

TACKITT, LILLIE VIRGINIA. SECOND INTERVIEW. 9904

46

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

TACKITT, LILLIE VIRGINIA. SECOND INTERVIEW. 9904

Field Worker's name Ethel B. Tackitt,

This report made on (date) January 25, 1933. 1933

1. Name Lillie Virginia Tackitt,

2. Post Office Address Lone Wolf, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Bx 132

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day: 28 Year 1860

5. Place of birth Oxford, Mississippi

6. Name of Father Aaron Knight Miller Place of birth North Carolina

Other information about father A Methodist Minister

7. Name of Mother Elizabeth Saint Julian Place of birth Mississippi  
Campbell Miller

Other information about mother was great-neice of General Marion of Revolution fame.

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. Continuation blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached \_\_\_\_\_

TACKITT, LILLIE VIRGINIA. SECOND INTERVIEW. 9904.

-Field Worker, Ethel B. Tackitt,  
January 25, 1938.

Interview with Lillie Virginia Tackitt,  
Lone Wolf, Oklahoma.

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I was born on a typical Southern plantation which belonged to my maternal grandfather, Daniel M. Campbell, six miles north of Oxford, Mississippi, November 28, 1860.

My grandmother was the niece of General Marion of Revolutionary fame. Her name was Carolina Marion Campbell. Her mother was yet living and owned the Marion estate, which was adjoining that of my grandfather's, all of which formed quite a sizeable village, including negro quarters which were the homes of the slaves that belonged to the family. Many of them had been there from generation to generation and continued to look to the family for protection and support years after the place had been laid in ruin by battles of the Civil War fought on the grounds.

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Grandfather was of Scotch lineage and my grandmother was very much French.

My mother, Elizabeth Saint Julian Campbell Miller, was the oldest daughter of this family and was married to my father, Aaron Knight Miller, February 8, 1860, on this

TACKITT, LILLIE VIRGINIA. SECOND INTERVIEW.

9904

-2-

big white plantation. My father was born in Richmond County, North Carolina, February 26, 1839, the son of John Miller of Maryland, and of Scotch-Irish descent. He was a gentleman owner of racehorses, a profession of which the family of his wife, Mary Ely, of Rockingham, North Carolina, greatly disapproved. Grandfather Ely was a Carolina planter and considered racing very unbecoming and useless, as he, grandfather Ely and family were originally from Wales and were very devout people.

My father had been educated for the ministry and was at that time in active service of the Methodist Church. His work took him to Kentucky and I have a letter which my mother wrote to him in 1861, relating to him some of the

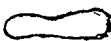
~~incidents of the coming on of the Civil War in Mississippi.~~

My mother died while Father was on his work in Kentucky where she had joined him, while the war was at its fiercest and he was unable to bring her body back to the family burial ground in Mississippi but was forced to bury her in Kentucky. My grandfather Campbell and his second daughter, Maryland Virginia, (Mrs. James Dooley) came to Kentucky and took me back home with them where I remained until 1863.

My father, having married again, brought his family to Texas and we remained at Houston while he attended the annual conference of the Methodists in 1869.

I was married to Thomas Pleasant Tackitt in Young County, Texas, September 4, 1879, and we moved to his ranch home, eight miles east of the town of Graham. He and his father, Captain James G. Tackitt, owned cattle and horses and ran a stage stand here until 1881, when the Texas Central Railroad was being built west from Fort Worth, Texas. We moved to Albany and they went into the livery-stable business.

In 1882 Father Tackitt went to New Mexico and purchased a large band of sheep. After disposing of the sheep we moved to Putnam, in Callahan County, and went into the hotel

business, as the Texas Pacific Railroad was making that part of Texas very prosperous. Father Tackitt and my husband sold the hotel in 1886 to Slipper Smith for his brand of cattle which was  (Slipper). They owned a pasture and stock near Putnam at the time. The drought in Texas at this time had been gradually growing more severe for several years and continued to grow worse in 1886. Father Tackitt,

-4-

who was looked upon as the head of the family for he was an old-style gentlemen who had served the state of Texas as a Ranger from his boyhood, calmly took command of and straightened out every difficulty that arose in the path of his family. He informed all that we were going to be forced to take the cattle to some place where they could get grass and water.

There was a kind of wood-eating insect that devoured all vegetation in the locality of our pasture and surrounding country and after eating the leaves and bark of plants, covered the stems with a thick paste of slime which dried into a hard covering of mud. This crackled like glass when walked upon. Stock died by the hundreds for want of grass and water. Having been a Texas Ranger and a cowman

in Texas since 1864, Father Tackitt was quite familiar with the conditions and country in the Indian Territory and Greer County as well as Texas, and as he had served as Ranger under Captain Sull P. Ross, who was Governor of Texas and a very close friend, he decided to consult him and secure his approval to take the cattle to Greer County, which was then under the jurisdiction of Texas. The Day Land and Cattle Company had control of Greer County through

TACKITT, LILLIE VIRGINIA. SECOND INTERVIEW. 9904

-5-

some kind of legal hold gained and they prevented smaller cattle owners from entering the country by sheer force of numbers. Understanding this condition perfectly, Father Tackitt decided to go up into Greer County and look the situation over and if he so desired pick out a location to which to take his cattle. He laid the plan before his family, which consisted of his wife, my husband's mother, Mrs. Nancie Elizabeth Culwell Tackitt, who was also of a Texas pioneer family; my husband, Thomas Pleasant Tackitt, myself and our little daughter, Ethel; their daughter, Mary Marzie, her husband, George Edwards, and their baby son, Cas. We had always lived together in the old fashioned pioneer family way and Father and Mother Tackitt felt themselves responsible for the well being of the whole group.

