

VANCE, CATHERINE SHIRK.

INTERVIEW

10264

131

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

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora L. Lorrin

This report made on (date) March 10. 1938

1. Name Mrs. Catherine Shirk Vance.
2. Post Office Address Albino.
3. Residence address (or location) Out side city limits, east end Cavnaugh Street.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 5 Year 1862
5. Place of birth Iowa.

6. Name of Father Joseph Shirk Place of birth Pennsylvania
Other information about father Died in 1912
1828
7. Name of Mother Sarah Gockley Shirk Place of birth Pennsylvania
Other information about mother Died about 1905.

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 5.

Mrs. Nora Lorrin
Field Worker
March 10, 1938

Interview with Mrs. Catherine Shirk Vance,
East end of Cavanaugh Street, El Reno, Okla.

Mrs Catherine Shirk Vance was born in Iowa, November 8, 1861. Her father, Joseph Shirk, was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in 1828 and died in 1912. Her mother, Sarah Gockley Shirk, was born in Pennsylvania in 1837 and died about 1905. Mrs. Vance spent her girlhood in Jackson County, Iowa. She met her future husband, John William Vance, and married him in Iowa in 1901. They first went to Kansas living in the town of Merinton. Her husband was a conductor on the Rock Island Railroad when she married him. They came to El Reno in 1903. Her father, who was a money lender in Iowa, usually invested his surplus cash in farm land, but the farm land in Iowa was very high and he came to El Reno in 1901 to find land for investment and he bought the farm Mrs. Vance now lives on and has continued to live on since coming to El Reno. Her father bought the farm from L. G. Cuttle, who previously had purchased it from Ella J. Hobbs, who had bought it from George Lamb, the man who pre-empted it in the first place. It sold the first time for \$4000.00, once for \$4800.00, and Mr. Shirk paid \$5000.00 for it.

At the same time her father bought this farm, he purchased another one six miles southwest of Alamo. It is ^{the} southeast quarter/Section 6, Township 11, Range 7, T. 11 N. Mrs. Shirk's father died in 1912 leaving them very well to do. Mrs. Vance had two sisters, one was dead; the dead sister was the mother of five children. Her father's property was divided among the three sisters. Mrs. Vance got the Oklahoma farms and still owns both of them. When the Vances moved onto their farm it had a very good frame house, one barn and a very fine orchard that had been put out by the original owner, George Lambe. This orchard later died out and Mr. Vance replanted it and the orchard they have now is the one which Mr. Vance planted. There was some fencing and quite a bit of ground broken.

After they moved to this farm Mr. Vance quit the railroad business and devoted himself to the business of farming. He raised wheat, oats and stock and had good luck when the bugs didn't take things. Later he made lots of money raising alfalfa. Mrs. Vance has often milked six or seven cows at a time, but only when her husband was in a "tight" and needed extra help. They have always put up lots of wild prairie hay. Mrs. Vance's own special part of the farming was the raising of Rhode Island Red chickens and she has been very successful at it.

When they first moved on the farm there were a few prairie dogs in the pasture but they have died out or have been killed out, as there are none there now. There is a low place on the northeast part of their farm, and the coyotes used to come in there and howl at night until they gave Mrs. Vance the "creeps" but they never lost anything on account of them. They butchered their own meat, and usually dry salted it but sometimes they put it down in brine. They did this for many years. They traded with the Kelso's Dry Goods Store. This store is still here and one of the finest in our city. They also traded with LaBrier who not only ran a store but was connected with the First National Bank in the early days.

When the Vances moved here the city of El Reno was not quite a wilderness, but it was very far from being the city it is today. There was some paving but it was rough and made of bricks, there was not much of it. Many of the streets that are lined with houses, modern and up-to-date now, were bare or at least grass covered. The sidewalks were for the most part made of wood and many of the streets had no sidewalks of any kind. People had most of their picnics and Fourth of July celebrations in what is now Legion Park, but at that time was called Peaches Park after its founder, Sam Peach. There

were no automobiles at that time and the best and fanciest rigs were buggies and carriages pulled by fancy high stepping spirited horses or ponies. Often the bridles would be decorated with red, blue or yellow horse hair tassels. Often there was fancy decorations on the harness, some of it in the form of nickel plated medallions.

The Vances drove a bay horse named Frank to their buggy and they also had a wagon and a good supply of far supplements.

Mrs. Vance went to see an Indian encampment on the west side of town; there was a very large camp of Indians. It was an interesting sight. There were many tents and teepees and all the Indians wore blankets or shawls, and the squaws carried their papooses on their backs when they didn't have them in their baby baskets. The squaws would put the papooses on their backs and draw the shawls or blankets tightly around them, so the papoose was more or less comfortably sitting in a fold of the blanket. Nearly all the Indians were painted, many of the men wearing feathers in their hair as well as paint of various colors on their faces, usually yellowish red, yellow, blue or sometimes there would be black streaks also. The men had a habit of braiding their hair in two braids, letting them hang down in front or either side of their faces. Sometimes they would wrap their braids with cloth, some-

times red, black or often it was just white strips of cloth ; usually the cloth was so dirty that you could hardly tell the color if any.

Mr. and Mrs. Vance built a very large and beautiful red brick residence. with a tiled roof and at the north side a garage, also with a tiled roof. There are two large barns and some smaller buildings. The original frame house is still there and in good condition. The place really is beautiful, more like an estate than a farm, with its cement drives and walks, cedars and shrubbery. Her husband, in his later life, retired from active work, did some money lending but not much else. He was born in 1861 and died in February, 1937. Mrs. Vance never had any children of her own but kept a girl with her for many years. One of the children of her dead sister, a nephew, lives with her now and runs the farm and looks after Mrs. Vance.