

DURKE, FLORENCE L.

INTERVIEW

10171

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

DUREE, FLORENCE L. INTERVIEW,

10171

Field Worker's name Ethel Mae Yates,

This report made on (date) March 17, 1933

1. Name Florence L. Duree

2. Post Office Address Flk City

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 20, Year 1876

5. Place of birth Cedervale, Kansas

6. Name of Father J. J. Smith Place of birth Ohio

Other information about father He was a soldier

7. Name of Mother Caroline Smith Place of birth Iowa

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 _____

Father was a pioneer. He lived only three years after coming to the Territory but he helped to blaze the way for others to follow. Mother is gone, brother is gone, so I am the only one of us left.

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Field worker, Ethel Mae Yates,
March 17, 1933.

Interview with Florence L. Duree
Elk City

My parents were J. J. Smith and Caroline Smith. I was born at Cedarvale , Kansas, and came with my parents to the Territory in the Fall of 1889 from Kansas. Father came to get a home and being a soldier he did not have to make the run. He homesteaded one and a half miles east of Stillwater. in Payne County. He and my brother hurriedly made us a dugout to live in until he could cut lumber for a house . Our dugout was one large room dug down in the ground and covered with poles, brush and dirt, with a fireplace in one end where we did our cooking. Mother white-washed the walls with lime so it looked very nice and clean.

We lived three-fourths of a mile from a creek, so we had plenty of wood to burn and carried water from the creek. Sometimes when we would go to get water, there would be two or three snakes jump out of bushes

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while we were there. But we drank the water just the same. Some people would say that they would not have drunk the water, but they would and would have enjoyed it too. We had to go to Arkansas City for the groceries we bought, but that wasn't many.

Father being a soldier, the Government issued us some groceries every three months the first year that we were here until Father could make a crop and get on his feet. He put in a sod crop and everything we planted made good. The summer after we got our crop worked, Father cut cottonwood logs and hauled them to a sawmill and got lumber, sawed and built us a two-room house and covered it with homemade clapboards, which were made out of cottonwood.

When it came time to make sorghum I went to work for some people across the creek. I worked from summer until late in the fall for my board and two dresses,

and you know calico was a luxury in those days.

It took eight yards to make a dress; we made tight basque waists with real full gathered skirts which came to the floor, and we would put a yard of goods

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in each sleeve and we wore real broad-brimmed hats that sat on the tops of our heads, pinned on with large hat pins. I have still got two of the pins.

In 1891 I was married to R. T. James. He had a two-wheeled cart that we went in to do our courting, and we made our own entertainment. Maybe one night there would be a dance at one house and the next night a spelling match at another house; then maybe the next night there would be singing at some one else's house. We really enjoyed ourselves and there very seldom would be any one come to these places who had been drinking.

The man I married had made the run and had gotten a claim five miles northeast of Sweetwater and had built a nice little one-room log house about twelve feet square and had made slide back windows. We had a home made bedstead and a home made table to eat on, and a little wood stove, a chair or two and our house was full. The sack was our flour bin and a box nailed on the wall with a curtain over it

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was the cupboard for our dishes, and we thought everything looked real nice. We raised hogs and alfalfa. We lived here one year and sold out and bought a place over close to Ingalls. It is now called Signet and it is twelve miles from Sweetwater. Right after we moved here there was a riot with the Delton gang and one of them was killed and two of the marshals were killed. There were some "scary" times and anyone was afraid to carry a dollar bill in his pocket and let any one know it. In the spring of 1896 our first baby was born. We had saved and gotten several cows and chickens, so we were going to make lots on our butter and eggs. We got 7 cents for the butter we sold and 3 cents a dozen for eggs and got 25 cents a bushel for our corn. We fattened our hogs and hauled them thirty miles to market and got 2½ cents a pound for them. Fifty cents a day was considered good wages for a man and \$1.50 a week for a woman. We lived on this place for seven years and sold out and moved to Stillwater.

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My husband was a surveyor and he surveyed the Cheyenne and Arapahoe country and the Sac and Fox and I have still got his old compass. We went to the first fair that was held at Sweetwater. There was some kind of a music box there that you would have to put tubes in your ears to hear the music and it cost 15 cents to listen in. I paid the 15 cents and thought that I heard some great music.

My husband died and left me with six small children and I stayed right there in Stillwater and raised and educated my children. I lived there thirty-five years, and married Mr. Duree eight years ago, came to Elk City six years ago, which is still my home today and I am an '39er.