

Recebba Childs

Early Settlers' Personal History Questionnaire, WPA

Interviewed by Johnny L. Selby Crawford County, Ark. December 16, 1940.

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

1. Early settler's name
 Recebba Childs (Colored)
2. Address
 308 No. 14th
3. Present occupation (most of the old timers are now retired).
 Laundry work
4. Previous occupation or occupations.
 " " [Laundry work]
5. Date of birth.
 1869
6. Place of birth.
 South Carolina
7. Married? To whom? When? Where?
 Yes, Jessie Childs 18 of Sept. 1885. Hunania, Miss.
8. If an immigrant give particulars. City and country of derivation, name of ship
 on which arrived, etc.
 No. Came with husband. Came on train. His folks were here.
9. How long has the individual resided in Arkansas?
 40 years.
10. If not a native tell of the voyage to Arkansas. Boat? Wagon train? etc.
 She came to Arkansas in 1900 with her [husband] to make her home in Alma,
 Arkansas. She came on the train.
11. Why did the individual come to Arkansas?
 [no answer]
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
 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.)
 She lived in 1 room log house and chimney was made of clay and split wood.
 Stopped the cracks with clay so the house would be warm.
13. What form of lighting was used in the early days? Pine knots? Tallow dips?
 Candles poured at home? Oil or fat lamps? etc.
 Mother molded candles. Had a tin oil lamp [lamp?]
14. When were electric lights first used in your community?
 [no answer]
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.)
 Wood.

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?
Her mother would get green coffee and would parch meal for coffee. Raised chicken, dried fruit but didn't can any.
17. What kinds of clothes were worn and how manufactured?
She carded cotton and could spin thread and make her own clothes. Her mother had an old spinning wheel and loom. Shoes that had brass nobs across the toe. Homemade stockings—knit. Spin cotton and make thread.
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?
Shivaree pronounced.
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.)
Bought flour by the barrel.
20. What were some of the incidents pertaining to the sharing of food and other supplies in times of common need?
People were good to divide milk, butter, and food that [they?] had to spare.
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?)
[no answer]
22. What were early farm implements? Any homemade? If purchased, where? Prices?
Harrow.
23. What were early industries in the community?
Farming.
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.)
She used wild onions, lettuce. Made a tea out of sassafras roots. Poke salad.
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 went a many brush arbor meeting, went in a wagon or buggy. About 8 or 10 miles was longer distance she ever went. Went Methodist meeting most of the time.
26. Tell of early methods of combating forest fires, town or building fires.
Water bucket.
27. Get origin of place and thing names such as hills, valleys, rivers, soughs, bayous, plants, animals, etc.
[no answer]
28. Tell of early taverns, hotels, boarding houses, stagecoach stations, boat

- landings, etc.
Collins Hotel.
29. Tell of early schools.
Douglas School.
30. Location of school? Late?
School in country in Mississippi. Frame building was a church house.
31. Name of teacher?
Mr. Dan Johnson, Mr. Jones, Mr. Hightower.
32. How were funds provided? Tuition? How much? Was payment made in kind?
[no answer]
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.)
Blue Back Speller, Harvest Grammer[sic]. McGuffer[sic] Reader.
34. What constituted the reading matter of the early settlers? Books? Magazines? Newspapers? Get titles and authors.
No newspaper.
35. - 36. [no answer]
37. When and where was the first automobile seen?
30 years ago.
38. When and where was the first train seen?
57 years ago.
39. - 42. [no answer]
43. Does the individual recall any early historical character such as Sam Houston, Co. James Bowie, former President Zachery Taylor, the James boys, etc.?
Remember about Pretty Boy Floyd, Jessie James, President McKinley being killed.
44. - 50. [no answer]
51. Get all information possible regarding the original Ku Klux Klan or similar organizations.
Remember the Ku Klux Klan.
52. Tell of any participation in the establishment of any religious or fraternal organizations.
Member of Derrick Chapel.
53. - 55 [no answer]
56. - 58 What is total number of descendants?
What are names and addresses of sons and daughters?
Name some of the grandchildren and greatgrandchildren, if any.
Jessie Childs, Chicago, Ill.
Eleanor Young, Dallas, Texas.
Archie Leona Hughes, Kansas City, Mo.
James Childs, Van Buren Arkansas.
7 Grand children—Pauline Hughes
Ben Hughes
Thomas Childs
Bessie Jean Childs
Mary Frances Childs
Shirley Ann Childs

Eleanor Arnold.

1 great-grand child—Leroy Arnold.

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