

PORTER, MARY ISRAEL. INTERVIEW

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PORTER, MARY ISRAEL. -INTERVIEW.

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Form A-(S-149)

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

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora Lorrin, El Reno, Oklahoma.

This report made on (date) November 19, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Mary (Israel) Porter,
2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) 402 South Choctaw Avenue.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 26 Year 1873.
5. Place of birth Willow Springs, Illinois.

6. Name of Father Joseph Israel Place of birth Germany  
About 1846.  
Other information about father Died about 1882.

7. Name of Mother Pauline (Cooper) Israel Place of birth Germany  
About 1843.  
Other information about mother Died in 1918.

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 Six

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Nora Lorrin,  
Investigator.  
November 19, 1937.

Interview with Mrs. Mary Israel Porter,  
402 S. Choctaw Avenue, El Reno, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Mary (Israel) Porter was born in Willow Springs, Illinois, on April 26, 1873.

Her father, Joseph Israel, was born in Germany about 1846 and died about 1882.

Her mother, Pauline (Cooper) Israel, was also born in Germany about 1843 and died in 1918. Her mother's and father's people came to America from Germany and settled near Willow Springs, Illinois, and her parents were married in that state.

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They moved to Ford County, Kansas, when Mrs. Porter was four years old. Her father died and her mother married again. There were seven children in all; five by her first husband and two by the second one.

When they first went to Kansas, there were numerous blue racer snakes and just before a thunder storm, they would come out and be about everywhere. Her parents made

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the children wear boots to protect them from being bitten by the snakes. It was hard to kill these blue racers as they were so swift you could not catch them.

In 1894 Mrs. Porter came down to the Cherokee Strip to some people she knew, hoping to obtain a relinquishment but decided after looking things over that it was no place for her and so came on to El Reno. She came by herself on the train. El Reno was not much of a place at that time; there were nothing but board sidewalks and not too many of those; some of them being in bad repair.

In the part of town where she now resides, at 402 South Choctaw Avenue, there were not many houses, just a scattering one here and one there.

Mrs. Porter worked in hotels and restaurants for some time; and one place in particular was the "Jam Restaurant" which was located somewhere on Rock Island Street, in the one or two hundred block south on the east side of the street. It was in a brick building and was owned and operated by Charley Hardy.

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For almost two years Mrs. Porter worked in private families for \$1.50 and \$2.00 per week. Anybody getting as much as \$3.00 a week had to be a good cook. She did this sort of work until she was married to Samuel C. Porter on April 15, 1897.

Her husband had obtained a relinquishment located three miles south and four miles west of El Reno. They had a little shanty about twelve by twelve feet, made of wide boards put straight up and down and battled. It was made of good pine lumber. They lined it with heavy building paper, making it comfortable and warm. It is still standing and in use, although not as a dwelling.

They had some of their land under barbed wire fencing and had sheds for the horses. They dug a well right away but got "gyp" water and they had to use it just the same. They could not "break" it enough so that they could use it for wash water and so had to be careful to catch all the rain water they could to use for wash water. Later a pond was dug and then they

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used the rain water caught in the pond for washing purposes.

The Porters raised wheat, oats; corn and kaffir corn. They started with one cow, later they had a good many; they also had horses, hogs and chickens. Mrs. Porter has often sold eggs for 5¢ and 10¢ a dozen and when they got 20¢ a pound for butter or 20¢ a dozen for eggs she thought she was getting big prices. \$1.50 a dozen for frying chickens was a very good price.

The men had to go across the South Canadian River to get their wood. They would generally start about three o'clock in the morning and as a rule got back about ten or eleven o'clock the next night.

They lived in their little one-room shanty for five solid years and then built a two-room frame house.

Mr. and Mrs. Porter built a good sized barn in 1908. They did general farming and did not specialize in any one thing. They did most of their trading in

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El Reno, patronizing the Barrett's grocery, Waldo's grocery and also LaBrier's.

Their plows and other implements were of the walking variety at first but later they had a riding plow. There were several hailstorms that destroyed their wheat and other crops. Their main conveyance was a lumber wagon at first but they got a buggy just as soon as they could.

Mrs. Porter moved to El Reno in 1918, three years after her husband died.

They never had any children but Mrs. Porter took a boy twelve or fourteen years of age, educated and gave him a home. This boy was with her for seventeen years before he got married. He now has a wife and two small children.

She sold the farm and bought the place she now occupies at 402 South Choctaw Avenue, a large and comfortably furnished home.

There was a school two and one-half miles from

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their claim called Lovely Valley.

There were lots of Indians when Mrs. Porter first came here but she never thought much about them. They were around town and in the country but she did not come in contact with them except to see them.

There were lots of quail and rabbits.

There were coyotes but people were not troubled with them any more than they are now.