

### **Notice of Copyright**

Published and unpublished materials may be protected by Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S. Code). Any copies of published and unpublished materials provided by the Western History Collections are for research, scholarship, and study purposes only.

Use of certain published materials and manuscripts is restricted by law, by reason of their origin, or by donor agreement. For the protection of its holdings, the Western History Collections also reserves the right to restrict the use of unprocessed materials, or books and documents of exceptional value and fragility. Use of any material is subject to the approval of the Curator.

### **Citing Resources from the Western History Collections**

For citations in published or unpublished papers, this repository should be listed as the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

An example of a proper citation:

Oklahoma Federation of Labor Collection, M452, Box 5, Folder 2. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

BEECHAM, JANE

INTERVIEW

4633

410

BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Place or History ~~Project for Oklahoma~~

BEECHAM, JANE

INTERVIEW

4633

Field Worker's name Anna R. Barry

This report made on (date) June 22, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Jane Beecham

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Okla.

3. Residence address (or location) 103 N. M. St.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Birth November Day 20 Year 1884

5. Place of birth Balsworth, Nebraska

6. Name of Father John Duncan Place of birth unknown

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Mary Ann (Stokes) Duncan Place of birth Indiana

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Anna R. Barry  
Interviewer  
June 22, 1937

Interview with  
Mrs. Jane Beecham  
El Reno, Oklahoma.

I was born at Belsworth, Nebraska, November 20, 1884. Soon after my birth my folks moved to Elsworth, Kansas, and settled on a claim.

In 1890 they decided to move to Oklahoma after hearing of so many opportunities to homestead on a claim. A week before we started we began to make preparation for the journey, the men repairing the wagons.

I was five years old at this time but I can remember it as well as if it were yesterday. I was very anxious to get started, this being my first trip. Oh! how grand and glorious I thought it would be to travel. Little did I know of the hardships I was to meet. Three days before we made ready to start my stepfather drove over to a little country store for some provisions for our trip. I thought the time would never come to start, as I was so anxious to get started.

- 2 -

On March 16, 1890, we loaded our wagons with a few farm implements, a few pieces of household goods, bedding, clothing and food to last for several weeks. We rounded up our cattle, fifteen head and seven head of horses, a few chickens and our old shepherd dog, "Spot."

During the greater part of the first day, we moved along pretty rapidly, moving southward toward Caldwell, Kansas. About an hour before sundown we pitched our camp on the bank of a little creek. How glad we children felt to be out of that wagon to run, skip, hop and jump. We all started gathering sticks and limbs to make a fire, and before many minutes we had almost a wagon load of wood piled up. Our parents told us to stop and that we might play while they cooked the evening meal. How good that meal tasted. We were all so hungry.

Traveling with our family were three other wagons. After supper they fixed the beds so that the women and children could sleep in the wagons. The men fixed their beds on the ground, stretching a tarpaulin on the north

- 3 -

side of the wagon, as this was in the spring and a cold north wind was blowing.

In the far distance we could hear noises, which sounded very loud and noticeable. The men at our camp said they believed that it was Indians in our neighborhood. The women became alarmed and this frightened the children. The men made hasty preparation for a fight. The cowbells were muffled, fires extinguished, guns loaded and the horses unhobbled and brought in and the harness put on them. The men sat up most of the night and watched, but it was just another Indian scare.

We continued on our journey about sunrise the next morning, proceeding over the plains in a southwesterly direction. About ten miles from the brook of our last night's encampment we came to another stream. Here we camped and cooked our noon meal. Our teams began to grow tired and our cattle's feet became sore. I remember we stopped at a town and my stepfather bought leather shoes for the cattle. This seemed very odd to me. At night they removed these leather shoes, drove little pegs in the ground and turned these shoes over them, so as to keep their shape.

- 4 -

That night the sky became overcast with heavy clouds and frequent flashes of lightning were observed near the horizon on the north and northwest. It rained violently during the night and the ground next morning was covered with water. We made an attempt to travel, but found the prairie so soft that it was with very great difficulty our teams were able to drag the wagons over it. We only made seven miles and camped near a small creek, which with all the small branches in the vicinity were full to the banks. We found but few trees along this creek upon which we were camped, hackberry and wild chinaberries were the only varieties.

We came to Caldwell, Kansas, on down to Kingfisher, then on to El Reno. It took us three weeks to make the trip. My stepfather bought a claim very cheap from a man near the little town of Piedmont in Canadian County.

