

HERNON, HENRY.

INTERVIEW

8666

395

BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Survey of Oklahoma

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora Lorrin, El Reno, Oklahoma.

This report made on (date) September 27, 1937

1. Name Mr. Henry Hermon,
2. Post Office Address 1319 South Dilly Avenue,
3. Residence address (or location) El Reno, Oklahoma.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 7 Year 1866
5. Place of birth Wyoming, Jones County, Iowa.

6. Name of Father William E. Hermon Place of birth Waterford, Ireland.
Other information about father Died at Wyoming, Iowa, in 1892.
7. Name of Mother Lora A. (Sawyer) Hermon Place of birth Vermont about 1840
Other information about mother Died in 1909.

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 13.

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

Mrs. Nora Lorrin,
El Reno, Oklahoma.
Interviewer,
September 27, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. Henry Hernon,
1319 South Billy Avenue,
El Reno, Oklahoma.

I was born in Wyoming, Jones County, Iowa, June 7, 1866.

My father, William E. Hernon, was born in Waterford, Ireland, in 1838 and died at Wyoming, Iowa, in 1892. He came to America about 1854 as a sailor on a sailing vessel, coming to Canada.

My mother, Lora A. (Sawyer) Hernon, was born about 1840 at Middleton, Vermont, and died in 1909.

My father was a stone mason by trade and a musician by avocation.

I lived at Wyoming, Iowa, until I was nineteen years old and then went to Kentucky and lived in that state two years, spending quite a bit of time while there playing the violin at dances, as I was and am an accomplished violinist. I returned to Iowa and stayed there twenty-one or twenty-two years. In 1891 I went to Davenport, Iowa,

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

-2-

and enlisted in the Army, Third Cavalry of the United States.

I was sent from Davenport to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, just nine miles south of St. Louis. After three months service, I was sent to Fort Brown, Texas. In June of 1893 my troop was transferred to Fort Reno, relieving the Fifth Cavalry, who were sent to take their place at Fort Brown, Texas. Some of the Fifth Cavalry were sent elsewhere.

When I first came to Fort Reno, people were having difficulties with the water problem. There were wells, but they had to put up poison water signs on them as the water was not fit for drinking purposes. People got their drinking and cooking water from Caddo Springs by having it hauled to the fort in tanks. Since water was scarce, we drank much beer and coffee. One time some of my soldier comrades and I were out at Okarche and found a well without a poison sign on it and assumed that it was good water and being thirsty, drank and drank of it.

In the time I was there, I must have consumed all of a gallon of water which was just as bad as the other wells

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

-3-

and I was thoroughly sick over it and it was almost two weeks before I recovered from the effects of that round of drinking water. It was one time when water was not so healthful as either beer or coffee.

Our first duties, after arriving at Fort Reno, were to go up to the Cherokee Strip and clean it out, and get it ready for settlement by running out Squatters, Sooners, and cattlemen with their immense herds of cattle. There were thousands and thousands of cattle in the Strip that had to be driven out before the run.

The Squatters had built little sod shanties and tilled small patches of ground and the soldiers had quite a time with some of them. Our main trouble was with the Sooners. We would run them out and our biggest trouble was to keep them out, as they would come right back again.

We were in the Strip working at clearing it for about three months, making our camp wherever our work required it and one time we were camping near Pond Creek and as we had been subsisting on the regular army rations of salt meat, beans, hard bread, and coffee (without milk or cream), we decided we would have some fresh beef steak for

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

-4-

dinner. There were literally thousands of heads of cattle in that country and I, together with some of the other soldiers, took my carbine and we went beef hunting. Over across a draw not far from our camp, we came upon a white steer and proceeded to shoot it. He was hard to kill, taking at least six shots to bring him down. After bleeding him we cut off a hind quarter and took it back to camp, turning it over to the cook. The cook cut off a lot of nice steaks, in fact, filled a large pan with the luscious smelling meat, and made gravy to go with it. A couple of cowboys rode up and we asked them to eat with us. Every one took a steak and then the fun began. It was tough, not just a little tough. We cut and cut on it and chewed to no purpose. One of the cowboys laid down his case knife and got his pocket knife and whetted it on the bottom of his boot sole, but it was no go. The cowboys then told us soldiers that if we wanted meat, to hunt up a two year old or a yearling, as the cattlemen would not care as that was customary. The cattlemen did not care if people killed an occasional animal for food, as there were so many, many cattle in the Strip. We did not need a second invitation

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

-5-

and after that as long as we were in the Strip, we had fresh meat. We came to the conclusion that the old white steer was an ox that had been turned loose or had gotten away from its owner.

