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ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW

18008 407

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

**ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.**

**INTERVIEW.**

**#13008.**

Field Worker's name Grace Kelley,

This report made on (date) February 15, 1938

1. Name Edmond Lee (Oklahoma Jack) Aldridge,

2. Post Office Address Henryetta, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) State Street, Gilliam Addition.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year 1871.

5. Place of birth Texas.

6. Name of Father Uriah Aldridge Place of birth On the

Other information about father Tennessee-Texas Trail in Arkansas.

7. Name of Mother Miss Moore Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about mother Cherokee Indian.

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 Fifteen.

ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE. INTERVIEW. #13005.

Grace Kelley, Investigator.  
February 15, 1938.

Interview with Edmond Lee (Oklahoma Jack) Aldridge,  
State Street, Henryetta, Oklahoma.

What Happened to the Jim Family.  
(This is known only to the Chickasaw Indians.)

This story has never been told to a white person but not because the Indians had committed a crime. All these bad deeds were done by whites.

When I was seventeen I worked for the widow Kutch, a full blood Chickasaw rancher, who was well-to-do. I was considered a Cherokee Indian although I have white blood, too. Only Indians worked on her ranch, the rest of them were Chickasaws but I knew their language.

A man moved in and took a lease below Hell Hole. We knew him as "Jim". He came from Texas and brought his pretty wife, a big red headed man and two pretty children, a boy and a girl. I was breaking horses for so much a head so was my own boss. The cowboys and I used to ride in that neighborhood for pastime. Jim had a well and we very seldom get a drink out of a well but had to drink from the creeks or rivers. We liked to

ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW.

#13005.

2

get a drink out of his well even if his place was right against the river. He and I got to be good friends and the children loved me. I hardly ever saw his wife but I thought she was the most beautiful person that I had ever seen. Whenever the children saw me coming they would run and get me the dipper so I could have a good drink. When I went to town I never forgot to get some candy for them.

One day I went there and the children came out as usual and I asked them where their father was. It had been a week or more since they had seen him. When I went to the back door and asked Mrs. Jim where he was she said that he had gone to Texas and she didn't know where he was. The red headed fellow was in the yard and it seemed to me that he looked guilty of murder. I got on my horse and rode away, sorrowing for I felt certain that something terrible had occurred.

I rode as though I was leaving but went around a big briar thicket about two hundred yards away, dismounted and started down the Washita River next to the

ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW.

#13005.

3

water's edge. I wanted to get behind the house without their knowing it so that I could watch them. I wanted to know about Jim and knew they would tell me nothing. When I got almost directly in the back of the house I saw some tracks of a man and woman where they had dragged something to the river. So I went down the river looking for whatever I could find. When I came to a drift I saw a tow-sack, a burlap feed sack, floating in the river against the drift. My boots and clothes were pulled off in a hurry and I swam out to it. Jim's body was in it; he had his head cut off and his legs were cut off at the knees. He was tied in the sack and a rock was tied to it but it was not heavy enough to hold him down though I guess it was as large as they could find as that isn't a rocky country. I swam back to the bank with the sack and pulled him up out of the water. Then I rode back to the ranch.

Deer Foot was an Indian scout for the white man. I told him about what had happened and he went back with me.

ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW.

#13005.

We buried Jim on the Washita River bank east of a big cottonwood tree.

Deer Foot hid in the hay patch near the house and I approached the house. I saw the Indians and didn't see them when I was there. The first time they had failed to greet me when I was there. I called to Mrs. Jim and asked if Jim had come home yet. The red headed fellow came to the door with a gun in his hand. I told him all I wanted was to talk Jim about a good trade he could make and I worked myself away with that story.

I went back to where Deer Foot was concealed and told him to watch the house; I told him that I was going back to the ranch for two more of the Indians. When we returned it was dark and the family had made their getaway. We four followed them to old Boggy Depot and got three other Indians to go with us. Now there were seven in our group. We followed them all night due east from Boggy toward where Stringtown is now and the Kiamichi Mountains. At daybreak we saw some smoke rising at the

ALDRIDGE, RIMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW.

