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Pioneer life--Arkansas

LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns

This report made on (date) June 2 1937

1. This legend was secured from (name) Mrs. Sarah Lamar
Address Fairland, Oklahoma

This person is (~~male~~ female) ~~White, Negro~~, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe Cherokee

2. Origin and history of legend or story from memory and her parents.

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____

Interview with Sarah Lamar
Fairland, Oklahoma

My father, Joshua Collins, was born and reared in middle Tennessee, his father being an Englishman. My mother, Elizabeth Essick, was born and reared in Kentucky, being half Cherokee and half Dutch. Later she came to Tennessee, where my parents were married, and they came west, settling at Elm Springs, Arkansas, which is between Bentonville and Fayetteville.

Mother passed away thirty-two years ago at my home and is buried at Hickory Grove Cemetery which is in the northern part of Delaware County, father passing at the home of a daughter in California, thirteen years ago last Thanksgiving. I, Sarah Collins Lamar, was born at Elm Springs, September 15, 1860. I had six brothers and three sisters and all of us except three brothers are living yet. My oldest sister, who is 90 years old (Nancy Ann Collins Evans), lives in California, as does my youngest sister who is 70 years old.

Our Early Home.

Father built our house, which was a three room log,

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and a log kitchen detached. Both were daubed with red clay. The place took its name, Elm Spring, from the big spring at the foot of the hill in front of the house and the large elm trees around it. We had log barns and log granaries, also a large orchard. Dad was a mill man, also a shoemaker.

Before the Thornberry school-house was built (which was used for both school and church) we walked three miles to school to a building of logs with slabs for seats without backs. The Thornberry building was a larger and closer to home. Each fall in September, we would have a ten day camp meeting. We would take our things and everybody camped on the grounds. The place where the meetings were held was a large shed covered with slabs, the ground was covered with straw and the seats were slab and backless. Each evening before the service, the lights must be fixed. At first we used the grease lamp which looked like a coffee pot. It had a spun wick through the spout and these lamps were placed in front of a piece of bright tin, which tin served as a reflector. These were placed all around the sides and ends. Later we had candles. Father made

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our molds and we moulded our own candles. The meeting would often last for several hours, and often the happy shouting could be heard a long way in the still night air. All activities stopped in the community during the time of the meeting.

Crops

We raised corn, wheat, oats, barley, rye and lots of garden stuff. We ploughed with one horse and we children went barefoot over the flint rocks and hoed. Every season was a busy one for the family. First, it was getting the crops and the gardens planted, then harvest which had to be done by hand. The grains were cradled and threshed by hand and, besides helping with this, we had our garden stuff and our chickens, turkeys and geese to look after. We belled our turkeys. After the gobblers became large enough, the boys fastened bells around their necks. This noise from the bells was a protection from the wild animals and varmints and also was a great help in finding them each evening when it was time to bring them home. We sometimes had as many as 500 with 100 of them belled. The geese were kept in a

large field in which they sowed grass for them. The gray wolves, the opossum, the weasel and the polecats all killed and stole the fowls. Once mother was bit by a weasel in the hand.

The big drove of geese had to be picked every six weeks, the sheep shearing came in May, often we had as many as 500. The wool had to be washed and was taken to Springdale to be carded, after which mother would pick out what she wanted to keep for home use and the rest was sold. I was the shepherd for the sheep. The wolves were so numerous that we were afraid to turn them out so they were kept in a large lot and each evening at four o'clock, I would take them out to graze for an hour, my helper being a big bull dog that had been trained to kill wolves, I have seen him kill them but not often would they come close to the sheep with him guarding.

We never milked less than fourteen cows and these had to be brought home from the range in the evening. They also were located by their bells. Father never did, but my husband belled his horses.

Next came the drying season. The beans and corn, also the apples, peaches, currants, gooseberries, the

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grapes and late in the fall the pumpkins.

