

## Alice Jones Folsom WPA interview

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An interview with Alice Jones Fulsom, Route 1, Caney, Oklahoma.

Interviewer Etta D. Mason, 10 June 1937.

My earliest recollections are of playing about the yards with other children my age. My father and mother, Impson Jones and Jency James were in the removal from Mississippi and many are the stories told us about the hardships of the removal. We are Choctaws.

We lived near Ft. Smith but in Indian Territory. There were many Indians in our village and we children roamed the woods and learned about birds and animals. By woods I mean the woods inside the Indian village. Far out in the open country there were wolves and other wild animals that would have torn us to pieces. Many a time at night we would hear the scream of a panther. If we were not in bed we would creep close to Father or Mother and be afraid to even speak. If we were in bed we would crawl under the covers and not move for minutes.

Our houses were made of logs hewed and put together neatly. There were not many conveniences, but we were comfortable. We had plenty to eat for there was an abundance of wild meat and we raised our corn and vegetables. Our surplus crop was sold at Fort Smith. We bought clothing, shoes, and such food as we could not raise on the farm.

We went to school and church in a log house. Which had a puncheon floor and seats made of puncheons with holes bored in the ends and pegs driven through for legs. There were no blackboards and what a thrill it was to the lucky boy or girl who owned a slate and pencil.

We learned to ride quite young and to swim and paddle canoes.

The Indians were very devout in their religious beliefs, and taught us that the devil was ready to get us with his pitchfork for any mean thing we did. On several occasions when I had stretched the truth a little I would peep behind the doors and under the beds to see if he was lurking around. In time I almost lost my belief in religion, but as I grew older I understood.

After a time Father moved to Armstrong Academy. Father was caretaker of the capital.

Our trading point then was Bonham, TX.

While we lived at our old home we believed in all the old superstitions handed down through generations. So of course we attended, when we were invited to homes where there were sick people and where there was supposed to be a witch doctor, or conjurer to cure the sick. Many were the ruses imposed on the family of the sick by the witch doctor to make them believe in their cures. They practiced steaming the sick by cutting a hole in the floor and burying a pot in the hole. The patient was placed on a frame and steamed. After several steamings, if the patient was getting well the witch doctor would show something that had been taken from the patient by her magic, and which was supposed to cause the trouble. I can still hear the beat of the tomtoms while this cure was going on. We children would sit in groups too frightened to play. If one, by any chance, passed by the door of the sick room, he or she would be dipped in cold water to drive away the evil spirit.

We buried our dead near our homes so that they would not feel as if they were neglected.

We had all the good things we could eat. There was hickory nut hominy. Nothing could be better; and the parched corn; and the beaten bread, and so many other good things. I have made them often since I have been a woman but none of them have ever tasted so good as they did when I was a child.

I am old now and have lived a full life, but those good old days when I was a child are still dear to me and the memory of them brighten many a day that otherwise would be dreary.