

BIOGRAPHIC FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Ethel Mae Yates

This report made on (date) June 25, 1937

1. Name Manda S. Evans

2. Post Office Address Elk City, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 903 Avenue D

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 28 Year 1862

5. Place of birth Missouri

6. Name of Father Simon Bank Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about father Don't know anything about father

7. Name of Mother Mary Banks Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about mother was left a widow with eight children right after Civil War

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 _____

Ethel Mae Yates
Field Worker
June 25, 1937

Interview with Manda S. Evans,
Elk City, Oklahoma

My grandparents moved to Illinois when my mother was six years old and lived there until she was eighteen and then she moved to Arkansas. This is where she and my father were married. Father died during the Civil War in 1862, the year that I was born, leaving mother with eight children. Mother stayed in Arkansas until I was fourteen and then mother and I came to Texas and made our home with my brother until I was married, then mother lived with me.

I was married in the year of 1882 to Henry Evans in Hill County, Texas, and there we made our home until we came to Oklahoma Territory in the year 1887.

We came in covered wagons and were thirteen days on the road. We camped out at night and the way we got our fuel while we were traveling was that sometimes we would pick up coal along the railroad tracks when we could get it and when we camped we would dig a pit and burn this coal and when we couldn't get coal, sometimes we would cut the tops off the fence posts and burn them.

- 2 -

We crossed Red River at Doan's Crossing and camped at Doan's that night and there was an awful blizzard and the wind blew so hard that it blew the sheet off of our wagon.

A friend we knew came down and asked us to go to his house and stay all night but his house was small and there were two families of us so we went to an old livery barn that had been vacated and stayed there. The wind had broken two of the wagon bows and our friend hunted around town and found two so we put them on our wagon and came on to what was known as No Man's Land and our trading post was Mangum. There were no houses in Mangum, only tents and there was no railroad nearer than Quanah and Vernon, Texas. It was sixty-five miles to Vernon and fifty miles to Quanah. We made a dugout by digging down in the ground. Made it three logs high with a dirt top and a cotton sack for a door. I was buried in this dugout for twelve years. We had one neighbor who lived a half mile from us and another, three miles away and the next was five miles away. We landed here with \$1.20 and my husband went to freighting from Mangum to Quanah, Texas.

The next year, 1888, Sitting Bull, Chief of the Kiowa Indians, go; Chief Whiteshield of the Cheyenne Indians and Lone Wolf, Chief of the Kiowa Indians, and they were all coming to make war on the

- 3 -

whites and had gotten as far as the Kiowa Reservation before the white people got them stopped.

My husband had gone to Vernon for supplies and a woman came and said there were Indians in the neighborhood who were going to make war. I had one child two years old and a small baby. I did not get word until dark and I couldn't go that night so I sat up all night with a gun on my lap and guarded the children, so that the Indians could not take me unaware. The next morning I took the children and walked three miles to the fort and we stayed there that day and night. The fort was a rock house with one window in it.

The next day I went home and I was going three miles to a neighbor's to wash. I had my children and my clothes and we were right at the foot of what is called the Granite Mountains where the grass was five or six feet tall. I was near the foot of the mountain in the trail when my oldest baby looked up and saw the Indians and said "Mamma what is that?" I looked up and saw the Indians and dropped my clothes and held onto the children and ran as fast as I could to this neighbor's house and when I got there a cowboy was standing in the yard. He said, "Mrs. Evans, what in the world is the matter with you? You look so white!" I told him that we had seen Indians back there and

- 4 -

he got on a horse and went to see what they were up to. There were two of these Indians who wanted beef so they had come with a white flag which was a signal piece.

Out of the twelve years we lived here my husband worked ten months as a line rider for a ranchman over in Kiowa County, right where Gray Hawk Creek emptied into Big Elk Creek one and a half miles from the place where Lone Wolf now is. We lived in a dugout there but it was dug back in a bank. Here I got board for my children, my husband and myself for cooking for the cow hands; and my husband got \$20.00 a month for his work. The boss told me when the Indians came and wanted anything if I had it to give it to them so that they wouldn't get mad and make him move his cattle.

