

McCUTCHEN, JANE

INTERVIEW

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

Field Worker's name Zaidee B. Bland

This report made on (date) September 22 1937

1. Name Mrs. Jane Minerva McCutchen

2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 506 West Walnut

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 5 Year 1864

5. Place of birth Tennessee

6. Name of Father John J. Graham Place of birth Alabama

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Jane Conyers 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 _____.

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Zaidee B. Bland
Interviewer
September 22, 1837

Interview with Mrs. Jane Minerva McCutchen,
506 West Walnut, Altus, Oklahoma.

My husband was a Cumberland Presbyterian preacher. We lived at Vernon for several years and as this country was all Texas then he often came across Red River to preach. In the Fall of 1896 Mr. Banks offered to sell Mr. McCutchen his claim very reasonably and let him prove up on it. Mr. McCutchen bought it in November and we moved over the river. We loaded our household goods into a covered wagon, and drove over one evening and set up housekeeping in a hole in the ground.

Mr. McCutchen was gone a lot preaching and I had to stay home and take care of things while he was away. Preaching did not pay much in those days for all the salary was made up of free will offerings but we managed to get along for we all considered the saving of souls the most important work in the world. I was very lonesome sometimes. Mr. McCutchen always stayed at home to plant the crops and he helped gather them sometimes. We put out an orchard

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the first thing after we got all the fall plowing done. I think I have done everything there was to do on a farm except plow. We never had a riding plow so I never tried that. We put seedlings in the ground for the orchard, plums and peaches and later apples, pears, grapes, dewberries, blackberries and apricots. All kinds of fruit grew and bore well for our soil was sandy. I think I had twenty-five different kinds of flowers that first year, Sweet Williams, Bachelor Buttons, Zinnias, Four O'clocks, Moss, Phlox, and a lot of other flowers, the names of which I have forgotten now.

When the land was plowed up around the house there were many centipedes that were run out of the grass and it looked as if everyone of them tried to get into the dugout. We killed so many that I finally decided to count them one month and I counted forty that I had killed that month. I have seen centipedes eighteen inches long and as wide as my hand. We were terribly afraid of them but were never harmed by them. I doubt if a centipede would really harm anyone. Of course they have a way of wrapping their bodies around their prey and stinging or

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smothering it to death but they do that for food. The centipedes always seemed willing enough to run away and hide with out trying to fight when we would find them.

Our claim lay one mile east and one mile north of Hess. Our dugout was built up about three feet above the ground and had three slide windows in it. I had it all papered on the inside even if I did have to have a dirt floor. Everytime a bug or anything would hit that paper I would hear it. I always said that I slept with one eye open for bugs, centipedes and tarantulas.

One night it was warm and I put the children to sleep with their heads near the door which lay open and flat on the ground on the outside of the dugout. Mr. McCutchen was away helping a thrashing gang. The kitty came down the steps and a snake hissed and waggled its tail. I thought sure it was a rattler. I stepped up a step or two to look around and there the snake was coiled upon the door that was laid back. I was so frightened that I moved all the children over on my bed and sat down to wait for my husband. He came in about ten o'clock

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and when I heard him I cried to him, "Look out there is a big snake coiled upon the door!" Mr. McCutchen got his pitchfork and killed it. It was longer than his pitchfork, handle and all, but it was a Bull snake. The snake's tail hitting the paper on the inside had made sounds which were to me like the noise of a rattler.

Fuel

We brought with us a cook stove and that was all the heat we ever needed until we built another house in front of the old dugout. We burned mostly wood that had to be gotten out of the Indian Nation. We usually referred to the getting of the wood as stealing it, but Drew Thomas said one time he never considered that he had ever stolen but one load of wood. He went over the river one time to get wood and found a wagon, already loaded with nice wood, with the back wheel broken. He kindly unloaded the wood off the wagon with the broken wheel and onto his own wagon and pulled out for home. His wife never could guess how he had made the trip for that load of wood so quickly until one day their nearest neighbor who was a Baptist preacher came over and said that he had

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been over for a load of wood and just as he got nearly back to the river one of his wagon wheels had broken and he had unhitched his team and had come on in home and gotten another wheel and had gone back the next day for his wood but someone had stolen it and he had had to cut another load.

