

McCOLUM, JOHN S.

INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name Ethel Mae Yates,

This report made on (date) April 29, 1938.

1. Name John S. McColum,

2. Post Office Address Elk City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 1st Year 1857

5. Place of birth Mississippi

6. Name of Father John S. McColum Place of birth Don't know.

7. Name of Mother Elizabeth McColum Place of birth Don't know.

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 5.

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Ethel Mae Yates,  
Investigator,  
April 29, 1938.

An Interview with John S. McColum,  
Elk City, Oklahoma.

I came with my family from Erath, Texas, in 1888 in one covered wagon with two horses pulling it and two tied on behind. We crossed Red River at a ford where we had to double teams to pull across.

This was in an early day and times were squally. I had to sit up one night to guard my team. I never did know <sup>against</sup> whether I was guarding Indians or horse thieves. But we had no other trouble and came on and took a lease near Chickasha on Salt Creek.

I planted a wheat crop and in 1889 made the Run. I went on two days ahead of time and camped on the Canadian River. I made the Run on a large black horse and a boy ran with me on another black horse. My brother-in-law, L. G. Bills, didn't own any horses so I let him take my wagon in which to make the Run. I had trained my horse and thought that he was almost a race horse, but in the Run my brother-in-law almost kept up with me. We were all lined up along

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the river and were supposed to be turned loose at twelve o'clock sharp. They were turned loose at El Reno at least thirty minutes before hand. You never saw so many people. They were just as thick as birds. Well, we didn't get anything, so I went on back home and lived on this lease until after the Cheyenne and Arapaho Run. I came and moved some people over on their claim near Bessie in Washita County, and when we got there it was just after a hail storm, and everything was beaten down. I just didn't think that this country was worth anything so I went back home. That Fall I moved some more people over and then the blue grass had come out and the country was looking fine. But a cowboy told us that we had better stay out of there, that we couldn't make a thing. However, I went to Oklahoma City and filed, went back home and traded my team off for some oxen, tore down a shack that I owned, and I loaded what little we had and the lumber from the shack and with my oxen came to our claim. With the lumber I built a temporary shack for our use until I could dig a dugout, 14 X 16. This was just dug down in the ground and covered with dirt, with dirt steps that went down

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into it. I dug a fireplace back in the back end where we did our cooking. I immediately began breaking sod with my oxen. The reason I had traded for these oxen was that feed was scarce and I could keep oxen cheaper than I could horses. I would plow until noon, then go and eat, leaving them at the plow, then at night turn them loose on the grass. I broke sod until the land got so dry I couldn't. I just couldn't get a job and money was scarce. So I went to gathering buffalo bones and hauling them to Minco. I sold these for \$20.00 a ton and sometimes I hauled twenty-five hundred pounds. This is the first money I made after I came on my claim. In this way I managed to get groceries and make crop. After I got my land broke, I traded one of the oxen to a merchant at Arapaho, taking its price out in groceries. He went broke so I lost about half of that.

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There were lots of wild turkey when we first came here and when freighting lots of nights we would camp on the Washita River and in the morning the turkeys would fly out of the trees and be just thick all around us. I have been caught out in many a snow storm while freighting, waking up in the

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morning with my covers frozen stiff and my teams almost frozen to death.

My claim was between Clinton and Bessie in Washita County and there was a little creek that ran through my place. It made a little island that had a large elm tree in the middle of it. I made a dam across the creek to this island and my wife would go over under this tree to wash. This dam held water for us and our stock as well and it also was where we took our baths.

I hauled the first corn I raised on my place eighteen miles and sold it for twenty-five cents per bushel.

A year or two after we came here, I was off freighting and my wife had gone to stay at her father's when everything we had in the dugout got burned. I always thought I knew who set this fire as I had some outlaw neighbors, and they thought that I didn't approve of them. The neighbors made up thirteen dollars in money and gave us enough household goods to keep house. I soon built a three-room sod house, plastering it inside with gyp. It looked nice inside but not so good on the outside.

About 1896 I bought a claim that joined mine and got some pigs and corn in the deal, so I thought I would raise some hogs for market. I took the very best care of them and when they

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weighed about two hundred, I loaded them up and took them to Minco; but couldn't get a bid on them, so I took them to El Reno and sold them for two cents a pound. I raised some of the finest wheat, when I took it to market I got sixty cents per bushel for it and with this money I bought flour for one dollar a hundred pounds.

I sold out this claim and moved to Cordell where I put up the first gin that was in Cordell. It wasn't long until I learned that I could get a second filing so I filed on a claim out near Cordell. I didn't keep this claim long until I sold out and moved near Clinton. After farming there a while I sold out and went southeast of Foss. The year I was in the Foss vicinity it was twelve months between rains and I didn't make a thing, so I moved on the flats south of Foss where we lived three years. In 1908 I took a lease on the Washita River and stayed there five years, then selling out and moving on Indian Creek between Carter and Sayre. In 1921 we moved to Elk City and that is now my home.