

RUSSELL, EDITH BARROWS INTERVIEW.

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Harry M. Dreyer, Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History
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Interview with Mrs. Edith Barrows
Russell, 2329 NW28th, Oklahoma
City, Oklahoma.

Father came to Oklahoma from East Nebraska;
Mother lived to be 87 years of age, died recently.

I, Mrs. Edith Barrows Russell, came to Okla-
home in 1889 with my father and mother. I was a
small child.

My father staked a lot on the corner of Broad-
way and Grant, where he built a two-room house and
we lived there for sometime. Lumber was scarce then,
so father gathered some drygoods boxes that he used
to make door steps with, as he waited so long before
he could get enough lumber to finish the house.

Father had three cows shipped down here in a car with
our neighbor's property, who also came from Nebraska,
but the cows all died of Texas fever, a few months
after we got here. Father dug a well on his lot,
which was about thirty feet deep and this was the
place nearly everyone got their water for drinking
and cooking. We did not have any pump. Had a frame
around the well and pulley above and water was drawn
from well with buckets.

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Father bought 160 acres on the corner of Twenty-Third street and Lincoln boulevard, (The capitol sets on the northwest corner of the place) and after two years, we moved out on this claim and built a small house out in the center of it. He, also, built a spring house out of rock, where there was a seepage of water on the side of the hill and this is where we put our milk and butter so they would keep from spoiling. It took a lot of nerve to do as father did, take a family out on the open prairie without any improvements, only a tent. But he soon built up the place. He broke out eighty acres and planted it in corn, oats and wheat. We raised wheat there that made sixty bushels per acre. Father was interested in the development of Oklahoma City, and tried to move development east. But the development was always northwest. So he told his family to remember that Oklahoma City would always go northwest. He planted out an orchard on the place but all the trees died after five or six years. So he and mother went down south in the forks of the river and bought 250 small cedar trees and brought them home in a wagon. We all worked several days, planting these trees. But

they all died, except one tree that is standing today. The trees would do fine until they grew large enough the roots hit the hard pan dirt and then they would die.

We had a Fair here in Oklahoma City the first year after the opening and all the senators came. A banquet was held for them in one of the business buildings. This Fair had enormous size cotton plants, and corn, and largest watermelons that I have ever seen.

We never had any shows or theatre buildings then, and never had any entertainments except the Fair and the banquet for the senators and all public spirited citizens attended these.

The Indians used to come into town from out northeast of the city and would camp east of the Santa Fe depot. They would build their tepees out of branches of trees. I used to go down to their camp with father in a two-wheel cart, as he used to buy ponies from them or would trade horses with them when they came to town. Father wanted to buy a spotted pony. He had one but wanted to get another to match

the one he had.

The Indian women would take flour and water and other ingredients mix it all in a rock bowl. They would take a piece of dough in their hands and flatten it out, and then wave same in air between their hands and in this manner somehow roll into round ball and drop into skillet which they had over fire. This was only done by some of the older Indian women. They would then cut some meat and put into skillet with the dough which they had mixed and rolled into balls. They did most of their cooking in one kettle and I have never seen them use any vegetables. When they sat down to eat they would all go around the kettle and sit on ground and each in turn would reach into the kettle with hands and get a piece of meat and dip out some of the soup with a cup. They had very few cooking utensils that I have ever seen.

Father had paid as high as fifteen dollars to the Indians for some of their best ponies and this was considered a big price for them. The Indians used such crude harness made out of ropes and pieces of straps, I could hardly see how they would hold together or how they could hitch them to their wagons. So when we had

our Fair, some business men went down to their (Indians) camp across the Santa Fe track to have some of the Indians drive their wagons in the parade. The Indian men talked to their women about it, and finally one of the women led one of the horses up to the wagon, and an hour elapsed before they got the other horse up to the wagon, they were so slow. But after waiting for several hours on them before starting the parade, the Indians managed to get around somehow with their wagons and joined in the parade.

Father used to go down in the Choctaw country on hunting trips. We always had plenty of wild fowl, turkeys, geese, and brants, a specie of wild ducks. Also ate a good deal of venison and when father wanted to give his family a treat he would bring home a piece of beef from the butcher shop.

The Ladies Aid Society was very active in church work, the members built a community building and paid for it by cooking meals for men who worked threshing machine, and by suppers given.

Father was religiously spirited and always saw that his family was in Sunday School and church on Sundays. He was a Presbyterian, but offered one hundred dollars

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to any denomination that would build a church, and in this way contributed to several churches. So when the Catholics were ready to build a church they lacked a hundred dollars having enough money to build and one of their members learned that father had made such an offer. So after some of the members had discussed the matter with the priest, who could not see that a protestant would contribute to a Catholic Church, it was decided to see my father and my father gave them the hundred dollars. Father Ketchum, Catholic Priest at that time, told me about that several years later.

There were a good many saloons in Oklahoma City in the early days. One time someone called my mother and asked her how many saloons there were in Oklahoma City and she replied that she did not know as she did not frequent them very much, but that there were so many between 4th and Broadway and Grand Avenue, a woman never walked that part of town.

My father-in-law, Malone, built a store on Main Street in 1889-90, that he operated for two years. It was located near the present Petty's store and he sold it to a party named Hull.

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Father said he seldom traded with a man from Kansas (he used to handle a good many cattle) but later stated to mother that he thought it would be a good state to move back to, as all the worst ones had come to Oklahoma as a good many of the outlaws and fugitives used to make Oklahoma their hiding place.

The greatest and last killing of buffalo in Oklahoma was between Oklahoma City and Guthrie in a roundup.

Mrs. Russell has a map about 6' x 6' with all counties, showing all trading posts and settlements and churches, trails, in Oklahoma prior to opening, copied from an early map made by a young engineer. This goes back to 1540/