In the Spring of 1936 they bought a new wagon-sheet; bows and spring-seat and built a chuck-box, three feet high, about eighteen inches wide at the top and about two and one-half feet wide at the bottom, that would sit snugly in the rear end of the new wagon.

It slanted down from the top so that all rain would run off and the door which let down from the top stood on a long leg and formed a very satisfactory table on which to serve meals. The chuck-box was built of heavy lumber and was well arranged with compartments holding tin plates, cups, knives and forks; spoons, frying pan, coffee pot and other cooking utensils. Also places for quite an amount of food for the old time cow-people. believed in eating well and always went prepared for emergencies; they had plenty of money which they spent freely but conservatively.

In the new wagon bed they placed a pair of springs, no slats, placed between the side-boards and the sides of the wagon bed and on the springs was made a most comfortable bed. Under it was placed their extra clothing, Winchester, six-shooter, ammunition and other articles which they knew would be needed and with a good span of young, brown horses hitched to this equipment they set out to find a location.

They found what they wanted in the new Greer County country and returned to Putnam in Callahan County.

Father Tackitt then went to Austin and laid his plan before his friend, Governor Sull Ross, and was given a written document which gave him the Governor's permission



TACKITT, LILLIE VIRGINIA. SECOND INTERVIEW. 9904

-7-


to pasture his stock any place in Greer County that he might choose. Arrangements to move began without delay. Father Tackitt and his son-in-law, George (L. J.) Edwards, went to Quanah, Texas, and rented a small one-room house, which was all they could get as Quanah was only a town of tents. The railroad had not been there long and it was the nearest shipping point to which our car of household goods could be sent. They also went completely across the stretch of Greer County to the north and on a small creek called Little Turkey, five miles from the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian territory line which was North Fork of Red River. They purchased a claim that was the hunting camp of an old trapper for two ponies and a wagon and this was to be the location of the ranch. My mother-in-law; sister-in-law, Mollie

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Edwards, and her baby son, Cas, went to visit Mother's people, the Culwell family, in Parker County and brother-in-law, the George Edwards' family of Fort Worth, Texas, before we went to Greer County.

My husband, Tom Tackitt, was to get the cattle and outfit ready and drive them through, while I remained with my little girl in Putnam and when my brother-in-law, George Edwards, returned after he and Father had made arrangements

-8-

of which I have told, he and I packed the furniture and all the things that we all wanted to bring and he had them loaded in the chartered car and shipped to Quanah. Then he, my little girl and I got into the big ranch buggy, which was drawn by two good horses of a larger size than the common cow-pony, and started out to overtake the herd of fifteen hundred cattle which was moving toward Greer County over the Texas Trail. These cattle were of the  (Slipper), C L O and V-(V Bar) and MoM brands. The C L O and V bar belonged to George Edwards. The cowboys driving the herd were my husband, Tom Tackitt, Al Walker, Luther Hall, Jack Roberson, two other men whose names I do not know, and John, the cook, who drove the chuck wagon loaded with chuck and bedding equipped with a chuck-box like the one previously described.

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We overtook them near Benjamin, Knox County, on July 4, 1887; and my brother-in-law, George Edwards, took his place with the herd while I drove the team with the buggy and followed the trail made by the chuck wagon as there was no such thing as a road. We were following a cow trail and it took us three weeks to make the trip to Quanah where Mother and Mollie had joined Father and were all living as best they could in the

one-room shack. The weather was dreadfully hot and the water was scarce with no conveniences whatsoever.

The plan had been that we women and children should remain in Quanah until the cattle had been driven to their range on Haystack Creek and North Fork. The men had dug some more dugouts at the ranch site, but the living conditions and the outlawry in Quanah were such that Mother Tackitt decided the question for everybody and informed them that we would go with the herd to the ranch. The cattle were camped on Grosebeck in Texas but were moved across Red River into Greer County and camped on Sandy. Some of our men folks had been forced to remain in Quanah with the women all the time and they were needed with the cattle.

The ranch buggy was so large that we three women and the two children could ride in it with ease and the man always rode horseback anyway for he had to ride ahead and pick out a road for us to follow. We went back and forth to the herd quite frequently, this was several miles and took most all day.

Our people were quite good managers. We were making the trip out to the herd one day and when time came for

-10-

dinner, it was found that there were no matches with which to build a fire. That meant no coffee and to go without coffee was not to be thought of, so George Edwards, who was with us that day, made camp under a tree near Red River, made a little pile of dry grass, took some cotton out of the baby's pillow, and cutting the end off a cartridge poured the powder over the little pile of inflammable material, placing the end of his Winchester, which he always carried strapped to his saddle, quite near the pile he shot into it and the nearness set fire to the dry powder-covered grass and cotton. This he quickly gathered up and the fire was ready to boil coffee.

