

~~WALKER~~, J. B. (MRS.) INTERVIEW 4465

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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4465

WALKER, J. B. Mrs.

INTERVIEW

Field Worker's name Virgil Coursey

This report made on (date) June 9, 1937

1. Name Mrs. J. B. Walker

2. Post-Office Address Altus, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 414 West Broadway

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 19 Year 1866

5. Place of birth Missouri

6. Name of Father John McClaren Place of birth Virginia

Other information about father

7. Name of Mother Susan Pollard Place of birth Virginia.

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 7

WALKER, J. B. (MRS.)

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An interview with Mrs. J. B. Walker, Altus.

By - Virgil Coursey, Field Worker.

June 9, 1937..

We came to Oklahoma from Grayson County, Texas, in 1885.

My father first filed on a section of land but for some reason cut it down to a quarter section. He also bought a quarter section for \$1.25 an acre. I have a dim recollection of my father's having purchased some certificates or something from the Government entitling him to eleven hundred acres of land if he could find that much land offered for homesteading in one unbroken lot. I remember that Captain Sweet, a surveyor at Mangum, assisted us in staking our claims.

There were three families of us; my father's family, my brother-in-law and his family, and my husband and I.

We all settled some two miles south and two miles west of Altus and have in many ways taken active part in the development of this country.

I felt that this was the most beautiful country

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I had ever seen. I have seen grass grow as tall as the ceiling, and wild pea vines grew here in profusion. The Grooms cattlemen had most of this country leased. I have heard that their lease covered some forty miles by ninety miles. There were line camps stationed at intervals. One was over on Turkey Creek, another on Boggy Creek and so on. The duties of the cowboys were to keep the cattle pushed back to the north during the summer, and to the south in the winter.

During these first years there were about three houses at Mangum, three at old Frazier and one or two over east near the mountains. I think Fort Elliott was located over near Mobeetie, Texas.

I really do not think that any one can state definitely just where the old Chisholm Trail ran. I always felt that it ran north and south near Bitter Creek for some distance because the trail was so wide there. I have talked with several old cattlemen and none of them can say just where the trail was.

There were no buffaloes here when we came to

this country, but there were numerous buffalo bones. Many people picked them up and sold them at Nichita Falls, Texas.

The year 1885 was a dry year and although there was plenty of grass for cattle, not much garden stuff was raised. We brought quite a lot of food with us from Texas in anticipation of such a year. We brought thirty pounds of butter, plenty of bacon, sausage, canned fruit, dried fruit and dried vegetables. We brought our cattle out here in May after we moved in January. We had plenty of turkeys.

Speaking of turkey, Turkey Creek was rightly named. There were literally hundreds of turkeys along the creek. The men used to put traps where the turkeys roosted. During the winter we made turkey sausage. This sausage consisted of pork sausage and turkey breast, about half and half. This was a very mild and delicious meat.

We had a dugout, a log house and two tents. We lived in constant fear of the Indians. One never knew when they were coming for the grass was so tall.

One day there were some sixty or seventy Indians within a half mile of the house before we saw them. They came up and demanded food. We finally managed to convince them that we could not possibly divide our food with so many. They were not really hungry because they had killed some beeves that day. They said that they wanted food to carry home to their papooses. We told them that if they carried all our food away our little papooses would go hungry, because we had to drive to Doan's Store for supplies. They were finally convinced and took their leave - all but one old Indian and squaw. They still clamored for food and we had to cook and let them eat. The Indian man looked at me and said, "You, young squaw, get me a drink!" I hurried to a well some hundred yards away and brought water. When the Indians started to leave they asked for a can of coffee to take to their papooses. We gave it to them. I was afraid the Indians might return that night and murder us.

Another day an Indian boy stopped by. He was walking - now one rarely saw an Indian on foot. He

wanted to borrow my husband's horse and saddle. I don't know why or where he wanted to go, but he promised to return them before another moon meaning before another day passed. My husband did not want to lend the horse and saddle, and had to use the utmost tact in refusing.

When an Indian is one's friend he is a friend indeed, but when he is an enemy one never knows what to expect. We let the boy spend the night. He asked again for the horse and saddle next morning, and when he saw that my husband was positively not going to lend them, he said, "John, you're no good, you're no good", and made his departure.

We had many hardships during those years. The constant fear of Indians, the uncertainty of crops and the inconveniences suffered, were a constant strain on the nerves. Sometimes the men folks would be away for weeks at a time on the range and we were apprehensive for their safety. Occasionally they sent word to us by some cowboy coming our way.

For a long time my father picked up mail in Texas

and brought it back to the cowboys. The town of old Frazier grew up on Bitter Creek. There were some stores, a mill, and my father finally opened a hotel there.

It was a long time before any of the old settlers died. There was very little sickness then. We had a few doctors in the community but they rarely ever received a call. An old man named Kennedy was the first person buried at Frazier, as far as I can remember. I think he died of old age. Next there were two men killed and buried there. My father donated two acres of land for Frazier Cemetery. I would say this was about 1886 or 1887.

We had styles of clothes in those days just as we do today. Little girls wore long waisted dresses with lots of pleats in the skirts. We thought they were lovely then. The women wore basques and overskirts and long trains.

In June, 1891, the flood came. After this there was strong agitation to move the town to Altus. This was met by strong opposition by those who contended

that floods would not be a yearly occurrence, that this one had been caused by a cloud burst. Those opposed to the move said that Bitter Creek was an advantageous place because there was water for mills. On the other hand there were those owning land in Altus who agitated the removal of the town to create a real estate boom, so to speak. Every inducement was made to store owners, even offers were made to move stores and merchandise free of charge, and offers were made to donate building sites. Most of the stores were moved; but Braddock Grocery, Mrs. Mahon's Drug Store and my father's Hotel remained for quite a time, but they too had to give way to the march of progress.

Editors Note:

There is no Bitter Creek to be found in the vicinity of Altus on the Rand McNally map. However, there is a stream of water running close to Altus named Stinking Creek, which is probably the creek referred to by Mrs. Walker.

Editor.

This is incorrect. see USGS Topographical maps. Bitter Creek is where Mrs. Walker says it is.

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