

S KES, SUSIE

INTERVIEW.

#6488

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

Field Worker's name Alene D. McDowell

This report made on (date) June 14, 193 7

1. Name Mrs. Susie Sykes

2. Post Office Address Ex 907 West Third, Bartlesville, Okla

3. Residence address (or location) 907 W. Third, Bartlesville, Oklah.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 10 Year 1871

5. Place of birth Bates County, Missouri

6. Name of Father W. P. Evans Place of birth Illinois

Other information about father Methodist minister

7. Name of Mother Sarah, Johnson-Evans place of birth Missouri

Other information about mother buried in Oklahoma

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 12.

SYKES, SUSIE. INTERVIEW.
Alene J. McDowell
Research Field Worker
Indian Pioneer History, S-149
June 14, 1937

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MY EXPERIENCES SINCE 1882
Given by Mrs. Susie Sykes
907 West Third Street
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

Mrs. Susie Sykes was born in Bates
County, Missouri, May 10, 1871.

Father - W. P. Evans, born in Illi-
nois. He was a Methodist minister, and
preached in the Indian Territory in the
early days. He organized a Sunday school
in the home of a family named Saunders.
The house was a double log house with a
large entrance or reception room. In this
room we had Sunday school and church,
where Mr. Evans preached to the small con-

gregation. This house was located on Coon
Creek, east of what is now Bartlesville,
Oklahoma. Churches were so few and people
gladly donated their homes for this purpose.

Mr. Evans died at the age of 77 years and

is buried at Ochelata, Oklahoma, about twelve miles south of Bartlesville.

Mother - Sarah Johnson-Evans, born in Missouri and died at the age of 41 years, in Oklahoma, and is buried in the Stokes Cemetery, located six miles southwest of Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

I removed from Bates County, Missouri to Topeka, Kansas, with my parents, in a covered wagon, when I was ten years old. We lived in Topeka for one year, then removed to the Indian Territory in 1882 and settled two and one-half miles west of what is now Dewey, Oklahoma, on a farm leased from Dutch Whiteturkey, a full blood Delaware Indian. Our group consisted of my parents and six children, and we brought a wagon and two teams with us to the Indian Territory.

My father cut logs and floated them down the Kanaw river to Jim Stokes' saw mill, to build our first home. The house was one large room built of rough lumber, hauled from the mill in wagons.

Our furniture was homemade chairs, tables and beds. We had a dug well, which supplied both the house and stock.

My father followed a agriculture on a large scale, and raised both corn and wheat for the market. He hauled wheat to the Bartles mill and to Coffeyville, Kansas to market. He also raised livestock for the market. The livestock consisted mostly of sheep and hogs and some horses.

Our food was principally raised on the farm. Twice a year my father took a double wagon load of wheat to Coffeyville where it was ground into flour, and also

had our corn meal ground. Supplies were bought to last us six months at Joffeyville. Sugar was bought by the hundred pounds and coffee by the sack. We raised our vegetables and fruit to can, made jelly, butters, preserves and pickles. We grew corn, beans, onions and fruits. We buried potatoes, sweet potatoes, apples, and cabbage for winter use, made our vinegar and cider, had several hives of honey bees and made our sorghum.

My father owned a sorghum mill and made sorghum for the neighbors for one-third. He had a man hired to help him and he took care of the mill from twelve o'clock noon until midnight, then the other man relieved him.

My father never butchered less than sixteen hogs for our winter meat. There was not much waste to a hog for we used every-

thing possible. We rendered our lard, and made soap from the cracklings, cured the hams, shoulders and sides, made sausage and fried it down in a large stone jar with grease poured over the top, made sacks from cheese cloth and stuffed them with sausage and smoked it, cleaned the stomach and stuffed it with headcheese, pickled the feet and ears, made liver-wurst from the liver, and pickled what spare ribs and back bones that could not be used while fresh.

We raised our chickens, geese, ducks, guineas and turkeys, sold enough eggs and butter to buy our clothes, made our butter and clabber cheese and always had plenty of milk. We baked our light-bread and pastry. In fact we raised every thing we ate except sugar and coffee.