#13005.

foot of a hill near the Miami country. We rode up to "Mrs. Jim" and "Red" when they were getting breakfast. I turned "Red" over to the Indians and I never saw him again. I took charge of the party, and her own wagon, and my horse and the pack. She came back to the river where Jim was buried. She confessed to the murder of the children and said that the bodies of the children were in sacks just like Jim's was. When we got back there Deer Foot had killed a deer and was cooking some venison upon the bank of the river.

I started looking for the children because I wanted to take Mrs. Jim to Paris, Texas, for trial. We were going to let the court give her her rightful punishment but needed to take the evidence along. When I took my boots off to go into the water I slipped my gun into one of them, not knowing that she was watching me. She wasn't board in any way. Deer Foot hollered, "Look out, Jack!" I looked and Mrs. Jim had my gun in her hand. She shot her own brains out.



ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE,

INTERVIEWS.

#13005.

6

We found the children's bodies and all are buried in one grave seven feet from a cottonwood tree with a cut on it on the north side of the Washita River.

One year later I found some more things belonging to the red headed man. He said the man who had him he was looking "this way" with his face to the sun. In other words he was hanging to a limb of a tree.

#### Finding Two Lost Children.

A white man, the father of two children, leased a place below Jim's place on the Washita River. It was a wild country. There were quite a few bears, panthers, cougars, wolves that the cowboys called "black tigers"; they could kill a five year old steer, besides other wild game that wasn't so dangerous. This man, I can't remember his name, was very poor but he would work for anyone to get a little money to live on. He walked five miles and made rails for an Indian. Every evening little Maggie and little Joe would go and meet him on the trail. One evening it was late when he came up the river; an Indian alone in a hack gave him a ride home. The children missed him and got lost.

ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW.

#13005.

7

The report came to the ranch for the cowboys. Seven Indian cowboys and I went to their aid. Until that time I had just been a wild boy with never a thought of my God nor the Hereafter. I wasn't a criminal at any time in my life though I knew and liked several outlaws but I wasn't converted until I went to help this poor mother. It made a man of me. We rode to the cabin but didn't dismount. I asked the mother which way the children had gone. She ran out and grabbed me by my best and begged me to find her children. That threw her under my horse that was wild. I tried to get her loose but couldn't. I told her to turn me loose and get back for my horse was very wild. I just knew she would get either badly hurt or killed. My horse turned his head back and looked at her but never offered to move. I caught the idea right then that we had a Maker and Protector. I said, "As sure as there is a God I'll do my utmost for this poor mother." I turned to the Indians, I say Indians because they were full bloods while I was only part, and we

ALDRIDGE, EDWARD LEE.

INTERVIEW.

1900.

decided to separate and fire three shots when the children were found.

I rode three days and nights without sleep or sleep and I don't know how long I was out there. I had been for one week. My horse became so tame that I had to ride so much riding. On the fourth night about midnight I heard something in a thicket, dismounted and entered it. The two children ran out on an open flat or bottom of a dry creek. I caught little Maggie and tied her to a hackberry tree with my hobble rope. Then started back after little Joe. They were both as wild as some wild animal. He ran down the creekbed and I jumped off a little bluff in front of him and caught him. Then I took him back to where I had left her and my horse. The only clothing about them was a belt that had belonged to her dress. I worked them to the horse and they scratched my face to a pulp. I held Joe and put her in the saddle, then slid into the saddle behind her and pulled her up onto my left leg. It was a hard job to keep them from getting away from me. I got my gun out and fired three shots but got

ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW.

#13005.

no answer so we started in the direction of home which was about twenty-four miles away. After riding about five miles I fired three more shots but got no answer. You can imagine how badly I wanted to get my answer and how disappointed I was when none came. I rode about seven or eight miles before I tried again; the answering shot came after the second shot of that trial. Deer Foot came to me and I gave him little Joe and I kept little Maggie. It was much easier to hold one of them than the two, besides that my friend was there to help me if I needed him. When we delivered the children home God touched my heart. For eight days and nights they had to be kept in a room for they were wild but their minds finally came back to them.

#### Roundup Time.

This was in the Cherokee and Creek Nations. Three or four outfits would be camped close together. We would have debates for recreation. I guess you would call it outdoor recreation. We could have been heard for miles but there was no one to hear us.

ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW.

#13005.

10

Knew Will Rogers.

