

SHEETS, ANNA STAFFORD

INTERVIEW

#4273

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

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Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora Lorrin

This report made on (date) June 4, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Anna Stafford Sheets

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 226 North K Street

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 3 Year 1868

5. Place of birth In the State of Iowa, on a farm.

6. Name of Father Morgan Stafford Place of birth Indiana, 1837

Other information about father Died in El Reno in 1903.

7. Name of Mother Mrs. Katherine Schmidt Stafford Place of birth Berlin, Germany

Other information about mother Died in 1923.

Note: or oral 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 16.

Mrs. Anna Stafford Sheets of 226 North K Street, El Reno, Oklahoma, was born to Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Stafford, on August 3rd, 1868, on a farm in the state of Iowa. She is one of ten children born to this couple. Her father, Mr. Morgan Stafford, was born in Indiana in 1837, and died in El Reno, in 1903 and is buried at Oak Chapel Cemetery, near his claim. Her mother, Mrs. Katherine Schmidt Stafford, was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1842, later coming to the United States. She and Mr. Stafford were married in Iowa, in February, 1856. She died in 1923 and is also buried in the Oak Chapel Cemetery.

Mrs. Sheets' parents moved from Iowa to Wichita, Kansas, in 1871, and moved from there to the western part of Kansas to the town of Ashland, in 1884. From there they came to Oklahoma, in 1889, coming for the first run.

Mr. Charles Sheets, an only child, was born to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Sheets, in Iowa, on the 20th of March, 1859. His father, Mr. Edwin W. Sheets, was born in Cain County, Illinois, in 1840. His mother, Sarah A. Olmstead Sheets, was born in Panama, New York, in 1834. They were married in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1858. They left Iowa, in 1884, and went to No Man's Land, which is now the Roshandle of Oklahoma.

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Mrs. Anna Stafford Sheets went with her father and family to No Man's Land to attend a quarterly meeting that was going on at Fairview. Mr. Sheets said Fairview wasn't much of a place, just cowboy country, but they were also looking for a claim. Mrs. Sheets met her future husband in No Man's Land at Fairview, in February, 1889. This country in Canadian County opened up and they ^{the Staffords} came on down here, with their seven children.

They came with an ox team, two wagons with one wagon trailing on behind. They were eleven days on the road. One day the ox team took a notion to run into a pond of water they were passing, as they had driven them until twelve o'clock at night, and they were very thirsty. The oxen were uncontrollable, and they just ran into the pond, wagon and all. They had a time getting the wagon out of the pond.

The night before the opening they traveled until midnight or until the moon went down. They got up at four o'clock and started again, so as to make it to the line. They arrived at, or almost to, the line at the opening, April 22nd, 1889. They came right on in to Kingfisher and staked lots, her father, her sister, and herself. They

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were fortunate to get lots that were on corners, and pitched their tent in the center and made their beds so that each slept on his own lot. They then put up a sign "Washing done, and bread for sale," and were kept very busy for several days with both jobs. They carried their water from John's Creek, about a half mile, in buckets by hand, up hill. After they got started, her father started freighting for a druggist named Wickmiller, and others. They rented a house from a Mr. Divers, a house twenty feet by twenty-four feet, with the boards up and down, and started the Home Restaurant, in Kingfisher. This ran until November, 1889.

In May, also in 1889, they located on a claim nine miles northeast of El Reno, filed on it, and moved on the homestead on the first day of December. They first lived in a tent, and then Mrs. Sheets helped to dig a dugout. The dugout was built and a log house built right over it. It was fourteen by thirty feet, covered with a tar roof and had a porch in front. The house faced east, and a sod hen-house was just north of it, with quite a large persimmon grove to the north and a bit east of the house. An old fashioned dug well with an old fashioned oaken bucket was

in the front yard and to the north a bit.