Sometime the Indians would come and just be piling into the dugout before I knew they were on the place. Sometimes they would come when the cowboys would be through eating dinner and the tables would still be set. They would say, "Indian heap hungry" and would dive in with their hands and eat up everything that I had. I remember a boy who lived about two-thirds of a mile from us who was crippled but could ride on horseback. This boy had gone one morning to ride around the herd and he saw a

- 5 -

bear. He went to his father who was old and wanted him to go and see what it was; this boy said it was the funniest looking cow that he had ever seen. They killed the bear and left its feet lying in the road and some Indians came along and when they saw the bear's feet they got down on their hands and feet and began praying for God to remove the curse that this bear had brought on them.

There would be four or five Indians over each of the bear's feet. The Indians got to be such a nuisance that the settlers had to dig a pit and bury the bear's feet. The Indians would come and if there was no one at home they would go in, take anything you had that they didn't have, such as butter, eggs, or syrup. They would take these things and leave beef in their stead.

The Indian women did all the work; the men would not as much as lariat out their saddle horses and the Indian men thought that I ought to wait on the cowboys as Indian women did on them.

Sometimes, the Indians would come and crowd into the dug-out until I could hardly get around. I remember one morning I was busy and about twenty Indians had come and walked in; I told them to leave as I didn't have room to work but they just kept staying, so I stepped over to a corner and picked up a gun

- 6 -

and told them to "beat it," and they got themselves out but every little while some of them would come to the door and look in and say, "White squaw, heap lazy; he fight."

When the cattle men were going to ship cattle they would round up their cattle and put them into a corral which was a round pen that didn't have any corners so that the cattle wouldn't hurt themselves.

If any of the neighbors' cattle got into the herd they would cut them out and put them into another pen. One time they had rounded up the cattle which were ready for shipping, and in the night the cattle got to milling and tramped eight head of cattle to death. My husband had gone eight miles to borrow a wagon to haul these eight carcasses away but had told me if the Indians came to give these carcasses to them. Up in the day some Indians came and spied the dead cattle; the Indians would go to the pen and come back.

They kept this up for a while then they asked me what made the cattle die and I told them that they had been trampled to death. Then the Indians would say, "Ugh! cattle stomp, kill!" and wanted to know if they could have the carcasses. I told them to go on down there and get them. They went and skinned the carcasses and then they would cut off long strips and wrap

- 7 -

them around their arms and would leave the end long enough to get hold of and they ate the raw meat this way until they were satisfied. Then they would take saplings and stake them up and make a fire under them and would cut the rest of the meat in round slabs and lay them on the fire and burn them black. Then they would make bread dough and pull it out into long strips and wrap these strips around hickory sticks and would run these sticks through the fire until they were black and they would make coffee and then they would eat. Right there they would stay until every bite of meat was gone and until they had trimmed the bones until it would make a butcher ashamed of himself.

The way they would have their Medicine Dance was they would eat a bean that was called the mescal bean and this bean would make them drunk. Then they would begin to dance and would dance all night and up into the day or until they fell exhausted, then they would go to sleep, and whatever the Chief dreamed while asleep they would do after they waked up. That is, if he dreamed that they would go and kill an Indian family that is what they would do.

After they had danced and slept and wakened from sleep they would go and get a cattleman to give them a beef and then

- 8 -

they would have a feast and would prepare it as I have told you before.

The way the Kiowas would make a drum was to take a willow stick bend it into a ring and stretch a green hide over this, tie it and let it dry. These drums were what the Kiowas would make their music on and you could hear this music for two or three miles.

When a baby was born the Kiowas would take it to the Creek and dip in three times and if it was winter they would break the ice and dip it and then they would put it by a tree and let it dry; the mother of the baby would do this.

My husband was out on the ~~main~~ line one Monday morning and was riding over on the North Fork of Red River and met an Indian whom they called Little Bow. The Indians call all of the white men John. Little Bow said, "Hello John," and my husband asked him what he was doing out there and Little Bow said, "White man talk heap Jesus on Sunday, and steal Kiowa's wood on Monday."

The Indians would give the dead wood away but the white people were not supposed to get any green wood and Little Bow had caught the Missionary who had been preaching to them with a load of green wood.

- 9 -

We had a little box house that we used for church and for Sunday school and day school. Brother Nigh organized a Baptist church there and there were fourteen children in Sunday school and five church members and nine in day school. The Indians wouldn't go to church so the Missionaries would go to the Indian tepees and preach to them. I remember one time they were having services in a tepee and they were praying. The Indians had set a hen under the bed and I don't know whether the hen got scared or not but she came off the nest a-spluttering. The flap for the door had blown to and she was flying around and cackling. The Indians got scared and in a few minutes there wasn't an Indian in the camp.

