

WALLEN, MARY SUTTON.

INTERVIEW

10593

BIOGRAPHY FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma
 WALLIN, MARY SUTTON INTERVIEW. 10898.

Field Worker's name Ethel B. Tackitt.

This report made on (date) April 22, 1938

Leone Wolf, Kiowa County.

1. Name Mrs. Mary Francis Sutton Wallin.

2. Post Office Address Hobart, Kiowa County.

3. Residence address (or location) Same

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 9 Year 1856.

5. Place of birth Pulaski County, Kentucky.

6. Name of Father Andrew Jackson Sutton Place of birth Kentucky

7. Name of Mother Martha Ann Gaston Sutton, Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about mother Member of a Pioneer family of Kentucky.

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 5.

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Ethel B. Tackitt,
Investigator.
April 22, 1938.

Interview with Mrs. Mary Francis Sutton Wallen
Hobart, Kiowa County.

Born December 8, 1856.

Father-Andrew Jackson Sutton

Mother-Martha Ann Gasteneau Sutton

I was born in Pulaski County, Kentucky, December 8, 1856. My father, Andrew Jackson Sutton, and my mother, Martha Ann Gasteneau Sutton, were both natives of Pulaski County and were member of pioneer Kentucky families.

My father's father, Micaiah Sutton, had established a tan yard for making leather and leather articles at a very early date in the history of Kentucky in a valley six miles East of Somerset, Pulaski County, Kentucky, and here grandfather reared his family, teaching each one to work in the tan yard and thereby providing a living as all the work was done by the family.

This valley was well watered not by creeks but by great wells of wonderfully sweet, good water and when I can first remember there were three hundred tanning vats and sheds with all the equipment which went with such an extensive plant.

All parts were operated by hand as there was not one bit

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of machinery in the whole establishment.

The hides were lowered into these vats which were about fifteen feet deep by ten feet square boarded up on the inside with heavy timbers while at each corner was a heavy piece of square timber called a plug which was raised when it was desired that the vat should be drained and cleaned to make ready for another pack of hides. These vats were dug in the ground but were so constructed that the stale water would run out at the bottom.

After the hides were well soaked so that the flesh adhering to the under side and the hair would slip off when the hand operated scraper was used on them they were ready for the leather making process which was that of the Old German kind which was used in Germany and put in practice by my grandfather, Micajah Sutton.

My father purchased eight hundred acres of land near him just to secure the tan bark off the chestnut, oak and Red oak trees as this bark was what they used for tanning. Lamp black and fish oil were also used on the leather.

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I worked in the tan yard, also, when a child and a young woman. Harness and leather horse-collars were also made here by hand. I have stuffed the wheat straw into many, many horse-collars so that was usually my job. I can think of nothing that now strikes like that tan yard and if a person was not accustomed to the smell he or she could hardly endure working there, but of course, our family was brought up to this sort of work.

When the Civil War came up my father was not drafted because of his operating this tan-yard, neither was it ever destroyed by either army. I remember on one November 23rd, during the war, that twenty-five Union Soldiers came to our home, all very ill of dysentery and remained two days and nights until all but one was well enough to travel. The one was left and we took care of him the best we could until some Confederate soldiers came and took him away and Father feared that the man would be killed, but eight months later, we received a letter from him stating that he had been freed and sent to his home.

After the war my folks hired negroes to work in the tan yard and there were two who worked there a long time

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but the most of the work was still done by the family. When I was twenty-four and had married, my husband and I left Kentucky and came to Texas there we lived until 1889 then in 1890 we moved three miles east of Ardmore in the Chickasaw Indian Nation and with us we brought a wagon loaded with hogs and chickens and nothing else and in the other covered wagon we had our bedding, cooking utensils and our clothes. We leased land from the Jackson Brothers who controlled twelve thousand acres of land in Clear Creek Bottom. The land was very productive, the corn grew fine, long ears and the cotton was also fine, but prices were low and there was so little market for either corn or cotton that there was no money in the country.

Having grown up as I have told you about, working in the tan yard and doing all kinds of farm work. I was able to look after my children and to plant a garden to help provide food. I would take the children and go out into the woods and gather post oak grapes, wild plums and currants for we were accustomed to having plenty of fruit and doing without fruit was truly a hardship to me. There were very few

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orchards in the country at that time and those which were growing were on old home places that had belonged to the Indian families.

I was not very happy for the country was so wild and unsettled that there was nothing for women and children but loneliness and work and as the land could not belong to the white people there was no incentive to build more on a place than was required by the lease, which was for so many years, usually five years, and then a person would either have to rent it or move to another lease and improve it in the same way.

Our stock did well as they ran at large but it was several years before the country settled up and we could have a subscription school and that was for only two or four months in the year and for that reason my children were able to get little education which was a great grief to me. I am now eighty-one years old and forty-eight of those years have been spent in Oklahoma. My husband has passed on and I am living with my daughter, Mrs. Lillie Pulsey, who was born in Oklahoma and has lived here all of her life. Some things are better now than when I first came to the country but I think it is harder for people to make a living at this time.