

WEST, ALICE VIRGINIA.

INTERVIEW

#1393

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

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Field Worker's name Merrill A. Nelson

This report made on (date) November 2, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Alice Virginia West,

2. Post Office Address Enid, Oklahoma,

3. Residence address (or location) 1125 N. Adams, Enid, Oklahoma.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 21 Year 1858.

5. Place of birth Denton County, Texas.

6. Name of Father Thomas Cash Place of birth South Carolina
or Florida.

Other information about father Medical doctor.

7. Name of Mother Margaret Wright Place of birth Texas

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 Nine

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Merrill A. Nelson,
Investigator.
November 2, 1938.

Interview with Mrs. Alice Virginia West,
1125 North Adams, Enid, Oklahoma.

My mother's father died when I was very young. That was on the Hickory Creek in Texas. His death was caused by pneumonia. I had three brothers and one sister. Two brothers were farmers. The youngest brother, Polk Cash, was a merchant. John McClure married the sister. Her name was Olie. Her husband was a sheriff. I was born in Denton County, in East Central Texas.

My parents moved around quite a bit. For a while my parents lived with Grandmother on Hickory Creek. I went fishing a good deal but I did not like it. Grandmother took me for company and she did this so often that I tired of it. However, we caught a lot of fish. We were living right on the bank of the creek. They had a nice place and Denton County had been settled and civilized by this time:

Occasionally an Indian or groups of Indians would camp along the creek but they never attempted to harm us. Nevertheless as a girl I was afraid of them.

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My father was a medical doctor for the Confederate Army. He never fought however. I can still remember though but a small child his coming home for a day sick. However, he soon recovered and returned to his post.

I went one year to school in Denton County and then several years in Tarrant County. One of the schools in Tarrant County was very crude. We used long tables for benches and these were shoved up against the wall. We had few text books, no curtains, no lock on the door, or no pictures on the wall. We did have blackboards, however. I went to one "Arithmetic School", also. But in the school we went the most we had were reading, grammar, geography and writing; that was all, perhaps a little arithmetic.

We had frequent spell downs and speeches on Fridays, the speeches being held in the evening. I never attended a school where there was more than one teacher.

I used to pick up the shuttle for Grandmother when she was weaving. We had an old spinning wheel in our

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home. Mother, Grandmother and I would often operate it.

We also had a weaving machine.

My father did not raise much except some corn as he was a physician and he rented the places where we lived. He raised some sheep and we would send away the wool to be carded by a carding machine. Sometimes we would get a little cotton and card it ourselves. Then we made counterpanes. These were blankets of mixed wool and cotton.

I moved away from Tarrant County, married and came back and stayed two years; then went to Montague County. When we returned after being married we moved on my father's farm a while.

We moved to Greer County in 1901. We made the trip as did so many pioneers in a covered wagon. One of my sons drove one of the wagons. Everybody lived in dug-outs, which were scattered over the prairie at wide intervals.

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There were no fields, only patches here and there for garden spots. My husband was called to take care of a country church. It was twelve miles west of Altus and three miles south of another town. We lived $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles from the church. We had no ladies' aid society but we made some quilts at the church. These we sent to an orphan's home. We also sewed there during the World War for the Red Cross.

We traded at Olustee. This was just a spot in the road but there was a post office, a gin, a few stores, a blacksmith shop or two. We took most of our cotton to this town.

We lived mostly on vegetables though we had some meat. Sorghum was a big part of our diet also. We had a 160 acre claim. We still have that claim. We raised cotton, wheat, maize, kaffir, vegetables and some cows and horses. There were rabbits, prairie dogs and rattlesnakes. There was little other game and few if any Indians. Our land was bare except for an orchard and a few trees we set out in the yard.

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A hail storm hurt our orchard. After a while the trees began to die. They were apple trees.

I still have an old bedstead I had when I was thirteen.

There was no choir, no carpets, and no organ in the little church when we first moved there. It was a frame building. Mrs. Pearl Speck ^{later} was the organist while Brother Speck was the superintendent. They used to shout at the services and say "Amen". We and the Methodists had big revivals down that way.

There was an old Baptist cemetery close by the church. The Campbellites had a church in that neighborhood soon, too, so we had plenty for a small community or no community at all.

At first most of the farming was by hand. There were no cultivators, only turning ploughs and bull-tongue plows. Harvesting was by horse power threshing machines; water mills ground our grain, wheat and corn. There was a big dam five miles from my father's place

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in Tarrant County where they had a mill.

We made lye soap as follows:

Take an old ash hopper, fill it with ashes with a hollow in the center of the ashes. Place a trough beneath it leading to a bucket. Then pour on water and it would gradually drip into the trough and bucket.

We made our own lard; we also killed our own beeves.

We made our lights by taking beef suet and melting it. This was poured into candle moulds into which a wick has been placed and allowed to cool. For lighters we took paper and twisted it into long tapers.

The farmers used oxen for their farm work to a considerable extent. I have also seen them hauling with six oxen.

In Tarrant and Montague Counties, where we were in the timber, they cut logs and built outbuildings, as barns, etc., off our own place.

They would sometimes even make their own bricks. Pottery plants were one man affairs.

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The women would wear sunbonnets. The women would wear hoop skirts and other odd styles. They seemed all right to us then.

We had no colored help except an occasional colored woman who would help us when sick.

Play was not neglected. We would swing, ride horseback, or play marbles with the boys, play ante over and get the boys to jump rope. Sometimes we made playhouses in the woods.

They killed a man, an Indian, in front of Father's house. They claimed he was an outlaw but I do not know what they ever accused him of. Sometimes a horse would be stolen and someone would be blamed.

When the men would roll logs for fences or for other buildings we had a big time. We would have dinner then more work; then supper, the women quilting all at the same time. In the evening we would pull taffy or the children would play "silly" games. We could pull that brown sorghum taffy till it was almost white. Then we

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would celebrate the usual holidays. There was dancing, too.

In Denton County my father had a drug store at Alden. When he moved, he only kept a few drugs in a small room in the home.

We got our mail once a week at first but when we moved to Greer we got it every day. There were no bridges there, however, so when it was rainy we would wait for the creek to go down, except some daring men would swim the creek and a few had swimming horses and got over that way.

One time I attended a camp meeting. Some of the older people brought their beds, killed beevès and made quite an affair of it. After service they sat around in groups and talked. Some brought their covered wagons. The one I "took in" was on old Mr. Simpson's place.

One of my sons was a preacher for a while. He lives in Colorado now and does not preach so much. There is

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another son who is the minister at the Olivet Baptist
Church in Enid.