

MATTHEWS, CORA COOPER.

INTERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
~~Indian-Planner History Project for Oklahoma~~

MATTHEWS, CORA COOPER INTERVIEW #6333

Field Worker's name Mary J. Stockton

This report made on (date) June 17, 1937

1. Name Cora (Cooper) Matthews

2. Post Office Address Claremore, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 9 Year 1876

5. Place of birth Bloomington, Indiana.

6. Name of Father Cooper Place of birth ---

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

7. Name of Mother --- Place of birth ---

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 8.

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Mary J. Stockton  
Field Worker  
June 17, 1937

Interview with Cora (Cooper) Matthews  
Claremore, Oklahoma.

I was born on a farm near Bloomington, Indiana, on August 9, 1876. We stayed there till I was seven years old and then we left Indiana and traveled in a covered wagon down to Evansville, Indiana. From there we got on a big steamboat and went down the Ohio River to Cairo, Illinois, where the Ohio River runs into the Mississippi River. We then got on a steam ferry and crossed the Mississippi which was a mile wide; it took us about a half-hour to cross. There was a train there that ran right up the dock. We took the train and went to Arkadelphia, Arkansas. We waited two weeks there for our baggage which was shipped from Bloomington. It was just 40 miles to the Texas line from Arkadelphia, but we were afraid to go on, because of the hard luck stories that we heard, about droughts, etc. So we got our wagon and team and went back through the Ozark Mountains, through Batesville, Searcy, Arkansas, and Little Rock. We saw smoke from Hot Springs, Arkansas. We had to

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wait ten days for the back water to go down from the Arkansas River. We then went on to Springfield, Missouri. There we rented a farm. It was the old Captain Owen's farm. We stayed there about ten years. I was married on that farm.

I was washing the windows when I first met Abram Matthews. He came up on our porch to ask for something to eat. He was on his way to the harvest fields around Kansas City, Missouri. He got a job working for my father and I fell in love with him, and we married.

Abram (Abe) Matthews was born November 20, 1868, in Illinois. Abe's father was Aaron Vernon Matthews, a Union soldier of the 10th Illinois Cavalry in the Civil War---1861-1865. Abe's mother was Miss Martha Walker of Missouri. Abe was reared on an Illinois farm. When he was twenty he went south to look for work in the harvest fields of Kansas. That is where he met me (Cora Cooper then). We married and moved from the family to the old Captain Jones farm near Springfield. His son, Johnnie Jones, owned the farm later. Johnnie

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Jones was the great uncle of Mr. J. Berry King (former Attorney General of the State of Oklahoma). J. Berry King's grandmother was Johnnie Jones' sister. My two oldest children were born on the Jones farm.

After leaving Missouri, we spent some time <sup>in</sup> Arkansas, coming to Indian Territory, Cooweescoowee District in 1900. This is now Rogers County, Oklahoma. We have been living here ever since. When we first arrived here the little town was full of tents which housed members of the DAWES COMMISSION. They were here allotting the Indian people their land. People were dying each day from smallpox. People lived in old shacks and tents. There were no screens on doors and windows. Water was scarce and it was hot. Children were dirty and even had screwworms in their ears. There didn't seem to be enough medical aid and the very few doctors could not get everywhere at once. The doctors here at that time were Dr. Duckworth, Dr. Bushyhead, and Dr. Hayes.

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When we came here we got acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Jack Matthews (no kin). Mr. Matthews has served as County Clerk for many years. He died in 1936. Mrs. Matthews is still living in Rogers County, at Claremore. Other old timers are Mr. John Taylor and wife, Mrs. Taylor being Jack Matthews' sister. All are now dead except his brother, Bill Taylor, and Mrs. Matthews and her son Flannery. I have

several old Cherokee documents and manuscripts in her home on Fifth street.

"Pop" Kates (A. L. Kates) was in the Progress Paper Business then and still is today. Howard Hale ran a merchandise store and still is in business in Claremore.

There were but two brick buildings here when we came but two years later a builder, named Bayless, came here from Cassville, Missouri, and built several brick buildings, the Bank building, the Sequoyah Hotel, the Belvedere. Mr. Matthews was the third man to deposit money in the bank of Claremore.

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#### Fords and Ferries.

There were two fords that crossed the Verdigris River when we came. One of them was about seven miles northwest of the town. It was Sanders Ford, named after the man who owned the land where the ford crossed the river. The other ford was Galcatcher Ford about five miles southwest of town. There were two ferry boats when we came here.

#### Clothing.

The shoes were more attractive and beautiful in the early days than they are today. They had lace shoes which laced high on the inside. They were of the very finest of kid. They had button shoes which laced on the outside and very high, almost half way to the knees. The stockings were made of cotton, but very nice, being white, black, and blue. The dresses were the full fashion skirts which took many yards to make. They were long and sometimes dragged the ground, basque waist, buttoned sleeves, and the waist had many decorated buttons. The men wore plain old jeans made of brown and blue ducking.

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## Historical Collections.

My mother had an odd rolling pin, which was taken by me and now my daughter has it. It is still in good use although getting thin. It is about 75 years old. I have several rugs that mother wove on the loom.

## Parentage (Grandfather).

My grandfather, Joseph Abram, was a Jew, his ancestors having come from Jerusalem. He was born in Tennessee in 1808. He married Polly Taylor, when she was sixteen years old. She was full blood Irish. They moved to Petersburg in Indiana, and they were both doctors. They used all kinds of herbs. Their daughter, Rebecca, married when she was twenty-two to John Irving Cooper, who was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in 1823.

My mother died nine years ago and was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery. Father died several years previous and is also buried in Woodlawn.

## Story of John Abram (great uncle).

My great uncle was stolen by the Indians, but I don't

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know if they were a wild tribe or not, as I don't remember what my mother told me. He was stolen when only a child about three years old. They searched for him for years without finding any trace of him. They were very afraid that the Indians had stolen him. They later heard a white man, who had escaped from the Indians, say that he had seen a white boy at the camp where he was held. The Indians kept him a long time and finally they learned to trust him. One day the warriors went on a hunt and left him in charge of the camp with a few squaws and small boys. He had wanted to come to a white settlement for a long time and look for his parents if he had any. So he escaped. They trailed him. He never would travel in the day time because he knew all about the Indians and how clever and skillful they were. He would hide in a cave, hollow tree, or some other safe place at night. Sometimes the Indians would be all around where he was hiding and he was very scared that they would find him. They were closing in on him one night, and he headed straight for

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the river. He found a boat, or canoe, and just got across the river when the Indians saw him. They wanted him to come back, because they loved him and wanted him to stay with them. He told them that he was going to the white settlement to stay. The Indians got mad and gave fierce warwhoops and shot arrows at him. He fled to the white settlement before they could get a chance to get a canoe to cross the river and catch him.

I was a musician and writer. I wrote several poems which I gave to different newspapers and sent to magazine companies. I am a staunch member of the Christian Church and so was my mother. My mother was loved by all who knew her and she lived with us till she passed away, about nine years ago. I have five living children. Four live in this county and one at Tulsa, Oklahoma. One of my twins died at birth. My husband supports me by working as janitor of the courthouse.