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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

ANDREWS, MARTHA ANN. INTERVIEW. 9700

Field Worker's name Anna R. Barry

This report made on (date) January 14 1938

1. Name Martha Ann (Thomas) Andrews
2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) 400 North Macomb Street.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 21 Year 1873
5. Place of birth Pulaski County, Kentucky.

6. Name of Father James Chumbley Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about father

7. Name of Mother Lucille Fry Chumbley Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about mother

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 .

ANDREWS, MARTHA ANN. INTERVIEW. 9700

Anna R. Berry
Journalist
January 14, 1938

Interview with Martha Ann Thomas Andrews
400 North Macom Street
El Reno, Oklahoma

Martha Ann Thomas Andrews was born in Pulaski County, Kentucky, on May 21, 1873, the daughter of James Chumbley and Lucille Fry Chumbley. When she was three years of age her parents moved to Russell County, Kentucky, a distance of about thirty miles. She remembers very distinctly this trip as her father owned a very stubborn mule that he wanted to take along. The only member of the family that could ride him was her father and as the mule would not lead when tied to the wagon the only thing was for her father to ride the mule. As they made ready to start Martha Ann set up a cry to ride with her father on the mule. At last her wish was granted, so for this reason she remembers this trip very well.

Her first school was built of logs; the roof was made of branches and sod placed over this; the logs were chinked with mud. A long broad board rested on pegs inserted in the logs along two sides of the room and this

formed a steep desk. The seats were rough slabs of wood from the sawmill. At one end of the room was a large fireplace. The teacher was fortunate to have a rude desk and chair. The dirt floor was dusty in dry weather and muddy with pools of water from the leaking roof for three days following a rain.

It was on September 8, 1890, that she married William Franklin Thomas and soon after their marriage this family drifted into Kansas, and in the Spring of 1892, the Thomas family decided to try their luck in the new country of Oklahoma. Mrs.Thomas said, after they decided to make the trip it didn't take them long to pack their wagon with a few pieces of farm tools, furniture, bedding, cooking utensils and a fair supply of food. As this family owned a good team, this trip was made in about two weeks.

Her husband made the run at the Cheyenne and Arapaho Opening on April 19, 1892, and secured a claim nine miles south of the town of Hinton. When their wagon halted, her husband took out a spade and began to construct a home. The dugout was more easily made than the

sod house and her husband was anxious to get settled and to start a crop, so this is the reason this type of dwelling was their first home. In a few days excavation the dugout was complete. The family meanwhile lived in the covered wagon box while the father used the running gears to haul the logs, poles, brush and grass needed for the roof and front of the dugout. Mrs. Thomas cooked the family meals by a campfire and the group slept in the wagon until the house was completed. She said it was bad enough for a man to live in a dugout but it was far more trying on the women. Her house like many of her neighbors homes was crudely furnished; a cheap small cook stove decked one corner of the room, several dry goods boxes and a nail keg stood up against the home made table, a bed stead that was brought from their home in Kansas stood in one corner of the room. At night she placed a straw bed-tick on the floor for her children to sleep on and carried it out in the day time in order to have room enough to walk around in the house.

One of the rules of homesteading was a fee of about fourteen dollars was charged for each one hundred and sixty

acres. Ten dollars was paid on making application and the balance when "final proof" was made. From the date of first application, usually called filing, six months was allowed to make improvements. On or before the expiration of that time the homesteader had to be on the land and begin improvements. He was further required to make it his permanent residence for five years from the date of the first papers. Any time after that date the settler could take out his final papers, provided, however, that he did it within seven years after filing. This final process consisted of giving evidence that the conditions had been fulfilled. If the evidence was satisfactory, a patent was granted on the testimony of two witnesses. This last form was called "proving up". War veterans were allowed to apply their service time in the army to the residence time required for proving up on a homestead.

The first year or two the settlers had to get along with the clothes they had brought with them from other states. After they had been here some time, they could carry their whole wardrobe on their backs. Proverty

was a badge of honor which decorated most all who homesteaded. In the summer it was not an uncommon sight to see grown girls and boys barefoot, while many times men broke sod barefoot. In order to save shoe leather usually people walked and carried their shoes and stockings until near the place of public meeting, then sat down and put on their shoes; she saw settlers children running around out-of-doors barefoot in January apparently without ill effect. Men, when out on a trip in cold weather, wound gunny sacks over their boots to keep their feet from freezing. Many men wore homemade trousers of duck, jeans, or denim. The shirts were hickory, blue or checkered. A garment something like a shirt worn outside the trousers was called a jumper. Many women made homespun jeans for men and linsey for the women. This homespun cloth was usually dyed brown with walnut or other natural dye. A suit of homespun would last a year. However, more women wore calico sunbonnets and long sweeping dresses.

