



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

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McMILLIAM, SAMUEL L.

INTERVIEW.

#9300

Field Worker's name Ethel Mae Yates

This report made on (date) November 24, 1937

1. Name Mr. Samuel L. McMilliam

2. Post Office Address Elk City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 217 South Boone Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 19 Year 1868

5. Place of birth Illinois

6. Name of Father Thomas A. McMilliam Place of birth Pennsylvania

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Mary J. McMilliam 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 4.

An Interview with Mr. Samuel L. McMilliam, Elk City.  
By - Ethel Mae Yates, Investigator.  
November 24, 1937.

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I came by rail to explore the new country in 1898; stopped at Kingfisher and bought some stakes. Then came on to Weatherford and there I took out across the country afoot. When I got to the Washita River it was up. An Indian came along; he couldn't speak English but he took me on behind him and swam across the river. I came on across and stayed one night in a little dugout. There were scarcely any roads; I would find a trail and take out across the country. I would stay anywhere that nightfall came on me. Almost everybody lived in dugouts but you were always welcomed.

I finally drifted down into the Sweet Water country and filed on a place fifteen miles north of Sayre and dug a dugout and covered it with boards and dirt, and every time it rained I would have to set tin pans all over the bed to catch the water. One time I got "drowned out" and went to my neighbors, Mr. McArteir's, and when I got

there his dugout was half knee deep in water and he was lying in the bed picking his guitar. He had pieces of wood laid around on the ground to walk around on to cook.

The water had run in the sides of his dugout and down through the roof of mine. I cooked on a little monkey stove and made a bedstead and table out of cotton-wood lumber, broke out some land and put in a sod crop. The first two years I was here I burned cow chips for fuel. Money was very scarce and after I got my crop in I went down in the eastern Territory and worked in the harvest to get money to live on, and in the winter I would hunt prairie chickens for market; I would sell them to Mr. A. D. Jones at Sweetwater and he would freight them to Weatherford and sell them to the market there.

I got some logs and stood them up and fixed poles across and covered them with grass for shelter for the stock.

We almost lived on black-eyed peas, jack rabbits and prairie chickens; there was a little store and post office at Sweetwater where we could get little things . . .

and we would make two trips a year to Weatherford or Granite. We had to haul water two miles for our use and also for the horses.

There was a doctor named Helve who lived several miles away in a little old dugout holding down his claim and one night I had the toothache so about midnight I started for him; it was almost morning when I got there and he looked at the tooth and said, "My! we have got a job", and said that it would not do to pull it until I got something to eat. He fixed me a warm breakfast, then he went to work and got the tooth out. I think it was the first tooth that he had ever pulled.

I would go over on the Red River and gather wild grapes and plums; that was the only kind of fruit that we knew anything about for a long time.

There was no school in that country when I first came, but a little later there was a school house built one and a half miles southwest of my claim, known as the Buena Vista School, but it has

been done away with.

The ranchmen were very nice and would let me have a cow to milk if I would raise a good calf for them.

I came from Illinois all alone to this much talked about country; filed on a claim, "bached" to prove up on it, and endured the hardships, and I have always managed to keep from going hungry. Sometimes, it would be a week at a time that there wouldn't be a dry thread of clothes on me, and not even a dry bed to sleep on in my dark dugout; and not only the rattlesnakes but the centipedes would make war on me. After I had been there awhile I built a better house which I later sold.

The large consolidated school building, known as the Bula School, is on the place I filed on. This was in Roger Mills County then, which is Beckham County now. I came to Elk City a number of years ago and this has been my home ever since.