Another day three or four other soldiers and I were out in the Strip, helping the cattlemen occasionally, to get their cattle on the move and out of the Strip. Sometimes we would come up with some cattlemen who were moving their cattle and if they needed help the soldiers would ride and help them for an hour or two. We rode up to a cowboys' camp one day at mealtime and the cowboys asked us to eat with them. We were glad to do so as the fare was very apt to be different from that to which we were accustomed. Someone suggested that we needed cream for our coffee and one of the cowboys took a pail and a tin cup, grabbed his lariat, got on his horse, and headed for a distant herd of wild cattle. We watched him ride into the herd, twirl his lariat and catch a cow. He threw and hog-tied her, milked her in a cup and poured the milk in the pail. When he thought he had enough he untied the cow, got on his horse and came back to camp. It was the

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

-6-

only way he could have milked her, as those cows were as wild as deer and were not accustomed to being milked.

In the evening, I played on my violin, accompanied by one of the cowboys who played on a guitar. We had a rousing good time and the music was enjoyed by both soldiers and cowboys. We stag danced until we wore the grass all off the ground.

After riding over the Cherokee Strip from June until September 16th, trying to keep it free of Sooners and other interlopers, at twelve o'clock, noon, on September 16th, 1893, the shot was fired as a signal for the opening of the Run. The soldiers' headquarters were at Orlando at that time. The day of the Run the soldiers rode along in front of the lines, trying to hold people back. They were simply wild to run. Straight ahead of the line, my soldier comrades and I were watching; there was a ditch that was about ten feet deep, and we rode along the line warning the people to ride to the left, here there was a low flat place. Some of the men failed to heed the warning and there were some horses hurt and some men unseated, but no one was killed. It was a mad

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

-7-

rush, they came like a cyclone. we had to run with the crowd for a mile and a half before we could get free of the jam, enough to be safe in returning to the line. There was every conceivable kind of a vehicle and conveyance used; lumber wagons, some people on foot, fast horses, slow horses, mules, buggies, sulkies, big wagons, little wagons, and after we got out of the jam and started to return to the line, we saw a team coming, pulling some kind of a vehicle that looked as if it were made out of parts of some kind of a wheeled farm implement. When this strange looking vehicle got near enough, we saw that it was driven by a young woman. A wheel broke just before we reached her, turning her over and over, somersaulting her to the ground. When we reached her, she got up and we asked her if she was hurt and she was not. She had a little stick about eighteen inches long with something wrapped around it. She stuck it in the ground and when it was unfurled, it was a flag with these words on it, "This place is taken".

A man came up over the hill and said to the young woman, "I'm sorry but I was on this place first." She

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

-8-

answered, "Were you?" We soldiers looked him over and he did not look sweaty and tired and dusty like the rest of the runners did and we asked him where his horse was. He told us it was over the hill and we asked him to bring it but he did not want to do that. We then asked him why he was not dusty, tired and sweaty like the rest were but he preferred to do his talking to the young woman. We hunted up the man's horse and camp and it looked as though he had been camped there for a couple of weeks, so we told the young woman that he was a Sooner and that she need pay no attention to him. All of us soldiers gave her our names and the name of our commanding officer and told her that if the man contested her, that she could call on us as witnesses. All she had to do was to let us know and we would help her.

The man said "You all seem to be against me, I reckon the only thing left for me to do, is to go." We soldiers told him that that would be the best thing he could do. We never heard anything more about it, so presumed that she got her claim without further molestation.

