

TILLEY, LAURA MAUD DEARDORFF INTERVIEW

#9006

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

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora Lorrin

This report made on (date) October 20, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Laura Maud Deardorff Tilley

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 621 South Reno Avenue.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 31 Year 1881

5. Place of birth Jackson County Kansas.

6. Name of Father William P. Deardorff Place of birth Kansas

Other information about father Born February 13, 1853. Died in 1917

Name of Mother Calista (Allard) Deardorff Place of birth Illinois

Other information about mother Born April 9, 1856. Died in 1932.

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and history 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 10

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Nora Herrin,
Investigator.
October 20, 1937.

Interview with Laura Maud (Deardorff) Tilley.

El Reno, Oklahoma.

Born August 31, 1881.

Father-William P. Deardorff.

Mother-Calesta (Allard) Deardorff.

Mrs. Laura Maud Deardorff Tilley was born in Jackson County, Kansas, about half way between Circleville and Soldier. These two towns were about six miles apart and her parents owned a farm about half way between them. She was born August 31, 1881.

Her father, William P. Deardorff, was born in Kansas and Mrs. Tilley does not know of his being in any other state until he came to Oklahoma. He died in 1917 at the age of fifty-nine. Her mother, Calesta Allard Deardorff, was born in Illinois April 9, 1856, and died in 1932. She lived in Illinois until she was fifteen and then her folks moved to Kansas and there she met and married Mr. Deardorff. They were married November 20, 1879. There were ten children in the family, five boys and five girls, and Mrs. Tilley is the oldest child.

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Her father came to Oklahoma in the Fall of 1889 and purchased a relinquishment four miles straight south of Banner. Banner was not there at that time. It was a corner section and it was the northwest quarter at the cross roads. They built their house on the southwest corner of their farm, so that you had to go four miles south of Banner and a quarter of a mile west to get to the house.

When Mr. Deardorff was ready to move his family he, together with several other men who were coming from Jackson County, Kansas, chartered some cars in which to bring their stock and household goods. It was much cheaper that way. In the party that came with Mr. Deardorff, were Mr. W. E. Fryberger, Lyman Allard, the late Bob Fry, and Mr. Thomas Bell who is also dead. When they got here there was no depot in El Reno and no stock pens in which to put their stock. They had to build temporary pens before they could unload their horses, cattle and other stock.

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Mr. Fryberger used to help Mrs. Tilley's father run a threshing machine, in Kansas, before they came to Oklahoma, when the threshing machines were still run by horse power.

When the Deardroff family arrived by train, a wash tub had to serve as a depot. There was nothing to step down on and the train men turned a wash tub upside down for them to step down on, from the train.

On their farm south of Banner they had one of the very few frame houses in that neighborhood at that time. It had four rooms, two down stairs and two up stairs. Their barn was dug out of the side of a hill and was roofed with boards. It was large enough to shelter three or four horses and they had a team. There was a well of good water and for fuel they burned wood. They obtained the wood in the Caddo country. Several of the men in the neighborhood would get together with three or four teams and wagons and men to drive them and they would all go to the Caddo country to get their wood which usually took them about two days.

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When they shipped their household goods from Kansas, a lot of canned fruit, potatoes and apples were shipped along with their other stuff and every Fall as long as they needed it their people in Kansas would send them ten or twelve barrels of apples and dried fruit to tide them over as there was no fruit here at that time to amount to anything. Among the stock they brought were a team, a couple of cows and some chickens.

There were no section lines visible; at that time, you just drove across the country. It was nothing to see prairie fires. You could see them at a distance any night. There were a number of buffalo wallows in the Deardorff pasture.

In 1891, Mr. Deardorff planted his second wheat crop and it was so high and lush and green that he was very proud of it. Mrs. Tilley said that he used to watch it when the wind would sway it back and forth, a "swell stand" and then in May there came a terrific hailstorm and wiped the wheat all out; nothing

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left at all. That was one winter when several families in Kansas sent help to the Deardorff family.

