

MONAHAN, BETTIE

INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name Ethel Mae YatesThis report made on (date) September 17 1937

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1. Name Mrs. Bettie Monahan
 2. Post Office Address Elk City, Oklahoma
 3. Residence address (or location) Eight and Walker Streets
 4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 24 Year 1864
 5. Place of birth Richfield, Kentucky
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6. Name of Father Sheley Cumming Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Norvey Cumming Place of birth Kentucky

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 _____.

Ethel Mae Yates
Interviewer
September 17, 1937

Interview with
Mrs. Bettie Monahan
Elk City, Oklahoma.

I was born and reared in Kentucky; was married there to Mr. T. J. Monahan.

He came to the Territory in 1892 to make the run; he made the run but failed to get a claim. He then went over to Dewey County and filed on a claim in a place where the Indians were wild. The place where he filed was twenty five miles northwest of Woodward and about twenty five miles from Loco.

My two babies and I came to Oklahoma on the train. It was a very small place and went by the name of Throat Cut Town. My husband met us here and we went to Mangum and stayed a while and then went to our claim. We went in covered wagons and my husband set to work to make us a dug-out.

Our dug-out was dug back in a bank covered over with dirt; the front was of logs, there were no windows, no fire

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place and only a piece of carpet for a door shutter.

Our barn was dug back in a bank covered over with cedar bark and dirt. We dug three wells before we got water but when we got water it was just as fine as it could be and there was plenty of it.

Cedar Creek ran through our place so we had plenty of wood to burn and my husband cut cedar logs and hauled them to Logan and Woodward and sold them to get our supplies. My husband was President of the Farmers Union and had to leave the children and me alone most of the time.

The Indians were wild and the rangers were desperate; they were all determined to run the settlers out. Rangers have come up on my dug-out and thrown notes down in front of it, tied to rocks, warning me to leave and saying that if I was not out by the next morning they would pull the children and me out.

The children and I would be there alone and our nearest neighbor two miles away. There was nothing that I could do. I would not dare go out doors until late in the day and I have done my chores many times with a baby in

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my arms, one on each side holding to my apron, me with a gun in one hand and another gun in my belt. I would not dare to leave the children alone in the dug-out.

The rangers have come and made attempts to get in, but I have stood in the door with a gun in my hand and kept them out, praying all the time that God would send someone to my rescue and that I would not have to do anything desperate and some one has always come and I never have had to shoot any one.

The mountain lions were thick. I used to hang my lantern in my dug-out door about sun down and let it hang there all night. I hung this lantern in my dug-out door every night for five years to keep the lions out for lions would not come close to fire. These lions would come up in the yard at night and paw around the well for water.

There was a canyon west of the dug-out with a carcass in it and late in the evening I have seen the wild "Varments" going there in droves.

One time the children were out in the yard playing and a catamount jumped ^{out} of a tree not more than two feet

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from the head of one child. When the children went to school, they went by Vici as the lions were so bad. School was supposed to run three months but the lions got so thick they had to close the school as it was not safe for the children to go.

Lofer wolves were thick and we just could not raise a chicken.

When we had sickness I nursed the patient the best I could. One time one of my little girls became ill with typhoid fever and we were there alone with no neighbors close enough for help. So one night I went down on my knees and asked God to spare her; I stayed on my knees until sunrise and the next morning when I got up my little girl was well.

While here the Cheyenne Indians broke out and were coming on the war path. They sent one of their chiefs ahead to tell us that they were coming; he was all dressed in his war paint and feathers. They came from Kontoma which was their Reservation. All the men in the country had to leave their families and go to try to stop the Indians. The Indians had taken Sealon and had gotten to

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the border of Dewey County when they got them stopped. The Indians killed lots of the white men, women and children. This was about 1897.

My husband farmed some when he was at home and raised lots of stuff. I have gone out and gathered as many as twenty-four bushels of tomatoes in one day. We went to Woodward and Logan for most of our supplies, but there was a post office near by run by Mrs. Vincent. The post office was called Vici and is still Vici until now.

When we landed on our claim we had provisions for six weeks and seventy cents in money.

We lived there for several years and then sold our claim out and went to Taloga where my husband ran a meat market and a little grocery store but he did not do much good, so we soon left there and moved to Logan and there he did truck farming and sold vegetables. We moved from there to Mutual over in Custer County.

My husband freighted from there to Woodward and to Custer. While at Taloga the Indians tried to steal our baby boy. I would not dare let him out of my sight. The Indians have come into my house and try to get him. I

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would be on one side of the stove and the Indian on the other and I would start around the table and they would start after me trying to get the baby. I would reach under the table and get my gun and then they would make for the door.

The Indians would not bother you much if they thought you had a gun. They were afraid of a gun.

The marshal there told me to carry a gun and shoot every Indian that I saw come in at my gate. I got a large Bull dog and kept him tied at the door with a rope that would reach to the yard gate.

It was here that my husband got killed. One evening as I was sitting at my window our little dog came to the well and got water, then came to the window and jumped up on it and howled twice. I made him get down; I walked over and sat down in a rocking chair; the dog came in and jumped up on my lap and howled twice. I rubbed his head and told him to go on, that every thing was all right, but he looked right up in my eyes and howled twice more. The next morning word was brought to me that my husband was at Logan dead. I buried him there at Logan and never did

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know how he come to be killed.

There were open saloons, rangers and wild Indians to contend with, so I did not have any way of finding out how Mr. Monahan got killed.

I lived there at Taloga three months after my husband's death, then I moved and came to Elk City in 1907 and I have lived here ever since. I did not have any money when I got here and with my children to take care of and educate it has been hard.

When I first came to this wild country many times the children and I would be alone and with only a piece of a carpet for a door. I have put my children to bed many a night and then I have gotten down on my knees and prayed until a light would shine through the dug-out. I have had my children rise up in bed and say "Mamma, what was that light, did you see it?" I would then tell them that they could lie down and sleep because they would be safe until morning. I learned to trust God when I did not have any one else to look to and He is still my trust and has never failed me.