A couple of weeks before the opening, our headquarters

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

-9-

were just inside the strip, north of Orlando, where the people had to come through after they had staked their land to get the paper they had to have to present to the land office when they wanted to file on their claim.

This booth was there for about two weeks after the opening. It was very hard on people. They had to stand in line and did not dare leave their places in the line for fear of losing them if they stepped out for food and water. The people soon formed themselves into companies and elected officers, so many to a company, then some one would be chosen to leave the line and bring refreshments without losing his place.

The long wait and standing in line was too much for one young lady who fainted. Some of us soldiers took her to a tent, placed her on a pallet, put water on her face and chafed her hands until she came to. We soldiers and the clerks were well acquainted and more or less chummy, and fixed it up to get her papers through, so she would not have to stand in line again. We dressed her in a soldier's uniform and put a carbine over her shoulder and sent her to stand guard at the booth. When she got these

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

-10-

things she went inside as per arrangement and had her papers fixed up. We then relieved her of guard duty and she left. I never heard of her again and did not think to ask her name.

After it was over, we rested a couple of days and then headed back to our homes at Fort Reno again.

The next year we went to the Osage country to put the intruders out. People who wished to live in the Osage country had to get permits signed by the Indian Agency. So many people who had lived there without permits, resented this and thought they could defy the Government and get away with it. Some of those fellows in there were pretty hard boiled and would ^{use} ~~Winchesters~~ occasionally, so the United States Deputies needed some help and the soldiers were ordered up there from Fort Reno. I was one of the soldiers chosen to go.

We came to a place where there was a very large raw-boned woman, with an equally large raw-boned daughter. Back-woodsy, barefooted, they looked as though they had never seen a pair of hose. The soldiers asked the elder woman if she and her daughter had a permit to live there

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

-11-

and she answered "No, I ain't got any permit, I ain't gonna git any permit and I don't need any." She told us that she wasn't going to leave and that we weren't men enough to put her off or make her go.

She cursed a blue streak and we could not get her to go, so we tied her up, about like we would rope a wild steer, and laid her in the back end of the wagon. We were driving an army wagon with a six mule team. The daughter tried to get her to hush, but was unsuccessful. The girl rode up front. The soldier who drove the team was a man named Flynn and every time he saw a rock or stone in the road that looked as though it might furnish a good jolt, if he handled the situation just right, he would whip up and hit the rock on high. The old lady was pretty well jolted up before we got her to the border.

She was a rough customer and earned by her ugly disposition, the rough treatment she received.

In the fall of 1894, General Nelson A. Miles, Buffalo
Colonel
Bill, and Cody had been out at Fort Supply on a hunting expedition and were returning to Fort Reno. The Commandant

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

-12-

at Fort Supply furnished them an escort halfway and a detachment of soldiers, of whom I was one, was sent from Fort Reno to the halfway point to meet them.

The Fort Reno boys got to the designated spot the evening before the Fort Supply party got there. It was cold and wet, and they could find nothing in the way of fuel that was dry enough to make a fire, so they had to eat cold rations. The distinguished party arrived the next morning and switched escorts, the Fort Supply soldiers returning to Fort Supply and General Miles, Buffalo Bill, and Colonel Cody returning to Fort Reno under escort of the Fort Reno soldiers.

Some scouts I have known are Buffalo Bill, John Auderby, and Red Bird. Red Bird, a Sioux Indian Scout, was among the Indians at Custer's Massacre and has traced the formation of that battle in the dirt with his finger for me.

I reenlisted in 1912 and continued in service until 1930 when I retired on a pension. I am a Knights Templar, 32 degree Mason, a Shriner, Odd Fellow, Knight of Pythias, and Veteran of Foreign Wars. Staff Sergeant, A.M.C., U.S.A.,

HERNON, HENRY

INTERVIEW

8666

-13-

Troop B, 3rd Cavalry, and I joined the Army, December 17th, 1891.

I was married to Edmona (Crowe) Sharpe, February 12, 1903. She died May 8, 1935. I was married a second time, to Mrs. Maisie (Miller) Church, June 25, 1936.