

LITTLE, HELEN EICHHOFF

INTERVIEW

#82887

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

LITTLE, HELEN EICHHOFF.

INTERVIEW.

#8203.

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora Lorrin,

This report made on (date) August 13, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Helen Eichhoff Little,

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 701 South Hadden

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 7, Year 1893

5. Place of birth El Reno, Oklahoma.

6. Name of Father Michael Eichhoff Place of birth Elberfeld,  
Germany

Other information about father Born October 3, 1867, died May 17, 1927.

7. Name of Mother Ursula Welter Eichhoff Place of birth Cologne,  
Germany

Other information about mother Born January 17, 1874, and died

in 1908.

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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Nora Lorrin, Interviewer,  
August 13, 1927.

Interview with Helen Eichhoff Little,  
701 South Hadden, El Reno, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Helen Eichhoff Little was born in El Reno, Oklahoma, on November 7, 1893. Her father, Mr. Michael Eichhoff, was born in Elberfeld, Germany, October 3, 1867, and died May 17, 1927. Her mother, Mrs. Ursula Welter Eichhoff, was born at Cologne, Germany, January 17, 1874, and died in 1908. Her father came to America when he was about seventeen years of age and his destination was Shelby, Nebraska. Her mother came to America when she was about fourteen years old and she also came to Shelby, Nebraska.

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They were married in Shelby about 1891.

Mrs. Little's parents came to Oklahoma for the first opening in 1889 but her father went into the banking business here in El Reno instead of taking a claim.

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His bank was the Stock Exchange Bank. He was still running the bank when Helen was born in 1893. After he quit the bank he went to a farm near Piedmont six miles northwest of that little place. They moved to this place when Helen was eight years old and Mr. Eichhoff lived on this farm until about eight years before he died. The last years of his life he was a clerk in the office of the Southern Hotel in El Reno.

Before they left Nebraska he had filed on a homestead and proved up on it, which made him ineligible for filing on another claim so he had to buy his claim in Oklahoma. He had two claims of a hundred and sixty acres but one of his claims was school land.

The farm had a two-story frame house with two rooms down-stairs and two rooms up-stairs, a large frame barn, chicken house, and good-tasting well water. This water was cold because it was from a deep well.

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Their fuel supply was wood and coal. The Eichhoff family traded with the Mulvey Mercantile Company at Piedmont. They also traded at a little country store and post office called Mathewson which was located about a mile from their farm. A man by the name of Otto Wray used to run the post office at Mathewson.

Soon after Piedmont was built Mathewson passed out of existence. There was a cemetery near Mathewson called the Mathewson Cemetery which is still in existence and in use. It is a nice one, well cared for. Mrs. Little had an uncle named Gus Thelen who used to run an Indian store at Concho in the early days when the country was first opened.

Helen Eichhoff attended the Racine School which is located nine miles north and six miles east of El Reno. She was eight years old when she started to school and she received all of her education at this school except one year when she attended a school term in David City, Nebraska.

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The school building at Racine was just a frame building which is still there and in use.

She and Mr. Frisco J. Little were married December 18, 1912. They have one child, a daughter twenty-two years old, who clerks in the Behne's Jewelry store here in El Reno.

For recreation the early day settler had parties, dances, literaries, Sunday School and Church, but it was usually at play parties where they sang and danced. Instead of having music to dance by they would make their music by singing. The names of some of the songs that they danced by were "Needle's Eye", "Pig in the Parlor", "Old Dan Tucker". They also played "Go In and Out the Window", and "Drop the Handkerchief".

Another song which Mrs. Little remembers went like this:

"Oh! Oh! The ladies Oh

The jolly jolly ladies Oh!

I'd give this world and

All I know

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To get to swing

The ladies Oh!

Mrs. Little clerked in C. O. Shaw's Grocery Store, the R. D. Thompson Store, Waldo's Apple House, Waldo's Grocery, the Nagle Market and Allison's Grocery Store.

She came in contact with the Indians through her work as clerk at these various stores. She states that Waldo's Grocery Store had a large Indian trade, and she liked to wait on the Indians who had many peculiar ways. When they are paying cash, no matter how many things they are going to buy, they will buy and pay cash for each separate article, even though it costs only 5¢ or 10¢.

The Indians liked "hardtack", a very hard cracker, and the stores kept a large supply of these crackers on hand especially for the Indian trade. The Indians ate lots of meat and they usually ordered rib roast or round steak, seldom ordinary roasts.

Mrs. Little says that if you treated Indians honestly they made good friends; they never forgot you and would

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always speak to you and treat you in a kindly, friendly manner.

Among her Indian friends are Mrs. Eagle Nest, Nellie Burns of Concho, who she states is a good customer, John Sleeper, and the Kingsleys of Concho; others are Howling Dog, and Mad Woman.

Once a month Mrs. Little would file the Indian orders and they would often have \$400.00 or \$500.00 worth of business.

Mrs. Little attended a funeral at the home of the Eagle Nest family. A son about twelve years old had died. When she arrived at the Indian home, the house was practically bare, except for the coffin setting on a couple of chairs. They had given everything away-furniture, bedding, dishes, everything. They considered it bad luck to keep things after a death.

Mrs. Little said that the Eagle Nest home had been nicely furnished. The custom is, though, that



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about a year later these people to whom the gifts were made were required to make a return gift of something. The mother and sister of the boy even cut their hair off. Probably it was another method of showing their grief.

The dead boy was buried at Concho and before the services were ended at the graveyard, the white people were asked to leave as there were some last rites the Indians wished to perform without the presence of the "pale-face" spectators. The Indians seemed glad to have their white friends there and treated them very courteously.

The house where Mrs. Little was born is still in use just as it was when she was born, and is located at 819 South McComb Street.