Fish and wild game were plentiful and it was no trouble to shoot a deer, wild turkey, wild prairie chickens. We had a variety of meat, wild berries and fruits, but it took a lot of hard work to prepare them.

I only had one brother, the youngest of the family, so I was my father's helper and always worked in the fields. I have broke ground, arrowed it, and drilled wheat, planted, plowed and gathered corn, in fact have done nearly all kinds of farm work.

I was driving the team one day, while my father and an Indian, who was helping my father shock wheat, were trying to finish a field before a big rain, which was coming up fast. I decided to help shock wheat on one side with the Indian

while my father worked the other side, so we could finish before the rain. I soon became too hot and was seriously ill, this effected my health for several years. My father always said he missed me more when I married, than any of the other children.

We lived on the Caesar place, located two and one-half miles southeast of Ochelata, on Double Creek, and we went to school in a log school house. Our teacher was Henry East, and I received an eighth grade education in this school.

The Caesar Cemetery was located on the banks of Double Creek, on our land. This

was a Cherokee Indian Cemetery, with about twenty-five graves. I attended three Indian funerals while we lived there. They only dug the grave about two feet

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deep and placed a box only large enough for the body and covered it with dirt. We had to whip our dogs to keep them from digging the body up. The Indians gathered at the grave every evening at sun down for four days and kept a candle burning at the head "to light them over." They claimed it took four days for them to get over. They muttered something in their language and moaned, but they were usually very quiet.

I attended an Osage baby's funeral once and they buried it in a trunk. It was placed on top of the ground with rocks built around it. They hired mourners who could be heard for several miles. The louder they mourned the better satisfied the family was. They mourned all night. Their graves were referred to as Indian mounds.

I married Melvin Bossen and we settled on Wilhoush Creek, near Hominy, in Osage County. Our nearest neighbor lived five miles distant from us and it was terribly lonesome, when I had time to be.

The Indians would ride past our house in a single file, sometimes a half mile long, in the evenings. They were very curious and would follow around after us and watch us work, but would not say a word.

There were numerous wild animals in the Territory in the early days; panthers, bob-cats, catamounts and wolves. Panthers would scream at nights and could be heard for miles.

I had many friends among the Indians, and soon learned if an Indian was a friend, he would do anything for you. If they

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came to my house and ^{asked} ask for food. I always gave them something. ~~this made~~ friends. If they did not like you, they would ignore you.

One time my brother-in-law ~~rented~~ farm near us, and the Indians did not like him and would not grant him a permit. He ask me to talk to them for they liked me. I visited them and spent the day and ate with them, and they issued me the permit.

When the full blood Osages were hunting, they wore blankets and had their saddles decorated with all kinds of hunting equipment, guns, tomahawks, etc.

One Fourth of July, we attended their celebration, "until the party got rough." There was a barrel of whiskey in the wagon, with two tin cups tied to the barrel, soon they were all drunk and quarrelsome.

My husband was making preparations to make the run into the Cherokee Outlet in 1893, and had his horse trained ready to go, when he became seriously ill and died a few days before the run. He was 27 years old when he died. I was left with two small children in a wild country.

In 1896 I married Joe Sykes, a Union soldier during the Civil war. He served in Missouri. Our first home was in Bartlesville, and was located near the freight depot. It was a small house and had no conveniences.

I have been in Bartlesville when there was only a log cabin on the Canguy river banks, near where the dam is now located.

We bought a home located at 705 Choctaw avenue, where we lived for twelve years.

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then sold and bought a house at 719 Oak avenue. The negroes soon built homes around us and we sold that place. I have lived in Bartlesville for forty years.

I remember crossing the Canby river once, when the river was bank full. We crossed on the ferry boat, west of where the Cherokee Avenue bridge now stands. A man drove his team on the boat just a head of us, with a load of wheat. The team backed the wagon off the boat and both the wagon and team were never found.

COMMENTS

Mrs. Sykes remarked she had experienced many hardships in the early pioneer life in the Indian Territory, but still longs for the good old days. They made a trip to California several years ago, and she took of the beautiful country, but still thinks it does not compare with Oklahoma.