

Adeline Blakeley

Early Settlers' Personal History Questionnaire, WPA
Interviewed by Virgil C. Erwin Washington County, Ark. January 27, 1941.

Transcribed by Andrea E. Cantrell, University of Arkansas Libraries, 2003. [See transcriber's notes](#)

1. Early settler's name
Miss Aadaline [Adeline] Blakely¹ (Colored)
2. Address
Fayetteville, Arkansas, Block & Rock Street
3. Present occupation (most of the old timers are now retired).
Keeping and superintending appartments[sic].
4. Previous occupation or occupations.
Housekeeping. Has keep house for white people all her life. States that the appartments she now has were given her through the kindness of Mrs. Lillian Parkes, a neice[sic] of Mr. Blakely's.
5. Date of birth.
She does not know the date of her birth, but stated that she was fifteen years old when the Civil War closed; that July 10th is her birthday. (She is confused for she stated in reference to the Battle of Prairie Grove that she was fifteen then, and that was fought December 7, 1862).
06. Place of birth.
She was born in Hickman County, Tennessee, but cannot remember if she ever knew the name of the town.
07. Married? To whom? When? Where?
No.
08. If an immigrant give particulars. City and country of derivation, name of ship on which arrived, etc.
[no answer]
09. How long has the individual resided in Arkansas?
About ninety-one years.
10. If not a native tell of the voyage to Arkansas. Boat? Wagon train? etc.
She states that she was one year old when she was brought to Arkansas in a horse drawn wagon.
11. Why did the individual come to Arkansas?
She does not remember the trip, but says she has heard others tell of it. Several families came through together bringing their negroes with them. They had quite a time crossing rivers and in making roads. She said that just trailways had to be cleared in places to make way for the wagons. She was brought here by her master as a slave.
12. Get details of construction of early homes. (In the southern and southeastern parts of the state chimneys were frequently built of clay and split wood or trimmed branches due to the scarcity of stone and the lack of

¹Adeline Blakeley was interviewed by M[ary] D. Hudgins in Rawick, *The American Slave* (1972) volume 8, pages 180-193 and "Aunt Adeline" was interviewed by Zillah Cross Peel, Rawick volume 8, pages 11-16. That these three interviews were with the same person can be confirmed by the personal information included in the interviews. I have used here the spelling of both the first and last name in the form used by this interviewer.

brick kilns. Some of the more pretentious houses were built with brick imported up the rivers. In the northwestern part of the state stone houses occurred much more frequently. Pay particular attention to these and similar regional differences.)

The house where her master moved to "The Old Kidd Place" west of Prairie Grove was a nice two story frame building painted white. Then it was a mansion. Nearly all the other houses were built of logs. The cracks were stopped with sticks or blocks and mud mortar[sic]. Some of the more well to do had plank floors. Some had flattened log made smooth with foot adds [adze?]. Others had dirt floors.

13. What form of lighting was used in the early days? Pine knots? Tallow dips? Candles poured at home? Oil or fat lamps? etc.

Tallow candles for the parlor and grease lamps for the kitchen. The grease lamp was a metal bowl with a sort of lip on one side. A rolled rag wick was placed in this vessel with one end hanging over this lip or low place. Care was taken to keep the wick pushed up to keep the grease from getting on fire. Pine knots were sometimes used at a party.

14. When were electric lights first used in your community?

She said that she was not sure, but thinks it was about 1880 before electric lights were used.

15. What kind of fuel was used? (This was wood in most parts of the state, of course, because it was plentiful and convenient, but in some of the western counties coal may have appeared early.)

She says that wood was used for fuel until about fifty years ago when coal came in for heating purposes.

16. What kinds of food did the early settlers have? Were fish and game depended upon for the meat supply? Was game plentiful? What kinds?

The foods used by the early settlers were meat, pork and wild game, bread, cornbread and wheat bread, milk, butter and vegetables. In the spring and summer wild fruits were plentiful such as, blackberries, strawberries, and grapes. While game was not depended upon for the meat supply, deer, turkey, squirrel[sic], and o'possum[sic] supplied a large part of it in the autumn and winter.