The fall season was a busy one, getting things stored for the winter; the cane was to strip and the sorghum to be made. Father had a sorghum mill and made sorghum for others as well as for ourselves. The apple and pumpkin butter sweetened with the sorghum was boiled in large kettles of iron with a fire built out-of-doors which had to be tended, stirred and the fires kept burning. This butter was cooked a long time till there was no danger of it souring, then put in large stone jars and sealed with paper under a cloth seasoned with molasses. We filled barrels with molasses and kraut.

Father buried apples, cabbages heads down, potatoes, sweet potatoes, beets, carrots and parsnips in long trenches lined with straw and covered with dirt to keep from freezing. In this way we had fresh vegetables all during the winter. We would dig in on the south side when we wanted any.

Our crops were made with oxen. I have driven oxen. You had a line around the horn of the off ox and in addition to this line you have a long cane and you guide them with

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a Gee which is left and a Haw which is right, striking on the opposite side from the way you want them to go.

Crop failures were unknown then.

We killed our own meat, rendered our lard, made our soda. Wood ashes were placed in a hopper, water poured over it letting it run through the ashes. This made lye and if boiled till the water is gone it leaves a white settling which was then pounded and used for soda.

About all we bought was coffee, as much of our sugar was made from the maple drippings from the maple trees in early spring when the sap is rising. Our salt was made from the salt rocks that we got about five miles from home. Soft soap was made by mixing the cracklins and lye and was kept by the barrel.

Luxuries

When I was 14, father made our first washboard. It was made of a sycamore board and ridged much the same as the present board. Before that time, we used a battling bench which was a log hollowed out and set on pegs for legs. We had to pound the dirt out. Mother was very careful to inspect our work and sometimes we had to do

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it again if all the spots were not out. Father bought us a Singer sewing machine which stood on a small stand and was threaded with a quill. It was run by hand but how much better than sewing everything by hand! It was always busy as the neighbors brought much of their sewing to do on it. The lady would bring a bundle of cut and basted garments, etc., and stay all day. Father gave me the machine after I was married.

Milling.

Father had a mill at Elm Springs and it was run by water and had a big mill-dam. The grinder was a large rock like a grindstone and this ground the corn into meal in a hopper. Many of the people around there would come to mill afoot, carrying their shelled corn on their backs and wait for it to be ground, and then would visit one another while it was being ground. The old mill is now replaced by a big fine mill. Not all of our corn was ground at the mill for we boiled some of it on the cob, cut it off and dried it on a scaffold. Then when the corn was in the roasting ear, we gitted it and made it into bread like cornbread and dried this on a scaffold

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and packed it into a barrel for winter. To use it, you would soak it over night and make it up with meat grease or butter.

Clothes

We raised our own cotton and flax. Mother had cards, spinning wheel and loom and grandmother had a flax wheel and flax board. I have whipped many a pound of flax and then spun it. We made our own linen tablecloths and colored the thread to stripe them, using copperas for yellow, indigo for blue, walnut for brown, etc. In the same way we striped our ticking for the beds and picked and cured our feathers for the beds. Mother mixed black and white wool and made us flannel dresses of this, which she trimmed in black velvet for Sunday. We knit our own stockings, gloves and the men's socks, etc. I used to get fifty cents a pair for knitting gloves, mittens, stockings or socks. We wore bam-a-rel skirts. What's that? The tops are gray and from the knees down they are striped, the stripes running round. Spinning was kept up in our home after many began to buy their goods. Mother and I spun all the day before she died, that was 32 years ago.

Father made our shoes. He made his own lasts. The first good pair I had was made of dressed squirrel hide dyed black with pegged soles, the pegs being made by father of elder. When we wanted to wear our best shoes we carried them till we were almost where we were going, if walking, before pulling them on.

Home Life

My grandmother was a little woman and couldn't speak English. I once stayed with her quite a while when I was small and learned to speak Dutch, so after I went home if I got mad at any of the folks, I would "cuss" them in Dutch and they wouldn't tell what I was saying, but father soon stopped that. He never punished me but once and that time I had laughed at him when a mare ran away and he struck me with a check line.

