

SCHURMANN, WILLIAM

INTERVIEW 8794

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

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Field Worker's name Elizabeth L. DuncanThis report made on (date) September 15, 193 71. Name William Schuermann2. Post Office Address Jefferson, Oklahoma, Route No. 2.3. Residence address (or location) miles east of Jefferson4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 10 Year 18575. Place of birth Bochum Westphalia, Prussia Germany6. Name of Father William Schuermann Place of birth Bochum Westphalia
Prussia GermanyOther information about father Miner7. Name of Mother Gertrude Blunback Place of birth Same placeOther information about mother Housekeeper

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 _____

Elizabeth L. Duncan
Field Worker
September 15, 1937

Interview with William Schuermann
Jefferson, Oklahoma

William Schuermann was born in Bochum Westphalia, Prussia, Germany, where he spent a good deal of his childhood. He said his father spent his years in the coal mine where he was underground most all of his life. William did not get to go to school like the other children then. When his father died, he was left to take the responsibility of the family.

William can remember seeing his father trudge homeward with a black smudged face with a small miner's lamp attached to his cap. William's father knew no other work as that part of the country was a coal mining country and Bochum was a town of coal miners.

William attended the elementary school until he was fourteen years of age. School in Germany was more advanced than in the United States. What they taught in German elementary schools was equivalent to high school, and second year college work here.

At the age of fourteen William was taken to the mine to work.

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He worked under his father as a beginner. After his father thought he had taught him all he knew, the President of the Mining Company then transferred him to the teamster division.

William spent seven years working in the mine. While he was working, he saved money to come to America. He went without his meals many a time to save money.

When he was twenty-one, he left his mother and father and home in September and worked toward the sailing point which was Hamburg, Germany. On April 10, 1878, he sailed on the ship "Wisconsin" down to Dusseldorf on the Rhine to Rotterdam, Holland and from there to New York.

On the way over, the ship ran into a terrible storm that caused great damage to the ship that caused considerable delay and hindered the speed of the ship. It landed May 1st. They were in the immigrant house for two days awaiting examination.

A man named Foster Berkenyer asked William where he was going and William told him he didn't know as he knew no one. Mr. Berkenyer told William that he thought he knew of a place and gave him a letter to give to a friend at Vincennes, Indiana. William bought a ticket to this place. He worked five months

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there on a farm, then came to Enterprise, Kansas, where he worked on a farm for \$10.00 a month and his board. During harvest, he got \$1.00 a day.

The following year, he was employed on a ranch for \$135.00 a year with board and room. He worked on the farms that was really the only work he knew how to do except the work in a coal mine.

On August 28th, 1880, he was married. He then bought a farm without paying a cent in cash but gave his note. He had saved \$250.00. He bought a team of horses and paid \$200.00 for them. The harness that came with the horses was sliced together with wire, rope and string. The rest of the \$50.00 was spent in buying a fourteen inch walking plow, a two section harrow, and food supplies. William Schuermann farmed this one farm twenty-two years. The farm he bought was at Woodbine, Kansas.

In 1906, Mr. Schuermann and family moved down into the Cherokee Strip and took some school land, the SE 16-26-5, which was East Rock Island at that time but which in later years was changed to Liberty Township.

His first house was a sod house which was one large room. The ridge pole was made from a small tree trunk. The well he

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witched with a tree limb, the way the people witched with a peach tree limb. The way to do it was to take a forked tree limb, hold each of the forked springs in one hand straight out in front of you, then whenever you passed over the spot where the water is located, the limb will turn right downward and you cannot hold it straight.

The Schuermann family was really pretty well off as the crops on the farm in Kansas were pretty good. They raised thirteen pretty fair crops and then had the money they received from the sale of the farm besides.

They brought with them into the Cherokee Strip twelve cows, one bull, six head of horses, seven dozen chickens and some household furniture.

In the fall of 1906, William broke sod and built shelter for the horses, chickens and cattle.

In 1907, William had bought a house thirteen miles from Jefferson in Grant County and had it moved onto the place. It cost him just as much to move it as it would have cost him to build. He broke more sod and that fall planted wheat.

In 1908, he had a pretty good crop of wheat. He sold

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it and bought a wagon and a walking plow.

In 1909, Mr. Schuermann and his boys were the first ones to organize a band. It was called the Schuermann band. Mr. and Mrs. Schuermann were musically inclined. They all played by ear.

In the following years, Mr. Schuermann prospered. He has never returned to Germany to visit his homeland.

He owns three-quarter sections of land besides the school land.