17. What kinds of clothes were worn and how manufactured?

The clothes were nearly all home made. The women carded and spun the cotton, then made it into cloth. From this under garments, sheeting, towels, and dresses were made. The dye was made from bark and different herbs. The wool sheared from the sheep was washed, picked, carded, and spun, then woven into cloth. Lensey and geanes[sic] supplied the cloth for clothing. Once in a great while a woman would buy a calico dress.

18. Were there any interesting customs or incidents connected with early courtships? Was bundling ever practiced? (It is highly improbable but possible.) Were charivaries (usually pronounced 'shivaree' in Arkansas and the lower Mississippi Valley territory) frequent?

She stated that for the more well to do, it was the custom for the lady to wear a long white robe when wedded. The skirt often contained seven to nine widths of material. The waist was tight fitting. She was attended by some little negro boy whose duty it was to carry the part of her dress sweeping the floor to keep it from dragging. She also wore hoops which made the skirt stand away out all around.

19. Compare some early food, clothing, etc. prices with those of today. (Since staples were usually bought in barrels, hogsheads, bushels, and similar large units, present prices will have to be quoted on the same basis.)

She does not remember about prices. She says her master would make one trip a year to market (sometimes this would require several days) to bring back a sack of brown sugar,

a sack of green coffee, some salt, soda and spices. The coffee was roasted at home. They never bought matches, but always kept a fire at home.

20. What were some of the incidents pertaining to the sharing of food and other supplies in times of common need?
She said that occasionally some of the family through sickness or loss sustained by a burn out was helped by neighbors. Some would take corn, others wheat, and others meat and lard. No one ever suffered for something to eat except during the Civil War.
21. What were some early cultivated crops? Domesticated animals? (For instance, when did tomatoes cease to be known as 'Love Apples,' regarded as poisonous? When moved from the flower garden to the vegetable garden?)
Corn and wheat were the principal crops. Cotton, beans, peas, cabbage, and pumpkins were also grown.
22. What were early farm implements? Any homemade? If purchased, where? Prices?
She learned to use the "eye hoe." This was a home made implement. The bull tongue plow was used in her childhood days. It was also home made. She does not remember when her master bought his first turning plow. However, he purchased it in Fort Smith.
23. What were early industries in the community?
The early industries were farming, grist mill, and saw mills. She does not know what power operated these mills.
24. What were some native wild plants used as food or for flower gardens? (For example: mullein, sassafras roots, sweet gum resin, sun-flower seed, paw-paws, sumac berries, poke salad-- or salet, or salud. There are stories told of various food substitutes used during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods. These might supply interesting sidelight.)
Poke salad, wild lettuce and sassafras tea. During the war parched corn and peas were used as a substitute for coffee. Irish potatoes served as bread. Salt was very scarce and some of the neighbors dug up the dirt in their smoke houses; placed it in hoppers and ran water through it. The water was then boiled to secure the salt in it.
25. Relate interesting incidents of the early days. Tell of childhood impressions and memories. Tell of group activities such as house raisings and warmings, quilting bees, corn huskings, brush arbor meetings, dances, games, socials, hunts and game drives, hog killing, sorghum making, play parties, and the like. Compare early farm and town life with that of today. Tell any experiences relating to the Indians, their customs and habits.
She relates that quite often in autumn some person would give a quilting bee. A big dinner was served and was followed by a warming party. The large fire place was filled with wood, and "Then things began to get warm". The negroes made the music for the white folks to dance. These were happy days and the source of many pleasant memories. If the room was not large enough, the beds were taken down for the dance. Corn huskings were occasions of great delight and were also followed by a dance. At the parties there was whisky and wine to drink. No one got drunk. Arbor meetings in the summer time were occasions for people to get together. There were more solemn occasions and were much enjoyed.
26. Tell of early methods of combating forest fires, town or building fires.
When forest fires got started as they often did in springtime, the whole community would get together and fight to save fences and houses. Sometimes they would form what they called the bucket brigade and fight forest fires all night.
27. Get origin of place and thing names such as hills, valleys, rivers, soughs,

bayous, plants, animals, etc.

None.