Calico was worth from five to eight and one-third cents a yard. Women took eggs and butter to the general

store to exchange for this useful material. Generally two of these dresses made up a woman's wardrobe for a year. Sometimes old chests brought from the home state were rummaged and old bed spreads, woven by some ancestor, were unearthed as a last resort and made into a skirt for sister. Sunbonnets were the headgear for almost every-woman, although faded blanket shawls of other years were also worn.

In the towns those who wanted to keep fully a breast of the styles wore hoop skirts and bustles, while in the cities women wore clothes with flounces, tucks, pleats, rosettes, jets, beads and other ornaments. This kind of clothing was unknown to the prairie home, where all clothing was plain cotton cloth. Their only ornaments were the patches of new material which all too soon made their appearance on the drab faded garments.

When this family located on their claim game was plentiful. Every year two or three neighbors would go out near the rivers for a big hunt when the weather became cool enough to preserve the meat. Deer and antelope were the principal kinds of game brought home from

these hunts. In addition to these, rabbit, wild turkeys, prairie chicken and wild ducks and geese were numerous near their home. The bill of fare usually consisted of mush for supper, corn bread, molasses, meat and hominy for dinner. In the summer wild greens formed a large part of the diet. Sheep sorrel made a good tart pie as well as preserves. The process of canning was not in use on a large scale like it is today and about the only method of preserving food was by drying. Everything was dried that possibly could be. Green beans, corn, peppers and even pumpkin was dried. Pumpkin was sliced thin and cut up into little dice and strung for drying; many times the meat became dark and leathery, but when soaked it made a fair pumpkin pie.

Mrs. Thomas attended a Fourth of July celebration in 1895 on the North Canadian River. For a month before the holiday everybody who passed was invited to come to the celebration and to bring his skillet. In good American style these pioneers appointed committees to make the arrangements. A committee of four or five was appointed to catch catfish during the week prior to the celebration.

By the Fourth these men had several hundred pounds of catfish penned up in a mouth of a nearby creek. Stakes had been driven across the creek above and below to form a pen. Another committee secured boards at a sawmill nearby for a thirty foot table and for a dance platform. A large pile of logs was gathered from the timber for fuel. On the afternoon of the third, people began to come. By the next day there were one hundred and fifty people. They came walking, riding horseback and in wagon loads, and any way they could get there. The ladies were dressed in sunbonnets and plain dresses. There was but one silk dress in the whole crowd. The flag was run to the top of a pole and the Declaration of Independence was read, and they enjoyed a sumptuous meal of fish and bread. Late that evening the fiddles were tuned up and the dance began. This lasted until broad daylight of the Fifth, when the settlers wended their way back to their homes, thinking of this bright event for many months.

Reading matter to this family as well as many others was very scarce and everything readable was hungrily devoured by these people. Almanacs and patent medicine

pamphlets, each with a loop of string fastened in one corner, were issued by the medicine companies and given at the stores. These were hung on a nail in the corner or behind the stove. Usually they were gaily colored, green, yellow, or blue and made elaborate use of the signs of the Zodiac. Piles of these almanacs were found on the counter of the general merchandise establishment of drug store each spring. The almanac was free but the "Healeys Bitters", which were said to purify the sluggish blood after the inactivity of the winter months, sold for one dollar a bottle. Much of the reading matter consisted of proverbs, many of which doubtless came from "Poor Richard."

Mrs. Thomas said as a rule the settlers were very agreeable and obliging. Neighbors were ready to lend anything they possessed. No man driving along with an empty wagon on a good road would pass another on foot without inviting him to ride. If he had a loaded wagon and happened to overtake a lady walking he would ask her to ride even if he, himself, had to walk.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas reared their family of five boys and four girls on their claim. In the Summer of 1936 Mr.

Thomas passed away. In March, 1937 Mrs. Thomas sold her share in the old homestead and moved to El Reno.

About two months ago she was married to Mr. Andrews.