Will Rogers was reared on his father's ranch and he was a real cowboy, not just a movie star. I guess I have ridden a thousand miles with him. He was a real friend who could be counted on when you needed one. He would try to get on my side when we were debating but I would rather have him on the opposing team for he was so witty. He made you use all the brain you had when you went against him. I met him in Tulsa when he was to make a big speech the next day and we talked about the old days. When we went to Cheyenne, Wyoming, to the rodeos I would meet him there and I would go from one part of the country as a bronc buster and Will would go from another as an expert roper.

Cowboy's Court.

If we could find a little log church we attended the services. If one of the boys did anything wrong he was punished when he came back to camp. We had strict rules or laws and everyone knew what they were. No outsiders had to make one of our outfit behave for if he was unruly

ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW.

#13003.

11

in camp or church we took charge of him ourselves. We made a pile of blankets on the ground. A man sat on the offender's arms and another on his legs. We took our six-shooter belts and he got a whipping. He could not say anything for we were his friends and he knew it. We were strict and he knew that.

#### Milking a Half Buffalo Cow.

They never bought canned milk when I was working on a ranch. I liked cow's milk and was willing to milk a cow to have it. Some of the other boys would ride out, find a cow that had a large udder and bring her in for me to milk.

One time they brought an old cow in that was part buffalo. She had a hump on her back and an udder like a wash tub. We had built a big brush fence to put the calf in. She jumped that like it was nothing. I milked her all right but the boys were holding her head up over a limb of a blackjack tree. When I had gotten about four gallons of milk we turned her in with her calf and let it

ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW.

#13006.

12

suck, then turned her out on the range. We kept the calf penned up so the cow would not go too far away.

She got so that I could ride up to her in the open and say, "Saw Buffalo" and she would back her leg for me to milk her but none of the others could come within fifty feet of her. The fact that she knew my voice and that I had never been mean to her are the only reasons I know for her letting me milk her.

In the Cheyenne Country.  
Wild Horses.

I have seen dust rise until it looked like a rain cloud coming but would be nothing but the dirt from wild horses running.

Antelope.

I have looked in the sand hills and seen something white. It looked like hundreds of geese but it would be the white spots on the throats of the antelope. I got a good run at an antelope once and roped it. I had a Number One horse and told the boys I was riding with that I was going to catch this antelope and I did.

ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW.

#13005.

13

## Buffalo.

I never saw but a few buffalo and they were right on the line of the Texas Panhandle and the Indian Territory. We thought that was all the Indian Territory.

## Mirage.

We would ride out on the prairie early in the morning and say, "Let's go to town? For we would see a big city ahead of us. We could have ridden forever and never have reached it. I've thought sometimes that was a shadow from Heaven but other folk call it a mirage.

## Blind River.

There was a blind river that ran from Red River into the Territory. We couldn't see where it was but it would cave through with us so we were very particular and never rode in a run but rode slowly through there. The fish of that stream had red eyes.

That was where the cowboys suffered. Our 'chaps' wouldn't bend but would just crack. Our spurs wouldn't rattle for they froze up. We used to have a time which nobody knows unless he has been a cowboy.



ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW.

#13005.

14

Salt Lake in Northwest Corner of State.

In the northwest corner of the state there was a lake. You could see it for miles and when you were far away from it, it looked like water. When you would get there it was solid salt. Cowmen would go and get it to salt their cattle in the early days.

Choctaw Nation  
Indians and Spaniards.

When the Government was having the Indian Territory surveyed the surveyors in the Choctaw Nation found a walnut peg; some Indian had driven a tomahawk into a tree then driven this wedge-shaped peg into that hole that was made by the tomahawk. It was found on wild Cat Hollow.

Rich people from Chicago and New York came in to see what it amounted to. They hired Deer Foot who was a scout and trailer to see if he could do anything. They also brought engineers in but they would have saved money to have stayed away.

I would see Deer Foot and ask him if he was eating good, sleeping good and making money while he was staying

ALDRIDGE, EDMOND LEE.

INTERVIEW.

#13005.

15

with the rich men. He would say, "Yes". Then one time he told me he would show me something after these people had left.

He did and I followed a trail and got seventeen sacks of pegs that led to a cave on Wild Cat Creek where the Indians used to stay lots.