

YANCEY, ORLENA

INTERVIEW

13652

106

LEGEND & STORY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

107

YANCEY, ORLENIA

INTERVIEW

13652

Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns,

This report made on (date) April 20, 193 8

1. This legend was secured from (name) Mrs. Orlenia Yancey

Address Picher, Oklahoma

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe \_\_\_\_\_

2. Origin and history of legend or story \_\_\_\_\_

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 5

YANCEY, ORLENIA

INTERVIEW

13652

Nannié Lee Burns,  
Investigator,  
April 20, 1938.

An Interview with Mrs. Orlenia Yancey,  
Picher, Oklahoma.

My parents were Robert Roberts and Lucretia Roberts nee Coffin born in Kentucky. I was born ninety-three years ago the 26th of this month near Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana on the banks of the Wabash River. My birthplace was a double log house but when I was a small girl my father built us a nice big frame house. We had good barns and on the prairie you could look in any direction and see nice homes and fields. Father kept oxen to break the sod and do the heavy work but had horses for the other work. We had good schools there and I went to school there before the Civil War.

Father joined the Union Army and that left Mother with us children at home and she would tell us to go to the barn and climb up on it and watch when we would see anything in the distance and see if it was the Blue coats or the Gray coats coming. We from the top of the barn could see them when they only looked like moving specks on the prairie and as soon as we could tell the color, we would climb down and hurry to the house and

YANCEY, ORLENA

INTERVIEW

13652

tell her which they were and if they were the Gray coats, she would try to hide some of our things and if they were the Blue coats they were our friends and we did not have to.

Father was wounded in the hip and was not able to do much after he returned home and it was not long until we sold out and moved to Iowa. We traveled there in wagons and crossed the Mississippi River on flat boats. There were five families who came at that time and father bought a farm near Winterset, and also two houses in the town. After he sold these we moved to Clay County, Missouri. I was a young woman by this time and I met a young full blood Indian, Joe Warr, whose mother was a Cherokee. During the Civil War Joe

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had seen his mother's throat cut and his father killed and this had made him very bitter.

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My people objected to my seeing Joe so I ran away with him and we were married by the Indians in their way in Caldwell County, Missouri. We loved each other but here my troubles began and I have had little else since. We lived together four years and then with the memory of the death of his parents still

-YANCEY, ORLENA

INTERVIEW

13652

- 3 -

fresh in his mind, it was not hard for others outside when talking to him to convince him that in revenge for his parents he should kill the Rebels. This of course forced him to leave home and he would slip in and see me when he could. We had no children and so when my parents moved to the southwest part of Missouri and bought a one hundred and eighty acre prairie farm near Mount Vernon, I came with them. We had lived in a little rented house near Quincy. Joe came to see me here and he still loved me but said "I can never live with you again but if you can find a good man to make you a living, marry him but remember that you will always be mine and that I am going to see you as long as I live". So I married Robert J. Yancey who loved me but I did not love him. He was a honest hard working man and knew that Joe was still living and Joe had told Robert that he could live with me but that I would always be Joe's and that he intended to come to see me as long as we both lived. Joe would come to the home to see me whenever he could. Mr. Yancey would get drunk maybe once a year and sometimes not for two years but when he did he would stay

YANCEY, ORLENTIA

INTERVIEW

13652

- 4 -

drunk for two weeks and he would tear up the place. We had twelve children but only one of them is living today. After we left the farm we came to the mining district where Robert died in 1916 at Webb City, Missouri. Joe continued to come to see me and the last time he came, he told me that he had been warned of his death and he wanted to be with me for awhile so I went with him to the first town north of Kansas City and remained two weeks, after which I returned to my home and he went to Dakota and in a few weeks died of double pneumonia. This was twelve years ago.

After Robert Yancey's death I came with my children to Picher where I have continued to live. The brightest spot of my later years has been my grandson, Jack Yancey who during his school days was well known as the boy preacher. His mother died when he was small and he has lived with me and I began to teach him to read the Bible when he was seven. Since then he has always read it and as he was a little fellow he learned to love it and as he grew older he would often say to me, "Granny, you have taught me to love that book and I am going to be a preacher." He began preaching before he was fourteen and

YANCEY, ORLEN LA

INTERVIEW

13652

- 5 -

still in school here and while he was in school here when he would go elsewhere to preach, I went with him until his preaching attracted so much attention that friends came to him and have raised the money and educated him. He is still preaching and is now twenty-two years old or will be the fourteenth of next August. He has a nice church in the northern part of California but tries to come to see me each year.