Nearly always several neighbors would go for wood together. One evening Mr. McCutchen said, "I am going for wood tonight, I will put out my lines and get fish while I cut my wood." There was no neighbor ready to go. Our nearest neighbor had gone to Vernon. I could not let Mr. McCutchen go alone so I got ready and went with him. When we got over to Otter Creek and set up our camping things and went down to the water to set our lines for fish, we could see where there had been a recent camp and the tall grass looked like someone had been hiding there for some time. We could see plainly where three men had lain in the grass. We hitched right up and pulled out for home without our wood. In a few days we learned that the United States Marshals had lain in that grass and arrested just fourteen of our friends and

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neighbors for getting wood and taken them to El Reno and had started with them not two hours before we made our camp there. We always alluded to that trip as a narrow escape. We would work all day and then hitch up a team to the wagon and drive ten miles to hear preaching at night. We never missed a meeting that was near us. If it was over twenty miles away we went and camped or stayed with some of the brethren. If the meeting was only ten or fifteen miles away we always drove back and forth from home. When a meeting was begun it usually lasted three or four weeks. The meetings were usually held in pleasant weather so that we could sleep out under the stars.

There was always a brush arbor to do the preaching under and the women and children usually spread their pallets or quilts in the house which was usually a school house. We would boil up whole hams, make bread to last weeks at a time and if the bread gave out we would go to the nearest house and bake another batch.

Building a new country meant to us seeing that all the souls in the country were saved or at least had the opportunity of being saved from the hearing of the Word.

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I have seen a lot of people healed by the power of God back in those days. I had a little grandson who could not walk because he could not use his limbs which were swollen all out of shape. He was carried to meeting every night and made as comfortable as possible on quilts and pillows on a bench near the altar. One night as the preacher gave the Altar Call my grandson rolled off his bench and crawled up to the preacher and giving him his hand asked to be prayed for. The child came away walking and is a strong, fine man to this day living in Arizona.

Sanctification was very common in those days. Everyone who was religiously inclined hoped for sanctification, longed for it and many of them received it. ~~There was a good looking widow at one of the meetings~~ at Lone Oak got sanctified one night and threw away her snuff box and shouted all over the grounds. When at last the services were closed and everyone went home the sanctified lady got to her home about six miles away and found she had left her little four year old daughter asleep in the hay at the arbor. Of course they drove

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back for the child who had not waked up and knew nothing about what had happened. There were plenty of people camping there to have taken care of her had she wakened. This lady and her little daughter are both living yet in California. I tell you it was an inspiring sight to see both men and women get so happy that they would walk the benches and shout and clap their hands. It was better than any shows you can go to now.

We had guineas, chickens, hogs and cattle and horses on our farm. We did not try to make a living by raising stock. Our real business was saving souls. I have taken care of four extra delegates, have done all my cooking, washing and ironing and have gone to preaching at eight o'clock every morning for a week and thought I was having a good time, and now with water in the house I can hardly get my work done in time to go to church on Sunday morning. We always carried dinner and had it on the grounds in the day time. Once Mr. McCutchen got on the wagon wheel and counted the people whom we fed from our spread and counted forty-two. We were never sure

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whether he counted them all. I don't know how I ever cooked for so many, but I did.

I had a Singer sewing machine and did all my own sewing. We usually made our hats from pieces of our dresses. We trimmed our hats with ribbon mostly or with feathers and sometimes we made artificial flowers or dipped fresh flowers in the thin tallow which we made candles from and put these flowers on our hats and they would stay pretty for a season at least.

Our first organ cost us \$125.00 and we bought it from an agent who shipped it to Vernon. We always went over into the Nation and gathered pecans enough to do us for the winter. I do not remember ever seeing Indians except passing. We raised corn, maize, sweet potatoes, ~~a little cotton, but mostly we raised just what we needed~~ on the farm in the way of food for the stock or the family, depending on Mr. McGutchen's preaching for the money to buy the other things. I never saw a drunk man until after Statehood and never had any experiences with a dishonest man until since the depression.