A blessing was asked before every meal, family prayers were said each evening at bedtime. We were taught to address the old people as grandma or grandpa, the middle aged as aunt and uncle. We were permitted to attend play parties but not dances, if father knew it. Once I slipped off to a dance about a quarter of a mile from home and father came

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after me and didn't I feel little when he walked in! I left my pardner standing in the middle of the floor, I was so anxious to go home.

Amusements

In the winter evening, the different families would have pumpkin cuttings, cutting the pumpkins in rings to dry; wool pickings, picking out the burrs; cotton pickings, picking out the seeds; and candy pullings. It would take the most of the next day to get the candy out of our hair. After the evening's work was done, often we would have baked sweet potatoes with butter, popped corn, cider or apples.

One evening my sweetheart rode and said, "Sally, we are going to have a Cut Pumpkin tonight at ---." This made me mad as I thought he was laughing about it.

If we couldn't walk and if the boys didn't bring us a horse, we rode behind them. I kept my side saddle that father gave me when I was twelve till just a few years ago and then cried when I sold it, and told my husband that if I hadn't married him, I wouldn't have had to sell it.

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These days at the old home were the happy days for us. I was too young to share the hardships that my parents underwent through the Civil War.

Those Sad Days

Father joined the Confederates and fought four years under Bill Buck Brown and was shot only once and that was at the Battle of Pea Ridge when he was shot through the heel.

Mother raised four children besides her own and one of them was Sarah Castle whom she had taken when her mother died, though her father was still living. She was a girl in her teens when the battle of Fayetteville was fought and as we were only twelve miles from there she heard the noise and knew her father was there. Afraid for him she ran all the way there and when she reached him there she found him shot and she fell dead on her face.

Mother and my oldest brother made the crops, mother went to the field, worked, even cutting the wheat and oats. One day some men came to the field, whipped my brother and made him take the harness off the horses and cut my mother's hands to make her turn loose of the horses that she had been keeping in the house for four days. Our home was robbed by

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them twice and everything of value they could find was taken. They destroyed what they could not take, cutting even the feather beds and beating the feathers out in the yard, killing our chickens and geese and just letting them lay where killed.

After the war closed, father had to hide for a year in a cave to keep from being killed by the bushwhackers. He made shoes during this time. He would make fourteen or fifteen pairs a week and these mother would get when she took him food, and sell them. A pair of men's shoes brought \$3.00, a lady's pair \$2.00 and children's sold for \$1.00.

I was small and soldiers who were friends of father would ask me where my daddy was and I was taught to say, "None of your business." They also asked me who I was, to which I was taught to make the same reply. I was taught this to keep me from telling.

Later Life

My sister Nancy Ann had married and was living near Aurora, three miles south of Fairland. She came home to weave some blankets and I came home with her to stay till Christmas.

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I was supposed to marry my sweetheart in Arkansas in the spring and he insisted that we marry before I came.

I met my husband at a protracted meeting being held at the Aurora school-house, when my sister's little girl wanted a drink and I took her to get water. He told me afterwards that he admired my hair which was (and is) very black and curly. A couple of days later he got a lady friend to get me to go home with her and stay till the next night's meeting and he came over that day. My folks didn't happen to be at church that night so he took me home.

So, on November 9, 1881, I married Ewing Lamar, a Cherokee who had been born and reared near the Aurora school house and had attended school at Hickory Grove. He was one year older than I.

My husband owned four farms and our home was a nice four room house, good barns, wells, etc. He had a good span of horses and a new buggy and we went to church and Sunday school every Sunday. Here we raised our family of five. They were: Annie Elizabeth; the twins, Maudie May and Vaudie Lee; Franklin Taylor and James Riley. My children went to Hickory Grove to school to John Chandler.

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Here we lived till my husband died twenty-five years ago the 9th day of this August. My brother made one crop for me but he became dissatisfied and so I sold out and came to Fairland to live and last year I was the oldest settler at the annual picnic.

Conclusion

This concludes the interview with a very lovely, little old lady, who still enjoys her neighbors and is very active, who is still willing to lend a hand in sickness or in need.