Laura Maud Deardorff attended a school that was a quarter of a mile from their house on the south side of the road. It was called Union Center. There was a small frame building there at that time. There is a much larger building there now but the school still retains the name of Union Center. When they went anywhere they either rode in a lumber wagon or walked. It was twelve miles to El Reno, where they did most of their trading and Banner was not in existence when they first came, but later it was there, not as Banner but as "Cereal".

There was a store and postoffice two miles west of their claim run by a man named Nick Barrett. This place was called "Liberty". They got their mail at Liberty and also did some of their trading at that little store. The place is no longer in existence.

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At that time, a Mr. Lawson carried the mail with a horse and buggy. His route was from El Reno to Liberty, Thurston and Mustang.

They planted an orchard on their farm and succeeded in raising grapes, apples, peaches, cherries and plums. They raised a garden every year raising potatoes and other vegetables. They also had milk and eggs and butter and always had home cured meats.

The Deardorff family never came into contact with the Indians enough to amount to anything and the only Indian scare they ever had was a charivari. A young couple of the neighborhood got married and there was a lot of shooting and noise made and some of the neighbors who did not understand about the rough and rowdy custom thought that it was the Indians on the war path. Mrs. Tilley's folks knew what it was, hence were not frightened.

There were a good many quail and rabbits but not much else in the way of game around their neighborhood. Some fish but not an abundance. They used to have a dinner bell that they used to call the men in from the field to dinner.

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There was a lovely grove about two miles north of their place and before there were any churches or school houses, it was used as a place to hold Church and Sunday School and also picnics. They put a lot of benches under the trees for people to sit on. It was a Union Sunday School and any denomination could, and did, use it. Later the Sunday Schools and churches were held in the various school buildings around over the country. The schools would give programs that were usually pretty well attended.

There was a man in that neighborhood named John D. Smith, who had one of those early Jay Edison phonographs, that used tube records instead of the disks. A phonograph was a rarity then and Mr. Smith often teased Mrs. Tilley by playing the record "Let's All Go Down to Maud's and Have a Jubilee". He knew that Mrs. Tilley's name was Maud; it annoyed his own wife more than it did Mrs. Tilley but he would play it about everytime she was in hearing distance.

The young folks would gather in crowds to have

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their good times and would share with each other whatever of pleasure they could. There was very little of this business of couples going off by themselves. It was in crowds that they had their fun.

Laura Maud Deardorff was married from her father's homestead. She knew her husband four years before she married him. He had an uncle in their neighborhood, and ^{he} husband, Mr. Frank J. Tilley, came from Columbus, Ohio, to try for a piece when the Kiowa and Comanche country opened by lottery in 1901. He came, however, in 1900. He found work with the farmers around there working for Mr. Deardorff awhile; that is how Laura Maud met him. Mr. Frank Tilley was successful in the drawing, getting number 524 and he filed on a farm one and a half miles south and a mile east of Gotebo.

He stayed on his farm in the winter working on the section of the Rock Island Railroad running through Gotebo. In the summer time, he would come back to his uncle's home near Banner and work in the harvest

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and then on November 20th, 1904, which was the silver wedding anniversary of Mrs. Tilley's parents, Laura Maud Deardorff and Frank J. Tilley were married and she went with him to their farm near Cotebo and they lived on it one year. They moved to Cotebo and lived a year and then they sold the claim and moved to a piece of school land that was located five and a quarter miles south and a mile east of Banner and they moved to it in 1907. There was a small three room box house on the school land, a small frame barn, a well and a cave. It was also fenced. Her children were all born on this school land farm. She had a triple experience at pioneering as her parents were Oklahoma pioneers: she helped her husband with his claim at Cotebo and the school land they moved to constituted another job of the same nature.

They left their farm in 1915 and came to El Reno. Her husband then worked in the oil fields both at Covington and at Tulsa. He helped the late Fred Pennwright move houses, worked for the Rock Island

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Railroad, painted houses and did carpenter work; in fact he did anything that came to hand. Mr. Tilley died in July of 1934.

The only relic Mrs. ~~Tilley~~ has left from the early days is a chest of drawers, made of solid walnut, that was handed down from her Grand other allard; is fifty years old or more.

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