

CARPENTER, DORA MATTHEWS. INTERVIEW 8695 97

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

CARPENTER, DORA MATTHEWS

INTERVIEW

8695

Field Worker's name Ethel B. Tackitt.

This report made on (date) September 16. 1937

Lone Wolf, Kiowa County, Oklahoma.

1. Name Dora Matthews, Carpenter,

2. Post Office Address Lone Wolf, Kiowa Coutny, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Lone Wolf City.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 19 Year 1881

5. Place of birth Collins County, Texas.

6. Name of Father James C. Matthews Place of birth Mississippi.

Other information about father Known for kindness to all people.

7. Name of Mother Mary Berry Matthews. Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about mother Pioneer 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.

CARPENTER, DORA MATTHEWS

INTERVIEW

8695

Ethel B. Tackitt,
Field Worker,
September 16, 1937.

An Interview with Mrs. Dora Matthews Carpenter,
Lone Wolf, Kiowa County,
Oklahoma.

I was born in Collin County, Texas, September 19, 1881. My father, James C. Matthews, was a native of Mississippi and my mother, Mary Berry Matthews, was born in Tennessee but they came to Texas and settled in Collin County from which place they moved to the Chickasaw Nation in 1885 and settled near the present town of Lebanon in Marshall County. Since that time fifty-two years ago, there has been only one year, 1924, that my mother who is yet living has not lived in the vicinity of Lebanon, and in that year her post office was Lone Wolf, Kiowa County.

Father rented land from a white man, Orr Dirk, who had it leased from an Indian, and we farmed. There was plenty of wild turkey and all other kind of game, also lots of fish in the streams. Father hunted and fished but it was only to supply food for his family and that which we did not need he gave to our neighbors, many of

CARPENTER, DORA MATTHEWS

INTERVIEW

8695

-2-

whom were Indians as there were many more Indians than white people in the country at that time. We had many friends among the Indians as Father and Mother took care to be kind and honest with them but at the same time they lived in their way and we lived in our way.

The Indians were mostly Chickasaws and were civilized and many were well educated. In their homes they were like white people, some were clean and kept their homes well, while others were dirty and shiftless. Very few Indians had much furniture in their homes, what they had was mostly beds and cooking equipment. All these Indians lived in houses; I do not remember any tepees.

We lived in a log house chinked and daubed with red clay. The water we used was drawn from a well with buckets. We used coal oil lamps, made our own clothes, did our own home work and Mother visited among the sick, both Indian and white. We did not make the cloth for our clothes. Father rented from two Indians, John and Tom Pickins, and after some years leased land from Frazier McClish, a Chickasaw. The McClish family were very much like white people

CARPENTER, DORA MATTHEWS

INTERVIEW

8695

-3-

and we lived right near them, in fact, so close that when we washed our clothes we used the tubs and pots which were in the McClish yard as the well from which we got water was nearer their house than it was ours.

My brother and sister, who were both older than I, went to dances and, of course, the young Indians also went. My parents did not want us to go with the Indian boys and girls as they thought it was not best for the Indians and whites to marry. There was a young Indian man in the community of the name of Ellis Keel who was nice looking and well educated as there was an Indian school called the Indian Academy, one and one half miles southwest of Lebanon. The name of one teacher was Whitesel and the other was named Derick and both were white men so the Indian children had much better opportunities for education than we white children did.

This young man, Ellis Keel, drank a great deal and at this dance which my brother and sister, Annie, attended, he was drinking, but he came and asked my sister to dance with him. She refused to dance with him and she and my

CARPENTER, DORA MATHEWS

INTERVIEW

8695

-4-

brother came home. Shortly after this incident, Sister Annie and I went over to Mrs. McClish's yard to do our family washing and had the water, fire, and the clothing all ready for work, when this young Indian, Ellis Keel, came out of the house. He was still drinking and he said, "Miss Annie, you would not dance with me the other night". Annie did not know what to do and we were both frightened. Ellis Keel said, "You wait a minute", and walked back into the house. We did not wait; we scrambled over the rail fence back of the smoke-house and ran home as fast as we could. We did not go back that day but left all the washing just as it was.

We did not see any more of Ellis Keel for a while but later he was engaged to a white girl in the neighborhood and they were to be married at a little house used for a church. When young Keel came to marry her he was drunk and the girl refused to go with ^{him} to be married. Ellis Keel took the marriage license out of his pocket and burned it up. Then as he was passing a house where some negroes lived he began to shoot at them. The negroes ran into the

CARPENTER, DORA MATTHEWS

INTERVIEW

8695

-5-

house and returned the fire, shooting through the holes between the logs where the chinks were out. In the gun battle which followed, Ellis Keel's arm was almost shot off and later it had to be taken off. He lingered several months but later died from effects of the gun shot. Our family felt that Sister Annie might have been engaged to him had not our parents used judgment in handling the situation.

Some of the white people around us were more to be feared than the Indians; there were two families, the Pollards and Brassfields, who created the worst condition I ever remember. The wives of these two men became entangled with two other white men, Lam and Odell and ordered their own husbands to leave the country. Pollard did as he was told and left while Brassfield remained at home. Brassfield had been missing for about a week and one night my father and mother were sitting up with the McClish family who had a sick boy, when one of our neighbors came and wanted Father to help search for Mr. Brassfield but Father did not go. A few days later Father saw some buzzards

CARPENTER, DORA MATTHEWS

INTERVIEW

8695

-6-

flying around and as he had shot a deer, shortly before and had failed to find it in the brush, told Mother that he would walk out into the woods and see what the buzzards were after and not far away in stepping down into a little ravine, Father saw Mr. Brassfield lying dead. Mr. Brassfield had been to the little store nearby and was walking back with his hands filled with groceries when he had been shot.

Father returned home greatly disturbed for he knew that he must report what he had found to the officers and he knew that more than likely he would also be killed as he was the main witness. He reported the matter to the officers and they arrested Lam and Odell taking them to Fort Smith, Arkansas, where the Territorial Court was conducted at that time. The women were also taken to jail. Lam and Odell were convicted and hanged but the two women were later released.

We continued to farm and as the years went by the country settled up but conditions were quite different then from what they are now. When travelers came by,

CARPENTER, DORA MATTHEWS

INTERVIEW

8695

-7-

which they often did and asked to purchase hay, eggs or milk, my parents never thought of charging them for such things. Father would go out to the barn and get a bale of hay or a few bundles of feed and give it to them, likewise eggs and milk was always given to travelers with the invitation to camp near the house so that they could have water from the well.

My parents lived together sixty-eight years and reared a large family in Marshall County. Father died there on July 27, 1937 and Mother still lives at Lebanon. I have lived in Kiowa County, with the exception of a short time when I was in Texas, since 1904. I have done my part toward the settling up the Kiowa Country as well as the Chickasaw Nation.