

BIOGRAPHIC FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History ~~Project for Oklahoma~~

EVANS, ALLIE J. INTERVIEW 4024

Field Worker's name Amelia F. Harris,

This report made on (date) May 11, 1937

1. Name Allie J. Evans,

2. Post office Address Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 601 West 8th Street,

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day _____ Year 1879

5. Place of birth Missouri

6. Name of Father Benton G. Wiseman Place of birth Missouri

Other information about father Dead (White)

7. Name of Mother Elvira Wiseman Place of birth Missouri

Other information about mother English

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 8

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Amelia F. Harris,
Field Worker,
May 11, 1937.

An Interview with Allie J. Evans,
601 West 8th Street,
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Our family came from Missouri overland in a covered wagon. We brought two teams, two hogs, one milk cow and a dozen hens. We stopped at Martha, a small town nine miles north of Altus. (Altus was in Texas then.) Texas was open for homesteading, too, and the next day we started out to find some open land.

We didn't have to go far until we came to a nice section of land on Bitter Creek. Here we stopped, put up our tent and Father and my oldest brother plowed a furrough around our claim. They then stuck up a board with our name on it.

Strange as it may seem, Bitter Creek was a dividing line for good and bad water. All wells dug east of Bitter Creek were gyp water, hard and terrible to drink; those wells dug west of the creek were allright to drink from and good soft water.

When we landed at Martha we had \$150.00 in money. There were seven in our family and our stock to feed.

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Father immediately dug a big half cave or dugout, high enough above the ground for one sash window. We lived here for one year, or until Father could make a crop.

The first year we broke out fifty acres of ground and planted wheat, cotton, corn and feed stuff. We had fine crops and the best garden we ever raised. There was plenty of fine grass for hay, but our first two years were very hard.

Often we would get out of coffee and Mother would parch wheat and grind it in the coffee mill and make our coffee out of it. She would boil the wheat for about three hours, then the next morning she would heat it and serve it with milk. This was our breakfast food.

We never lacked for meat, as there were plenty of prairie chickens, quail, squirrels, rabbits, and antelope. Father would clean the antelope and hang it on a high post with a rope and pulley, and when we wanted a piece of meat, we would lower it and cut off what was needed, then hoist it up again. We did this to keep it out of the reach of varmints.

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We hauled our farm products to Vernan, Texas, about forty-five miles from our farm, and with oxen team; old "Dick and Bundy." Our cotton sold for 5¢ per pound, oats at 11 ¢ per bushel, and we traded most of our wheat for flour enough to last us a year. We canned and dried everything that we could from our garden.

There was very little fruit; wild grapes, plums, black and dewberries were plentiful. We children had to gather these and Mother canned, preserved and made jelly out of them. Mother worked hard, trying to have a variety of food to feed seven hungry people. We raised pie-melons out of which we made pies, tasting very much like apple pies. We would put these pie-melons and pumpkins in the hayloft and cover with hay to keep them from freezing. We tied big bunches of cured onions to the barn rafters. We always had three or four kegs of kraut, too.

Our first schoolhouse was a half dugout which a German built on his claim as a home for his family, but

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from some cause his family did not come until that fall. We had three months summer school. Our benches were made of cottonwood logs with the bark peeled off and logs hewed flat on top. We held our books and slates in our laps.

Miss Martha Medlin was our first teacher. She had a table made of cottonwood for a desk. There were about twelve or fourteen children and our parents paid \$1.00 per month for each child. Everybody loved Miss Martha and named the little town "Martha" for her. This school was three miles from our farm.

Mother was so afraid we would get lost on the way home that Father ploughed a furrough from our house to the schoolhouse and cautioned us not to move out of that furrough.

It was open range and often wild cattle would drift over our way. Father was always watching and when they came over, he would come after us in the wagon, as these cattle would gore you to death.

Next year Father gave the ground for a schoolhouse and they built a box schoolhouse first. We used this for

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two years, until it was burned up in a big prairie fire. Then the farmers were in very good financial circumstances and they built a brick house.

Our community was very religious and our social activities were on that order - Sunday school, churches, prayer meeting, singing schools, and protracted meetings, both Methodist and Baptist.

The Circuit Rider preachers held their meetings at the schoolhouse or neighbor's house and they baptized in Bitter Creek. I was baptized there.

I remember of two or three times in the late summer, and during these protracted meetings, we had prairie fires. The grass was high and dry, too, and the flames would leap ten to twelve feet high. The meetings would break up and some of the farmers would start "back fires". They would haul barrels of water and with wet tow sacks would start beating out the fire while others would plough up furrows around the hay stacks and buildings. Fighting fire was a problem and you had to work fast, too.

Our first post office was in the half dugout home of the Medlins' and Miss Martha was our postmistress. This was

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on the mail route between Vernon, Texas, and Langum, via Frazier, a distance of seventy miles. The mail carrier would try to make this trip in one day, starting at four o'clock in the morning and just stopping in different towns for relay horses. My father kept a pair of horses for the change, "Calamity and Buckskin". They were called hack horses, as he drove them to a covered hack. The mail carrier kept the horses he drove in a lope all the time.

In 1894 we almost had a cloud-burst and Salt Fork Creek and Bitter Creek went on a rampage. They over-flowed and washed the town of Frazier away. The town was then rebuilt on a high spot and named Altus which means "high and dry."

We never feared the Indians much. Once when Father went to take a load of wheat to Vernon, Texas, it always took five or six days for these trips, about two or three hundred Comanche Indians were passing through and they stopped at our house. Three of the leaders came in and asked for something to eat. Mother gave them flour, meal, and coffee. My brother was sick with a fever, and the

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medicine man came in, felt of my brother's pulse and said "paleface much sick but no die." They left then and never came any more.

When the Wichita Falls and Northwestern surveyed for a railroad from Wichita to Morgan, in No Man's Land, the survey ran through our house, so Father moved our house across on the east side of Bitter Creek to the good water and selected good lumber and added to our house, making a nice home. We still own the farm and the house is in a good state of preservation, now occupied by my grandson.

A peculiar incident happened while my mother was living on the farm (after Father's death). We were first in Jackson County, Texas. Then the Red River made a change in the boundary line and the United States and Texas became involved in a lawsuit over boundaries. While this was in litigation, Mother said she was not under the jurisdiction of any power. She lived in two states and one territory; Texas, Oklahoma, and Indian Territory. She lived in two counties, Greer and Jackson,

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and had two county seats, Langum in Greer County, and Altus in Jackson County. She moved with Jackson County, out of Texas into Oklahoma but didn't move an inch.