28. Tell of early taverns, hotels, boarding houses, stagecoach stations, boat landings, etc.

She stated that her master, Mr. Blakely, moved to Fayetteville and put up a tavern (she doesn't remember the date). It was before the Civil War. He drove the stage to Fort Smith along the old "Wire Road." the stage was often drawn by four or six horses. On his approach to a town he blew a trumpet so the next driver could have his team harnessed and ready to relieve him.

At his tavern would be traveling people. On one occasion when a family with a small girl was there, Adaline and this little girl were playing together and had become good friends. Adaline's mistress had called her in and was combing her hair. Adoline[sic] was crying. The little white girl looked on awhile and said, "Adaline, when you get to heaven and the Lord combs your hair, are you going to cry then?" One day she and her little white friend were playing in the back yard and discovered that they were being watched by the guests in the tavern. The ran off and hid. One of the boarders found them, but could not persuade them to come back and go on with their services. Finally he told htem if they would come back and go on with their play he would give each of them a dime. Adaline began to think of that dime. She persuaded her friend to go back and continue their play. That is the way she made her first dime.

29. Tell of early schools.

No school, no school privileges. She can tell nothing of the early schools or of the books used.

30. Location of school? Late?

[see answer to question 29]

31. Name of teacher?

[see answer to question 29]

32. How were funds provided? Tuition? How much? Was payment made in kind?

[see answer to question 29]

33. School books used? Title? Author? (Many of the old plantations maintained tutors either for individual families or groups of families. Sometimes 'school' was conducted on the premises for darkies'[sic] youngsters. Check on such information.)

[see answer to question 29]

34. What constituted the reading matter of the early settlers? Books? Magazines? Newspapers? Get titles and authors.

Had no school privileges. No books, but remembers her master had a lot of books. She never knew what they were.

35. Where was the first telegraph station in the community? When established?

In Fayetteville, but she does not remember the date. She can remember when they built the line from Fort Smith to Fayetteville. (1888)

36. Tell of the early "Horse cars." When were trolley cars substituted? When buses?

She states that she does not know if she ever saw a trolley car. Only stage coach.

37. When and where was the first automobile seen?

It was in Fayetteville she saw the first train that pulled into this part of the country. There was a celebration; the band played and everybody rejoiced.

38. When and where was the first train seen?

[no answer]

39. When and where was the first airplane seen?
She saw her first airplane in Fayetteville during the World War.
40. When did automotive busses begin interurban operation? (Give descriptions on the five foregoing.)
Not known.
41. Early theatrical performances? Local people? Traveling stock companies?
Her master, Mr. Harvy[sic] M. Hudgens established a theater on the southwest corner of the square about where Penney's store stands. He was owner of this opera for a number of years. Men and women put on musical shows. This was after the Civil War. Traveling shows with animals would come through about once a year.
42. Tell of any important local celebration in memory of any individual or event.
She says the town celebrated the occasion when the first train came. In stage coach days it was a common thing to celebrate the coming of the stage when some noted person was to come. There was a great celebration in honor of Governor Yell when he gave the Dr. Saford home to the masons. It was converted into a masonic hall.
43. Does the individual recall any early historical character such as Sam Houston, Co. James Bowie, former President Zachery Taylor, the James boys, etc.?
She said one time it was reported that the James boys were in the community. This report, however, proved false.
44. Tell of any duels. Where were they fought? By whom? Why?
None.
45. Tell of any feuds. Who was involved? Where? Why?
None.
46. Tell of any early tombstone inscriptions. Where?
Governor Yell has a masonic tombstone at his grave in Evergreen Cemetary[sic].
47. Tell of any bank robberies, stage holdups, executions of horse thieves or other impromptu executions, including lynchings. Give details.
One afternoon not long after the Civil War four men rode into town and went at once to the salon. After this they made an attempt to rob the bank. The officers got after them wounding one. The others tried to save him by holding him on his horse. They carried him about four miles and finally had to leave him. When the robber was shot, he was carrying a gold watch which the bullet struck. The shot went through the watch. Miss Adaline got the rim and kept it a long time. The robber died telling them nothing.
48. Tell of Civil War days, giving the fullest detail possible.
Miss Adaline lived here in Fayetteville on the same lot where she now lives. When the war came, she remembers the Federals coming in and taking Fayetteville. The Confederates slipped in, captured the picket guards and were filing in on the south side of the square when their presence was discovered. The fought all day, but only one man was killed. Mrs. Blakely had announced dinner when the racket began. They all ran to the cellar and remained there all evening. The masonic hall was used by the Federals as a hospital.
It was at this time that every house on the square was burned except one. That one stood where Robinson's store now stands. The Federals detailed a group of soldiers to burn the dwelling houses. Two came to the Blakely home. Two of the Blakely children were sick, and Mrs. Blakely plead for them to spare her home. They replied that they were commissioned and had to do their duty. They placed a burning torch under the house which when they were gone Mrs. Blakely put out.
Mrs. Blakely had two brothers, Captain John Blakely and Jim Blakely. Jim was killed in the Battle of Vicksburg. Captain John Blakely took at active part in the Battle at Putman's Ridge.

