

PHILPS, MARY A.

INTERVIEW

#8883

- 2 -

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

285

PHILPS, MARY A. (.. .)

INTERVIEW.

#8883

Field Worker's name Ethel Mae YatesThis report made on (date) October 18, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Mary A. Philps
2. Post Office Address Elk City, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) Route #2, Box 115-A
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 7 Year 1853
5. Place of birth Virginia
6. Name of Father William Fisswates Place of birth Virginia  
Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_
7. Name of Mother Emma Fisswates Place of birth Virginia.  
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 \_\_\_\_\_.

An Interview with Mrs. Mary A. Philips, Elk City.  
By - Ethel Mae Yates, Field Worker.  
October 18, 1937.

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My husband and myself and five children came to the Territory in the year of 1898. We came from Missouri in covered wagons and crossed the Missouri River on a steamboat.

We crossed the Canadian and the Washita Rivers, camped out at night and sometimes it was a problem to get feed for our horses; water was scarce and at times we could hardly find any water at all. We brought with us two wagons and teams and because my husband was sick I had to drive one of the teams most of the way.

We came through Arapaho and close enough to see Weatherford which was just a bunch of tents. We left Missouri on the fifteenth of July and got here on the eleventh day of August and filed on a claim two miles east of where Elk City is now.

My husband went to Weatherford and got lumber for a dugout; he dug down in the ground for our dugout and walled it up with planks and made it sixteen

by eighteen feet. We had been told that we would not need a roof so we just covered the dugout with planks; it was not long until it began raining and the water began pouring into the dugout and we nearly drowned. My husband then had to go to Weatherford and get shingles to cover the dugout.

He then went down on Sandstone Ridge and cut poles for a barn; then he dug down into the ground and walled the dugout up with poles and then with prairie hay, then covered it with poles and sod, so this was shelter for our stock.

My husband then went to work to fence in our place; he went down on Sandstone Ridge and got posts and then went to Weatherford and got the barbed wire and fenced forty acres of land, and then we used the wire spools for chairs as we just had one old chair that we had brought with us.

We had come here to get a home and like most of the pioneers we had come without much money, and by the time we had gotten our improvements made, our money was all gone, so our oldest boy, Tom, went down into the

PHILLIPS, MARY A.

INTERVIEW.

3

eastern part of the Nation to work and my husband put the crop all in. Then Tom got sick and had to come home so my husband then had to go away to work to make money for us to live on which left me and the small children to make the crop.

We certainly did go through some hardships the first year we were here. We had to use cow chips most of the time for fuel, and we did not have any fruit of any kind the first year.

In the spring we went out and gathered sheep-sorrel, which was a little weed with a sour flavor and made pies out of this. We brought our meat and soap with us and the way I got my lye to make soap was to take green cottonwood and burn it to ashes then put the ashes in a large cast-iron kettle I had, then cover them with water and boil them thin. I would dip out the lye to make my soap with.

I raised a wonderful garden the first year; after the pumpkins came in we had plenty of pumpkin butter. After the boy got well he and his father both went down around Kingfisher to harvest, then on down East in the Fall and gathered corn. They came

4

home Thanksgiving and brought some apples and gave all the children one apple apiece; the youngest had forgot what apples were.

I did all of my sewing for our family by hand as I did not own a sewing machine. I made shirts, pants and underwear for my husband and boys and I knitted all of our stockings and socks. My mother sent me the yarn from Missouri. My dresses were made of blue shirting.

The first winter we were here, the children had to go three miles to school, which was taught in one room of a dwelling house owned by Mrs. Smith. My little girl, Jennie, did not have a dress to wear to school, so I took a red and black bedspread that I had and made her one, and her teacher told her that she thought she had a very pretty dress so Jennie came home thrilled about it.

Our postoffice was Edwardville, a settlement which was later done away with.

The first church I went to was in a dugout owned by a Mr. Keen, and he also owned a little store

and ran a post office in a dugout. People called this place Buck, but later when Elk City was started these buildings were moved to Elk City.

The second school our children went to was taught in our son's dugout; he had filed on a claim and being unmarried, let his dugout be used for a schoolhouse.

We raised a good sod crop the first year we were here and a good garden and that fall my husband went to a public sale and bought sixty hens. I made a hen house like our barn for our chickens. My husband bought a cow; she just gave enough cream for coffee and enough milk to make gravy for breakfast. She had a nice steer calf which my husband traded for two heifer calves and paid the difference; he kept this trading up each year until we got a start of cattle.

The second year we were here we went over on the Washita River and got a lot of plums. There was not a house to be seen anywhere and the nearest dugout was a mile from us and was made about the

same time ours was. No one knows what a hard time we went through the first year except the pioneers themselves. We never did really go hungry but sometimes there was very little to eat.

My husband, five children and myself lived in this dugout for seven years before we were able to build a house.

We stayed on this claim for twenty-two years and then moved to Elk City and lived there four years, then moved back to the claim and lived four years, then sold it and went back to Missouri and stayed there four years and then came back to Elk City.

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