

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

MONTGOMERY, KATE E. SMITH INTERVIEW 9520

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora Lorrin.

This report made on (date) December 27, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Kate E. (Smith) Montgomery

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Okla.

3. Residence address (or location) 402 South Hoff St.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 29 Year 1863

5. Place of birth Syracuse, New York

6. Name of Father Frederic D. Smith Place of birth Connecti-
cut, Janu-
Other information about father ary 5, 1819

Died December 27, 1887.

7. Name of Mother Adeline (Blackmore) Smith Place of birth New York
State

Other information about mother Died September 7, 1913.

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 _____.

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Nora Lorrin,
Investigator,
December 27, 1937.

An Interview with Mrs. Kate E. Smith Montgomery,
402 South Hoff, El Reno, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Kate Elmira (Smith) Montgomery was born in
Syracuse, New York, September 29, 1863.

Her father, Frederic D. Smith, was born at Ridgefield,
Connecticut, January 5, 1819. He died December 27, 1887.

Her mother, Adeline (Blackmore) Smith, was born in
New York State, July 4, 1829. She died September 7, 1913.

Her parents moved to Iowa when Mrs. Montgomery was
two or three years old, lived there for a short time and
then moved to Kirksville, Missouri, where she grew to woman-
hood. She came to Kansas in 1883, to teach school at
Canton, Kansas, in McPherson County. Canton was a small
place of about a thousand people, and Kate Smith taught for
two years. She was married to Mr. I. C. Montgomery on
June 9, 1885 and after their marriage continued to reside
there for some time, moving to Salina, Kansas, and spending
a year at that place before coming to Oklahoma in 1891. Mr.
Montgomery came in July and his wife in August, 1891.

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Mr. Montgomery had been in business at one time with Mr. Crowe, and Mr. Crowe had a store in El Reno. Mr. Crowe offered Mr. Montgomery an interest in this store if he would go to El Reno and take charge of it. Mr. Montgomery accepted the offer. This was the reason for the Montgomery family coming to Oklahoma. Mrs. Montgomery was out in Colorado at this time with her baby daughter who was sick; the doctor had advised them to take the child to a cooler climate. Her husband telegraphed her that if she wanted to see him before he went to El Reno, she had better come home to Salina. She had never heard of El Reno before she got the telegram but she came home to Salina and Mr. Montgomery left on the seven o'clock train the same evening for El Reno.

Mr. I. C. Montgomery was manager of the Crowe Mercantile Company for a long time; later Mr. Penner and a Mr. Dale, together with Mr. Montgomery, bought out the Crowe Mercantile Company and it was then known as the El Reno Mercantile Company. It was a general merchandise store.

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In the early days they often kept the store open until eleven and twelve o'clock at night and the night before the Cherokee strip was opened, Mr. Crowe was at the house of the Montgomerys and as usual the store was kept open until late.

Mr. Montgomery had been warned that there might be a raid on the store, and that he had better watch out. Mr. Crowe was elderly and almost deaf and they did not tell him about it for fear he would want to go down to the store and stay up all night. Mrs. Montgomery had gone to bed when her husband came home and wakened her. He told her about the warning of a raid and said he wanted her to go back to the store with him to get the money as they had quite a sum of money at the store. He told her that he thought if a woman was with him there was less danger of anyone bothering him. Mrs. Montgomery went back with her husband who got the money and put it in a leather bag and when they got home hung it on the door knob between his room and Mr. Crowe's. There was no raid, it was just a rumor as the Jennings boys were "acting up" along about that time. Mrs. Montgomery still has this leather bag.

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When the Montgomery family first came to El Reno there were almost no trees and while there were a few good homes, the houses for the most part were just make-shifts. There were Indians everywhere and it did not surprise a person a bit to look up and see an Indian, with his hands to his face shading his eyes and trying to peer into a house. When a person went out in summer he or she got covered with sand fleas and the weather was beastly hot.

Mrs. Montgomery was pretty well acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Veits, who were employees at the Cheyenne Indian school which is the Concho school now.

She and Mr. Montgomery were with Mr. and Mrs. Veits at the last beef issue, where the Government allowed the Indians to kill the beeves, and the squaws were allowed to cut the beeves open; watching this slaughter made her so sick that they took her ^{to} Ben Clark's cabin to recuperate and this cabin was the cleanest place she ever saw. The floor was scrubbed until it was actually white and everything in it was immaculate. While the Montgomerys were there, their little daughter sang and danced, she was

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about three years old and when she had finished, Mrs. Clark, an Indian squaw, took Mrs. Montgomery into the hall where there was a chest of drawers, full of the loveliest bead work, and asked Mrs. Montgomery to pick out a pair of beaded moccasins for the little girl. Mrs. Montgomery would not do that, but told Mrs. Clark that if she would pick out a pair of moccasins for the child she would appreciate it. Mrs. Clark gave the little girl a nice pair of moccasins and also a pair for her dollie and she has them yet.

In 1891, the city of El Reno appropriated \$1500.00 for trees but these trees were planted around over town by persons inexperienced in the work, who just dug small holes stuck the trees into them and as a result all of the trees died but one. This was a cottonwood tree and it was planted down by the Central schoolhouse and grew there until two or three years ago when it was cut down.

After Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Penner and Mr. Dale went into partnership, in the El Reno Mercantile Company, Mr. Penner managed the clothing department, and Mr. Montgomery

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managed the dry goods and notions and about 1914 this partnership was dissolved and Mr. Montgomery named his store "Montgomery's Store." It was located the first door south of the Penner and Dale clothing store, which is located at 106 South Bickford.

Mrs. Montgomery has had to chase the water wagon man down lots of times on wash day, paying as much as 50 cents a barrel for water. They got their drinking water from a well on Bickford Street about a block away from the place where they first lived when they came to El Reno.

Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery lived for about nine months in the back of a shoe store, located near where the Bonebrake Hardware store is now at 101 North Rock Island Street.

Later they lived in a little three roomed house about where the Bowers Fashion Shop is now at 121 South Rock Island Street.

One day while living there a man moved a house on the next lot jamb up against their little house. He

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told them that he had jumped the lot and meant to hold it. Mr. Foreman, one of the men whose claim was in the original townsite, had been proven a sooner, and so the land was without legal title for these people who had been on the ground first.

Mr. Montgomery bought the three lots on which their present home is located at an auction. These lots belonged to Judge Mackatee and were being sold for a debt and Mr. Montgomery got them for \$85.00. They are worth many times that now.

Mr. Montgomery had previously bought a farm out northeast of town as an investment, which was not so good because of dry weather, of being "hailed out", etc., and Mrs. Montgomery persuaded her husband to sell this farm and build a home on the three lots which he had bought. He did so and they have been at their present location for thirty-eight years. Mr. Montgomery is dead.