

SCHRODER, FRED.

INTERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-History Project for Oklahoma

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Field Worker's name Nora Lorrin.This report made on (date) January 24, 1938. 1931. Name Fred Schroder.2. Post Office Address Okarche, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 4 Year 1858.5. Place of birth Germany.6. Name of Father John Schroder. Place of birth Germany, 1816.Other information about father Died in Germany, aged 59 years.7. Name of Mother Frederica Allenberg Schroder. Place of birth Germany, 1816.Other information about mother Died in 1891.

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,  
Investigator,  
Jan. 24, 1938.

An Interview With Fred Schroder.  
Okarche, Oklahoma.

I was born in Germany, December 1856. My father, John Schroder, was born in Germany, in 1816, and died in Germany at the age of fifty-nine years. My mother, Frederica Allenberg Schroder, was born in Germany about the year 1816, and died in 1891. There were five children, two girls and three boys, I being the youngest of the children.

I was married when I was twenty-seven years of age, and was father of one child when we left Germany for the United States. The ship on which we came across the water was called the "Retchio". We got along all right until one day something broke in the ship's machinery, and we floated around helpless one whole day. We were on the water for fourteen days and landed in New York on Wednesday April 16, 1883. The first day of May I landed in Nebraska. My mother's brother was living in Nebraska, in Lancaster County, ten miles east of Lincoln, and that was the reason that I chose that locality. Our family lived in Nebraska

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for about seven years. I was renting farms all that time, and was not getting ahead. I had always wanted a home of my own so when Oklahoma was opened for settlement, I came here to look it over, leaving my wife in Nebraska until later. My wife thought Oklahoma was all Indians and I had a very difficult time persuading her to come. I came down on the train, which at that time came as far as Kingfisher. The train stopped at Hennessey. There was nothing there at that time but the stock yards. Kingfisher was a little town full of shacks.

I came to Oklahoma six months after the run of 1889, and took a claim that another man had filed on and departed. It was located just a mile east of Okarche, just across the line in Kingfisher County. I went back and got my family and brought them down in the train. The first thing I did was to go to Kingfisher and get a load of lumber and built a box house, 14 x 20 feet, that being long enough to give us two rooms. I dug a well after I got my shack built. In the meantime, we used water from the slough on our claim. There had been rain a-plenty and the slough was well-filled with rain water. That first summer I had chills and fever,

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though I was the only one in the family who did. After building my shanty, I built a shed barn, just a wind break, with poles, covering it with slough grass. The grass was high in the sloughs and luxuriant everywhere, because of the rains, and so we had plenty of wild prairie hay. I had three horses, four milk cows, and I also brought a pig along from Nebraska, which we butchered when it was large enough.

The first year I broke out ten acres of sod and then planted it to wheat, but did not raise much wheat. It was seven years before I got to put any more improvements on my property. I just had to make a go of my farming venture, as there was no work to be had at that time. The way we worked it, we would take some butter and eggs to town one week and get a few groceries, and the next week the produce would have to be used to purchase flour.

The Indians passed my claim every day and I did quite a lot of trading with them. I traded watermelons and other farm produce for shoes, blankets, clothing, etc. The Indians would sometimes come singly and sometimes in groups of five or six. The best bargain I remember to

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have made with an Indian, was to trade a bushel of my potatoes for a good little pony.

I used to use a corn planter that had a long wire knotted as far apart as I wanted my corn to be planted in the hills. This wire was fastened at both ends of the field, the wire running through the planter and every time one of those knots hit a gadget, the proper amount of corn would drop for each hill. It planted evenly and was very dependable. Some Indians came along one day and stopped to watch me plant corn. They were very curious about it, and monkeyed with the wire, and when my corn came up that year it was all out of line, and so far as looks were concerned it might as well have been planted by hand.

There were no trees at all on my place, nothing but prairie grass. I got wood to burn from people who had trees, that they either sold or gave me. I have picked up many loads of cow chips and used them for fuel. They make a reasonably warm fire and burn all right if quite dry. The main draw-back is that they make lots of ashes, but the odor of their burning is not unpleasant, as one

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would suppose. It did not take long to gather a wagonload as the country was covered with cattle. Okarche was a cattle shipping point. The cattle corrals and chutes were a half mile long and were located on a hill on the west side of town. Often whole train loads of cattle were shipped from this point. The largest shipment that I ever saw from this point at one time was 3,000 head of cattle at one time. There were fifty cowboys who regularly ranged around Okarche when I first came here, and I have eaten lots of beans with them. They were good boys, they always gave me a good piece of beef. There were some deer, but I was never fortunate enough to kill one of them. There were lots of prairie chickens; I have seen them in bunches of thousands. There were lots of rattlesnakes, also; I have killed many of them. One time the country was burned over, and in a distance of one mile I killed eighteen of these rattlesnakes, shooting them with a shotgun. The cowboys tried to get me to let the rattlesnakes alone, as they were sure that I would get bitten by them. The rattlesnakes have a habit of crawling into their hole and leaving their tail stick out far enough to be in plain view; they

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could turn and their head will be close where their tail is, and ready to strike. If you did not know this habit, you might think that he was safely in his hole, with only his tail in evidence, and do something foolhardy about it.

I was in El Reno when they were laying out the lots and I could have had the lot on which the Kerfoot Hotel now stands for \$75.00 but I did not have the money to invest.

I improved my farm until I eventually had a five roomed house, a barn, a granary, chicken house, etc. My family lived on our claim for thirty-three years. During this time, my wife and I became the parents of six children, five boys and one girl. By hard work and good management, we became wealthy land owners. I own four other farms besides my original claim, I also own a home in Okarche. With my family, I moved to Okarche about 1923, and have since been living the life of a retired farmer. I have four sons living and they are farming my land, carrying on where I left off. We still have some furniture; chairs, tables, dishes, etc., that we had when we first came to Oklahoma. My wife is still living, and we are now living happily together in Okarche, while the children farm.