In the Indian grave yard they had a scaffold built and when one of them would die they would put the body on this scaffold and then would put all of the dead person's belongings on the scaffold. If a warrior died they would kill his horse and dog and put them with his saddle and gun and every thing that had belonged to him on the platform and on the side that was closest to him.

There was a mission for the Indians and all the Indians who went there would cut their hair and in that way you could

- 10 -

tell the Indians who went to the Mission.

There was another Indian whom they called Big Bow; he and his wife and some other Indians came to our dugout one day and I noticed that his wife was a white woman and I knew she had been to the Indian Mission School as she had her hair bobbed. She had a small baby in her arms and I asked her how old her baby was but she would just shake her head and grunt.

Then I said, "Big Bow make your squaw talk to me," and he said something to her in their own language and said to me, "She talk now." Then I asked her how old her baby was and she said it was three months old. She told me that the Indians had murdered her parents when she was a baby and had taken her and raised her. I asked her if she didn't want to go back to her own people and she said that she did not.

One time the Cheyennes had come over to the Kiowas to have a feast and they came over to our ranch to get a beef. My little girl had black hair and eyes and had run in the sun until she was as brown as an Indian and the Cheyennes spied her and began to watch her. They came to me and said, "She Cheyenne," and I said, "No she isn't Cheyenne," and they said, "Ugh, she heap Cheyenne." I would tell them that she wasn't either, that I wouldn't have a Cheyenne, but they kept on insisting that she was a Cheyenne until

- 11 -

I got afraid they would steal her so I put her in the dugout and hid her behind the stove.

After we had worked ten months on the ranch we moved back to Greer County into our same old dugout and here we had some trying times. I remember part of the time we didn't have anything but milk and bread to eat and one morning I had cooked the last piece of bread we had and my husband said that he would go and cut some posts and take them to town and try to sell them to get something to eat and as he was going to town he crossed a gully which the rain had washed out and as he crossed it he found \$1.50. He came back and showed the \$1.50 and said, "Ma, what would ^{you} do with it? Would you keep it a while and see if the owner comes to claim it?" He sat there for a while and then said, "I can't stand to see my babies go hungry, I have got to go and get them something to eat." He went to Mangum and got a sack of meal and some coffee.

One time my husband was going to Vernon, Texas. It took six days to make the trip so he went and got one of his cousins to stay with me and one morning she came running into the house wanting to know what that was out on the post. I went to see and it was a mountain lion, so we kept the children in the house

- 12 -

until my husband came home, and when he came home I was telling him about it and he wanted to know why I didn't kill the mountain lion. I told him that I was afraid I would miss it and make it mad. So he said, "When it comes back I will kill it." I looked out and it was there on a post and my husband got the gun and opened the door a little way and stuck the gun barrel out and just sat there. I said, "John, why don't you shoot it?" But he just sat there and let it climb down and walk off and when I asked him why he hadn't shot it he said he didn't know why but he couldn't pull the trigger to save his life.

I cooked on a fireplace for five years and this was the way I got a stove. A ranchman lost a cow that had a young calf and he came over and gave the calf to me. We were not getting any milk that winter so I raised the calf on corn meal gruel and when it was two years old we sold it and bought a cook stove.

We lived here until the land question was settled and the land was opened for filing and I asked my husband why he didn't file and he said that he just didn't have the money. I stayed with some people for five weeks who had a new baby and in this way I made enough money to pay for filing, but when my husband went to file on a certain piece of land someone had "jumped"

- 13 -

it and he came back and told me about it and I told him to go and "jump" someone else. There was another piece of land close by that a man was trying to hold for his nephew so my husband "jumped" that and filed on it and we built a dugout, size twelve by twenty-eight feet and moved to our new home and then we started to farming. We just had one horse and it was two years old. My husband broke the garden and the way we harrowed it was that the two oldest children and myself got down on our knees and broke the clods up and picked the turf out and certainly did raise a good garden.

I didn't have but one dress and I would wash it and then I would go up the steps to see if anyone was in sight and if no one was in sight I would run and hang it to a barbed wire fence until it got dry and then put it back on.

It was in the year of 1899 that we filed on our claim and we lived there twenty-one years.