Our house was a sod house, fourteen by sixteen feet. It had a brush roof and earthen floor. When we bought this place, something like twenty acres of sod were broken on it. We planted a small field of June corn, kaffir

- 5 -

corn, pumpkins, melons and beans. Many of the early school houses, which were also used for church services, were made with sod walls and a dirt roof. Where there was timber the walls were constructed of logs set end-wise into the ground.

In the early days trading points were sometimes forty miles away and water had to be hauled long distances. However, small country stores were soon established and wells were dug. When we first came to Oklahoma, the organization of schools was a very important matter in each community. Subscription schools were maintained in practically all of the towns in the Oklahoma country during the first year. The building of the first railway lines brought great changes into the life of the people who settled claims. Mails were more frequent and more regular than ever before.

The town of Piedmont, our nearest trading point, which is the trading center for the residents of the northeastern part of Canadian County, was established in 1903. James Dean homesteaded the quarter section on which

- 6 -

the town was established. He died in 1899 and was buried in Mathewson Cemetery.

Dr. E. H. Long bought the farm on June 19, 1903, and later in the year the townsite was laid off. The Piedmont Press was established on January 4, 1904, by Bruce L. Ott. The St. Louis, El Reno and Western Railroad entered the city of Piedmont in 1904. The Piedmont State Bank opened its doors for business January 2, 1904. A. M. Miller general store was the first store located in the new town. He moved his stock of goods from one mile east of Piedmont. I. I. Couch, who still resides in Piedmont, and Frank Crowley were second to establish a store. W. E. McNinch established the first meat market.

The Methodist Church, south of Piedmont was organized in the fall of 1903 and the present building was constructed early in 1904. Clarence Williams was the first Sunday School Superintendent. The Baptist Church was organized in 1906 in the school house and a church was built in 1907. Reverend J. D. Pogue was the first

- 7 -

pastor. The present church was constructed in the spring of 1926. Several charter members still reside in the community.

In the early years my mother kept a diary of some of the early day happening of something I thought might perhaps be of interest in history and which no doubt many of the pioneers have forgotten, the naming of the streets of El Reno:

Carson - named in honor of Lieutenant Carson of Fifth Cavalry.

Foster Street - named for Quartermaster Foster of Fifth Cavalry.

Hayes Street - Captain "Black Jack" Hayes, C Troop, Fifth Cavalry.

Hoff Street - Doctor Hoff, Major, Fifth Cavalry.

Jenkins Street - Lieutenant Jenkins, K Troop, Fifth Cavalry.

London Street - Lieutenant London, Fifth Cavalry.

Macomb Street - Lieutenant Macomb, B Troop, Fifth Cavalry.

Miles Street - General Nelson A Miles (General Miles often visited Fort Reno, but never was stationed there.)

Russell Street - Major Russell Fifth Cavalry.

- 8 -

Wade Street - Colonel J. F. Wade commanding officer of Fifth Cavalry and commander of Fort Reno.

Watts Street - Captain Watts, F Troop Fifth Cavalry.

The following is a partial list of streets named after civilians:

Admire Street - named after Captain J. L. Admire, (receiver of the Kingfisher land office)

Barker Street - W. D. Barker, Indian teacher at Darlington.

Bickford Street - H. L. Bickford, who with his brother C. B. were in the overland freight business with headquarters at Darlington.

Clark Street - Ben Clark, government scout and interpreter at Fort Reno.

Evans Street - Neal W. Evans, post trader at Fort Reno, who later moved to El Reno, where he resided until his death in 1915.

Foreman Street - Major John A. Foreman, on whose claim the original townsite of El Reno was located.

Jackson Street - Dr. A. H. Jackson, who filed on the claim which is now part of east El Reno.

Jensen Street - Tom Jensen, one of the founders of El Reno and prominent early day real estate man. He owned Jensen addition to El Reno.

Keith Street - Ben Keith, who owned Keith's addition to El Reno.

Mitchell Street - E. F. Mitchell, early day El Reno booster and government contractor.

Rogers Street - Dr. C. S. Rogers, whom the townsite organizers selected as the first mayor.

Williams Street - W. G. Williams, known as "Caddo Bill," who owned an extensive ranch west of Minco before the opening and afterwards engaged in wholesale grocery business in El Reno.

The foregoing list covers about one-third of El Reno's streets.