Alstine  
Elk City, Oklahoma.

\*\*\*\*

My parents are Jimmie and Randy Roach. They were married in Tennessee and came to Texas, in which state, at Riverside, my father died before I was born.

I came to the Chickasaw Nation with my grandfather and grandmother Plemons, and my mother. There were also two aunts and three uncles in our group. This was in the year 1887. We came in covered wagons and Grandfather brought one yoke of oxen. He took a lease on Rush Creek, on what was then known as the McDowell place, and he farmed with the oxen. One day my uncle, Joe Plemons, had hooked these oxen to the wagon and started to the field, when they ran away and upset the wagon with him in it.

Our post office was Purcell and that was where we took our chickens, eggs, and butter to market, and bought our supplies. I don't know just how many miles it was, but it usually took four days to make the trip.

Our living quarters consisted of one log room and a two-room dugout. The log room had one door, a half window

VAN ALSTINE, JIMMIE (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10517

-2-

and a dirt floor. The dugout was just dug down in the ground and covered with dirt. We went down dirt steps like those of the old storm cellars.

We had good ash wood to burn, so Grandfather made Grandmother an ash hopper out of a barrel. He fixed a small log at one side and a larger one opposite, so it would tilt, and they would fill it with ashes and keep them wet with water and when it started to drip, Grandmother would catch the lye, and when the lye was strong enough to hold up an egg or would singe the feather off the stem, it was strong enough to make soap. She would take old left-over meat crackling and put in this solution, making soft soap to wash our clothes with. She cooked her soap in an iron kettle in the fire-place, and one morning, when we got up, there was a large rat in her soap. The rats were so bad that they almost undermined our dugout. Grandfather had an ingenious contrivance of a barrel half full of water, into which the rats would be thrown by its tilting when they got on it, and with this he destroyed lots of rats.

There were some deer and lots of quail here when we first came, and lots of grapes and plums. There was one kind of plum, a large blue plum, that grew on large trees,

VAN ALSTINE, JIMMIE (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10517

-3-

but didn't get ripe until fall and were t'ay fine!

I well remember the first school that I went to. I had to walk three miles, my teacher's name was Anna Nesberry. We went by a little store and one day some of us girls stopped in this store and these girls were picking out some stockings for themselves. These stockings were made with bright stripes that ran cross-ways. They picked theirs and I started to pick out a pair for myself, and when I did, I fell through a hole in the floor, and I know that I never was so scared in my life as I was that time. There was a man who pulled me out, and years later, when we came west, I met this man and he recognized me and told me that he was the man who pulled me up through the hole in the floor, when I was a little girl.

We planted corn, cotton, and oats and made fine crops.

We lived here several years, then moved on up Rush Creek to within about eight miles of Marlow. There we lived in a large box-room and a dugout. Before we left the other place, Grandfather had gotten some milch cows and we owned a pet horse named Brandy. I kept begging Grandfather to let me ride Brandy, so he let me ride him for the first time, to help drive these cows. There was one cow that kept staying

VAN ALSTINE, JIMMIE (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10517

-4-

behind and this horse got mad at her and grabbed her in the back with his mouth and ran her plumb to the front of the herd. I thought it was funny and was laughing. Grandfather thought the horse was running away and he was hollowing as loud as he could.

We lived here near Marlow and farmed, and in the meantime had accumulated quite a herd of cattle. When the Cheyenne and Arapaho Run was made Grandfather made the run and got a claim two and a half miles south of old Hammon. He then rented a place on the Washita River which had a two-room half dugout on it, walled up with logs, and covered with dirt and logs. He then came back after us. When we left Rush Creek we left with three covered wagons and a herd of cattle.

Some of the men folk slept on pallets on the ground while others kept watch. Something came through the herd and caused two or three stampedes on our way, and we were caught out in a sleet storm one night, when we were camped away up on a high hill. The next morning the cowboys' pallets were frozen stiff and Grandfather wouldn't let Mother and me out of the wagon, so we drove all day and didn't get to stop and cook anything to eat until supper. When we got down on Cache Creek my uncle, Willie Plemons, met us with another

VAN ALSTINE, JIMMIE (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10517

-5-

wagon, so I then had a wagon to drive. This wagon had no brakes; but we had an extra horse along, and we tied it to the back of my wagon, which proved a great help to me, for we had to cross a canyon, the banks of which were very steep, and when I started down, the horses couldn't possibly hold the wagon, but the horse, tied to the back, sat down and that helped to slow the wagon. I guess that was all that saved me. Then I got up on the other side there sat two men in a hack. They had been watching me and said they just knew that I would get my neck broken. They were strangers to me then but in later years one of them became my husband. Mother drove the chuck wagon, with a span of little mules. Her wagon was the back one. One morning they started out before she had the pots and pans in the wagon,

and her team started too. She had to run to catch up and lost one of her shoes. Our cooking vessels, on this trip, were a black iron kettle and a bake oven. We would boil potatoes, onions and meat together, and bake sour dough, or baking powder bread, cook on a stick fire and my! would we eat! Sometimes we would have <sup>to</sup> bake bread two or three times:

We came to our rented place, and let our cattle run down on the river as everything was free Range. Rathbone

VAN ALSTINE, JIMMIE (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10517

-6-

was just across the river from us on the south and Edwardsville was west of us two miles and across the river. It was between us and Foss. We lived here about two years. There was a saw-mill put in on the river and Grandfather cut logs and hauled them to the mill and had them split, and built a one-room house, for us, stockade fashioned, that is the split logs stood up endways, and covered with slabs, which was the back side that was split off the logs.

I was married on the 7th day of August, 1898, to Mr. J. Van Alstine, and moved to his claim, where we had a two-room cottonwood house with a hall. It was built with twelve inch planks and then the cracks stripped, and how it would warp when it would rain and the sun would come out.

My grandmother gave me a little half-gallon churn, that was large at the bottom and small at the top. I went down on the river and cut some limbs and made a little churn dash and took a piece of board and whittled out a lid to fit the churn, and with this I did all my churning.

A little later, we bought my grandfather's place and moved over there. I am the mother of seven children, all born on this place but one. When we traded out there, we moved over to Foss but didn't stay there long, until we



VAN ALSTINE, JIMMIE (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10517

-7-

moved to Arkansas. We moved in a covered wagon and did we travel over some rocky roads! My husband got a job in the mill camps, six or eight miles east of Nunley. Later we left the mill camps and went to Mena, Arkansas, and there I lost my husband on the 22nd day of October, 1912. We brought him back to Stafford and buried him in the Murphy cemetery. Then on March 22, 1913, our little Nellie died. I took in washing to support my children while living at Mena, and also at Wellington, Texas, where I moved some time later. When my health became bad, I moved to Clinton and lived for some time. My mother was living here at Elk City, and she got in poor health, so I came here and took care of her until she died, March 19, 1930. Both my grandparents also died here in Elk City and are buried here.

I still make Elk City my home.