She tells about Tom Applegate who had joined the Rebel Army. His mother lived west of Fayetteville. The Union soldiers went to her place looking for Tom. Mrs. Applegate talked back, whereupon one of them shot and killed her.

Mrs. Blakely had a small hog which they had killed. Union soldiers took all of it except a very small piece. They also took all the salt. Later they got Mrs. Blakely to cook for them and allowed her to share the food with them.

Miss Adaline sat on the yard fence and heard the Battle of Prairie Grove. It lasted all day. She could hear the guns all day. Even though it snowed she never thought of being cold until she came to realize she was almost frozen. That night the Union Army came back through Fayetteville.

49. Tell of any battles, skirmishes, forays, etc., witnessed.
[no answer]
50. Tell of Reconstruction, the Carpetbaggers, scalawags, etc.
See below.
During the days of reconstruction there was a lot of trouble about white folk voting. She does not recall any killing here. If anyone said anything against the government, they were not allowed to vote. She recalls that there was a lot of talk about carpet baggers and scalawags.
51. Get all information possible regarding the original Ku Klux Klan or similar organizations.
She does not know anything about the origin of the KKK, but says it was an influence that helped to establish order.
52. Tell of any participation in the establishment of any religious or fraternal organizations.
None
53. Tell of any military affiliations.
None
54. Tell of any Indian mounds, cliff dwellings, caves, etc., that may be recalled. Get as accurate information as possible regarding artifacts, particularly such things as calendar stones, mortars, pottery, baskets, etc.
None
55. Tell of any other historic sites.
None
56. What is total number of descendants?
Miss Adaline Blakely was never married. Has no children. She was the property of Miss Nora Blakely. When freed she wanted to stay with Miss Nora and Fannie, a sister of Miss Nora's. She prefers to stay with white folk, and has done so all her life. She now owns an apartment [sic]house on Block and Rock Streets. This property was given her by the Parkes. Mrs. Blakely the mother of Nora and Fannie was a Parkes before her marriage.
57. What are names and addresses of sons and daughters?
None
58. Name some of the grandchildren and greatgrandchildren, if any.
None
59. Tell of any books, diaries, journals, sketches, or newspaper articles the individual has written. Give details.
None
60. [Other information]
The question concerning her age is in doubt. She made the statement that she was fifteen years old when the Civil War closed. Later in her remarks she made the statement that she was fifteen at the time President Lincoln gave out the "Emancipation Proclamation."

If her first statement is correct, she was born July 10, 1850. If the latter, her birth was July 10, 1848.

The above questionnaire is intended solely as a skeleton outline to assist the interviewer in giving his subject leads. It is improbable that any one individual can answer all the questions fully but it is advisable to ask them all anyway. Record the answers on plain paper numbering the answers to correspond with the above questions, if possible.

AT THE TOP OF THE PAPER ON WHICH YOU RECORD THE ANSWERS BE CERTAIN TO PUT YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, DATE AND REFER TO ARKANSAS HRS FORM J.

Do not limit yourself to the above questions. If the subject goes off on any tangent follow it to see if it is of historical interest. Remember to get Who, What, When, Where, How, and Why on every possible question. As regards matters of location, such as Indian sites, early buildings, tombstones, etc., be as definite and detailed as possible. Give pertinent data i.e., whether or not buildings are now occupied and if so by what or whom, and in either case, in what state of preservation and repair.

AH/gm-9/13/38