

SWEET, J. L. (MRS.)

INTERVIEW

#8329

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field Worker's name Ruth Kerbo.

This report made on (date) August 17, 1937.

1. Name Mrs. J. L. Sweet.

2. Post Office Address Mangum, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 431 East Lincoln Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 30 Year 1867.

5. Place of birth Springfield, Illinois.

6. Name of Father A. W. Gilstrap. Place of birth Tennessee.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Francis Stilwell. Place of birth Illinois.

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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Ruth Kerbo,
Interviewer.

August 17, 1937.

An Interview With Mrs. J. L. Sweet,
Mangum, Oklahoma.

I made the trip to Greer County in 1889, and settled on a claim with my husband A. W. Putnam, near Eldorado. A native of Illinois, I had immigrated to Texas with my parents. The marriage uniting Mr. Putnam and me was performed at Fort Worth, Texas.

We later moved to Kansas, and then to Greer County, where Mr. Putnam was county surveyor for forty years. He was also a government surveyor and in a test of fifteen surveyors, he had the best rating. His death occurred in 1931.

Mr. Putnam was also a minister of the Christian Church and preached on occasion throughout his life.

Early ministers worked without much worldly compensation, and were obliged to engage in other pursuits to piece out their incomes.

Mr. Putnam taught school for some time following our marriage. School and preaching services at Eldorado were held in a log school house, which was equipped with log seats.

Services were held alternately by all denominations. In summer, the door was removed from the school house and

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church elders often had to drive out cows from the building to prepare it for services.

The school house and a general merchandise store operated by a man named Alexander were the only buildings in Eldorado. Fortunately, large mesquite trees abounded in the vicinity, and the settlers never lacked for wood to fence their claims or for fuel.

Some of the settlers hauled wood to Quanah to sell and a load of wood would bring \$1.00. It was fifteen miles to Quanah. We were better fixed financially as we sold everything before we came and had a little money. I sold eggs and butter; all the Kansas women did that.

One day I started to Quanah with my produce and as usual I went alone in a cart and drove an old gray mare. I always left home before daylight and arrived at Quanah by sunup. I always dreaded the crossing at Red River and yet I did not realize how dangerous this crossing really was, especially when the river was "up". But when I arrived this time at the crossing a man and his family were there fixing to cross and the river was rising slowly. The family ahead of me was in a wagon and drove into the water ahead of me. We crossed

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~~the first channel safely but when the first wagon drove off~~
into the second channel, the wheels began to slip and sink
in the quicksand. The man stopped his team and nearly lost
them before he could get them loose from the wagon. He did
finally loosen the wagon. I did not drive into the second
channel, but turned and went back home.

After eight years at Eldorado, we moved to Mangum in
1897. Mr. Putnam built a little two room house on East
Lincoln Street, on a lot he purchased from H. C. Sweet. In
the fall Mr. Putnam taught school in the one room frame
structure located on the present site of the Edison school
building.

Panthers, wild cats and grey wolves were common in this
section.

On one occasion at Eldorado, my daughter who was only
six years of age was returning from school through a mesquite
thicket, when a large wild cat stood upon his hind feet and
made a face at the child, as she told it. She ran home very
much frightened.

The grey timber wolves, which the settlers called "loafers"
would occasionally attack men on horseback. Two wolves attacked

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Mr. Putnam one day. By racing the animals to his doorway, he managed to evade the wolves.

Indians formerly camped at the branch on East Lincoln Street. One day, when I was recovering from an illness, an old Indian walked into my house into the room and I was lying on a bed with a high wooden footboard he did not see me at first. He explored the room thoroughly then spied me lying there. He leaned over on the footboard of the bed and said, "Huh, sick or lazy"?

I informed him that I was sick, and being so frightened, suppose I looked pale. He looked sorrowfully at me and said, "Heap sick, heap sick".

Then he spied a big doll hanging on the wall, and said, "where get it, where get it".

I told him up town, and he left saying, "me get one, me get one".

I was relieved when he left.

Amusements of early day settlers were social gatherings and end-of-school exercises, called exhibitions.

The only tree in Mangum in the early day period was the one in front of the Crouch Hotel.

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Despite the hardships of the frontier life, I am glad I am a pioneer of old Greer County.

In 1933, I was married to Joe L. Sweet, also a pioneer of this section.

Two rooms of the house we built when we first settled in Mangum are still standing.

Just before I make a decision to leave this section, I remember my old friends and am unable to leave them.