When the herd started north to the range, Father Tackitt decided that it was best that he should take us women and children in his new wagon, which has been described, and the buggy, with our individual camp outfit and go on to the ranch as he could make the trip in about four days and it would most likely take that many weeks for the herd to make the trip. The weather was very hot and the wind annoyed us a great deal for we were not accustomed to such hardships. The second night on the way we camped at Mangum. There were not more than a dozen houses in the place and a few dugouts.

When we drove up on Main Street, which was a few wagon ruts, and stopped, the people came out of the dugouts and shacks and were as glad to see us as if we had been kinfolk.

These were the Pearsons, Crouch, and Curry families;

Henry Sweet was postmaster. We spent the night in camp on what is now the northwest corner of Mangum and the next morning continued our journey, reaching the ranch on Turkey Creek the following day. We drove up on the bank of the creek and nothing was to be seen but one long dugout-dug back straight in the earth and covered with poles and dirt: not a window but a chimney in the back bank, while the front end opened out on the second bank of the creek. We had not seen a human being since leaving Mangum, thirty-five miles to the south.

Mother took the two children and went down into the dugout to get out of the awful heat and wind, while Mollie and I sat still in the buggy. She said, "You had just as well get out and come on down, this is where we are going to stay." We went on down at last. All of us were dressed in light lawn dresses for we were accustomed to dressing that way. Father was unhitching the teams.

In a short while the children began to cry and we found that we were covered with millions of fleas as the

old hunter had let his pack of hounds sleep in the dugout, while he slept in the open and we had to get out and change our clothing. We did not take our things in the dugout but Father stretched the tent on the hill above. Our dresses were black with fleas and I have never seen so many before or since. In the course of several weeks the herd came up and was turned loose on the head of Haystack Creek. All the men began to work and two more large dugouts were built in the bank of the creek and the furniture was hauled in wagons from Quanah. This consisted of cook stove, dishes, silverware, old-fashioned marble-top dresser and washstands, trunks with clothing enough to last several years for we did not buy any for several years, and Mollie Edwards' big square Vose piano that her father had given to her when she was sixteen years old. So far as I know it was the first piano in Greer County and is still owned by her son, Cas Edwards, at Alpine, Brewster County, Texas, and is in good condition.

The men hauled lumber from Quanah and put a floor in one of the dugouts on which we put down some Brussels carpets which we had brought along. Many of the pioneer cattle people brought things like these to Greer County. After some of this work was completed Al Walker, Luther Hall and the other

hands went back to Texas and we felt rather lonely as we did not know just how the big cow outfits were going to accept our cattle on the range which they considered their property. At last one day one of the representatives of the Day Land and Cattle Company, with some of his men, rode up near the dugout and called for the boss. Father Tackitt, George Edwards, and my husband went to meet them and were warned that they would have to take their stock and get out of the country, but Father Tackitt came down in the dugout, took out the document given to him by Governor Sull Ross and returned, giving it to the men. They pretended that <sup>they</sup> would have us forced out. From that day on none of the outfit were molested other than when the spring round-up came on, the range boss, Givins/Tane, would not allow the boys to work with the vigor for a while but that is another story in itself. Every day was a ranch story for time moved along in the regular ranch way.

Just before Christmas we had gotten very well established. Many of the cowboys had dropped in for meals and we learned that the family of Uncle Johnnie Richison was

TACKITT; LILLIE VIRGINI. SECOND INTERVIEW. 9904

-14-

at his hay camp where he put up hay for Fort Elliott, down the river a way.

One evening two cowboys, Saunie Moore and Edd Draper, from the H-Y (H bar Y) line camp, came to the ranch and said they wanted to have a dance. George Edwards was a fiddler of no small talent and his wife, Mollie, played an accompaniment to all the tunes of that day in a way which the radio programs of today try to imitate. George Edwards came to report this request and Mother Tackitt was shocked to think of giving a dance in a dugout. Father Tackitt came to the front and said that it was the thing to do and we all agreed that if the cowboys could find any people we would be delighted to entertain them, but we could not imagine where they were to be found. When the time came the cowboys came in a great number but the ladies were only Aunt Pollie, Uncle Johnnie Richison's wife, his two sons' wives, and one young lady, Miss Maegie Heffinan, the daughter of a rancher living about ten miles over on Haystack who rode horseback there and back.

Mother Tackitt nor I danced and Mollie had to play the piano, so when Aunt Pollie, who was quite up in years,



McGITT, ILLIE VIRGINIA

SECOND INTERVIEW

9904

-15

gave out some of the cowboys tied handkerchiefs around their arms and danced in the place of ladies. The dance was much enjoyed and we served cake and coffee

before they started to their camp home late at night.

and from that time to this our friendship among these

people has never waned. I have lived in what is now

the state of Oklahoma under Texas, Oklahoma Territory,

and statehood, fifty-two years and each year is a

story in itself.