

GILMORE, RUTH

INTERVIEW

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124

BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

125

GILMORE, RUTH.

INTERVIEW.

15850.

Field Worker's name Alene D. McDowell.

This report made on (date) April 26, 1938. 1938

1. Name Mrs. Ruth Gilmore.

2. Post Office Address 118 Delaware, Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 4 Year 1897.

5. Place of birth Birmingham, Alabama.

6. Name of Father Milo Kimbrell. Place of birth Alabama.

Other information about father Piano salesman in the Indian Territory in the early day.

7. Name of Mother Anice Wilson Kimbrell. Place of birth Alabama.

Other information about mother Buried at McAlester.

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 _____.

GILMORE, RUTH

INTERVIEW.

13850.

Alene D. McDowell,
Investigator,
April 26, 1938.

An Interview With Mrs. Ruth Gilmore,
Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Ruth Gilmore was born September 4, 1897 at Birmingham, Alabama.

Father - Milo Kimbrell was born in 1854 at Kimbrell, Alabama, died at the age of 63 years and is buried in Alabama.

Mother - Anice Wilson Kimbrell was born in Pickens County, Alabama, died at the age of forty-two years and is buried at McAlester, Oklahoma.

I came to the Indian Territory with my parents in 1903, when I was six years old. We settled at McAlester during the mining boom where my father established a music store for Fredrickson and Kroh. He sold organs and pianos to the Indians, often taking live stock in exchange for the instruments. The stock consisted mostly of carriage and saddle horses. They sometimes insisted upon trading him 'White Mule' (whiskey) for musical instruments. This liquor was put up in 10 gallon galvanized cans covered with light wood.

GILMORE, RUTH

INTERVIEW.

13850.

-2-

One morning I was sent to the cellar to bring some sorghum for breakfast. The sorghum was in one of the ten (10) gallon whiskey cans and instead of bringing sorghum, I brought 'white mule'. My father was very much embarrassed for we children did not know that the liquor was stored in the cellar.

My father's territory extended over the entire Indian Territory and he traveled with a horse and buggy. Sometimes he would be gone for several months on the trip. He later operated a branch office for the Jenkins Music Company.

At the time of our removal to the Indian Territory, my father had lost all of his money in a bank crash in Alabama. He sold all of his property and came to the new country for a new start. There was no currency and not much silver in circulation at that time and he received the payment for his property in gold. This money was hid in a hair trunk and brought to the Indian Territory. He bought a home and invested part of his money in the music business.

GILMORE, RUTH

INTERVIEW.

13850.

-3-

I received my early education in the ward school at McAlester. The school house was a two-room frame building with one room downstairs and one room upstairs. There was a stairway up to the second floor, on the outside of the building. There was an eight foot wall on one side of the school, about seventy-five feet long, to protect the school house from the high flood waters. Our teacher was Miss Julia Doyle.

There was a pair of Cherokee Indian twins who attended this school and I was mortally afraid of them. To over-come this fear the teacher made me sit with the boy, who was a friendly chap, and after several days I saw he wouldn't harm me so we became friendly. The girl, Lucille, was a typical Indian, but LeAndre, the boy, had blonde hair which he wore in long braids. This looked odd among the other boys.

We wore rubber boots to school in bad weather for there were no sidewalks in McAlester in those early days. It was not an unusual sight to see a wagon stuck in the main street of the city with several horses hitched to it to pull it out of the mud.

GILMORE, RUTH

INTERVIEW.

13850.

-4-

One winter my father was away from home on one of his selling trips when we had a severe snow storm. We children were alone and were snowbound for two weeks. The coal shed was about seventy-five feet from the house and the snow was over our head. My sister, Gertrude, who was the venturesome one of the family, dressed in my brother's clothes and dug a tunnel through the snow to the coal shed with a shovel. That was the worst snow storm in the history of McAlester.

I walked two miles to high school and in the extremely cold weather the teacher kept a tub full of snow in the school house to thaw out our ears and fingers when we arrived. We also had our hot weather. In the summer it was so hot that the ground would crack. These cracks would sometimes be ten inches wide.

A few years after the close of the Civil War, Colonel James J. McAlester came to the Indian Territory and settled where the Texas cattle trail and the California Trail crossed. He opened a trading post at the cross roads and prospered from the start for this was a good location. The travelers on both trails bought supplies from him and

GILMORE, RUTH

INTERVIEW.

13850.

-5-

at that time the trails were lined with wagons every day.

After the railroad was built through this part of the Territory, coal mining became one of the chief industries. When the railroad was completed the station of the Cross Roads became known as McAlester.

McAlester is an old city and the buildings appear ancient to the younger generation. The modern buildings of the present day make the old structures look quaint, but to me they make McAlester an outstanding city, for there is not much change in the appearance of the town since my childhood. Of course, the paved streets and highways have been added to the city but the changes have been few.

William Farnum, the movie star, went to school in McAlester at the same time I did. He was our paper boy and my sister, Mayme, and I used to go with him on his paper route. My father bought us an Indian pony and Bill, as he was then known, taught us to ride it. He also taught us to fold papers. While he attended school in McAlester, he lived with relatives named Miller.

GILMORE, RUTH

INTERVIEW.

13830.

-6-

J. B. "Bun" McAlester operated a hardware store at McAlester when we settled there and Harvey Davis clerked in the store. Harvey later married my sister.

When I was in my early teens my father returned to Alabama where he died in 1917. While Alabama is my native state I consider Oklahoma my home for it was here that I spent my childhood and received my education.