Mr. Sheets and Anna Stafford corresponded after they met in No Man's Land, and after she left out there, he followed her down here and they were married on December the 25th, 1889. They now have four boys and one girl. The first boy, Edwin R. Sheets, was born a mile north of old Reno City. They went to live in Reno City just when it had started to move. Mr. Sheets was freighting at the time and when he'd come home Mrs. Sheets would inform him that they had to move; they would find another house and move. This happened exactly thirteen times in one month. She states that they actually moved that many times in a month. Mrs. Sheets' father was running a grocery store in Reno City then. Her husband freighted until 1891 and then rented a farm from a Mrs. Hubbard of Reno City, one mile north of Reno City. They moved up there and their son, Edwin, was born there in July, 1891. That fall his father moved his store to El Reno. The family also moved to El Reno and was there when it opened. It seems that Tom Jensen, Major Foreman, and Cap Wilson of Fort Reno were the original founders. It was not a government

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townsite. At first they had just "squatter's rights." Finally the Government took it over and there was a run for lots. Mr. Sheets got the lots that the big Sanatorium now stands on, and he sold them to another man for five dollars each. They lived in El Reno until 1892, when the Cheyenne and Arapaho country opened. Mr. Sheets and her father both made the run, her husband getting a claim eight miles west of here, and they built a little house 14 by 15, dug a well, and lived there until 1903. They lived close to Fort Reno and often heard the bugle blowing. They remember the issue pens north of the Fort.

One of their recreations was singing at the neighbors houses on Sunday afternoon. The first Sunday School was held at a neighbor's house. Mr. Sheets and his father helped haul the lumber from El Reno to build their first church, in that neighborhood. It was the Red Rock Church, and the first Sunday School convention that was held was at Red Rock Church.

Mrs. Sheets' father was the first assessor of the Maple Township, also, first assessor for the Caddo Indians.

He would often take his grandson, Edwin, with him to make assessments. Edwin was named after his grandfather.

His mother would fix the little chap an assessor's badge like his grandfather had and he would feel that he was as important an assessor as his grandfather.

Edwin was the very first patient that Dr. Hatchett attended after he came to El Reno. He had a case of pneumonia.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Stafford continued by saying he stopped with the Caddo Indians one day and they wanted him to eat dinner with them. He looked into the pot to see the food that was cooking and it was puppies. He told them that he had already had his dinner. He camped several times at Caddo Jake's place down on the South Canadian River about eight miles southwest of El Reno. Caddo Jake was a "squaw man."

All of Mrs. Sheets' children were born in Canadian County but no two in the same house. All five of them live in El Reno at the present time. In 1912, they moved to Nowata and were gone for almost two years, then came back. When the Cheyenne and Arapaho country opened Mr. Charles E. Sheets and his father made the first track on

the road that is Highway 66 now. The Fort road was out that way but it angled off across the country and they made their track straight, as straight as they could make it. They stayed on this farm west of town until the boys were married and in 1926 they bought the place at 226 North K Street, where they are living now.

Mrs. Sheets has seen three runs; one in 1889, a gun was fired at noon and people with ox teams, horses, wagons, and on foot made the run. Mrs. Sheets served lunches at the Kickapoo Run and when the Cheyenne and Arapaho country opened she stood on the Rock Island Railroad and watched when the gun was fired. The most exciting thing that happened was an ox team that was left so far behind that it was laughable.

DIARY

of Mrs. Sheets trip to Oklahoma in 1889, day by day.

1st day.

Our trip to Oklahoma, the first day. April 10th we were to start to Oklahoma, but it was raining. Mollie and Charley and the boys came over to bid us goodbye, but it didn't quit raining, so we went to Mary's in the rain. Charley took the wagon and family. Pa drove the cattle,

and we all walked up from Antelope. We got through safe, and Mollie and Anna got dinner in the kitchen, while the water was streaming in; they also got supper. Night came and bedtime on hand, so we commenced making beds, until the floor was covered. As the saying goes, we were so thick, you could stir us with a stick. We all slept soundly until daylight, then we began one by one to dress and get ready for breakfast.

As it was clear, we began to make another attempt to start for Oklahoma. Charley hitched his team to our load, and gave us another start for "The land of promise." We went through his pasture, with his family and ours making thirteen in all following in a string. We got to Antelope again, where we met one of our neighbors. He helped us across, and sent us on our way rejoicing. Charley took us down to Mr. Murray's, there we trailed our wagon behind Mr. Murry's wagon and hitched the two yoke of oxen up and bid all goodbye. This was a sad thing to do, for to leave a brother and sister and nephews behind, from whom we had never before been separated, is hard.

We went on till we came to Antelope (must be a creek, she does not say) again. There we got stuck, and had to drop one wagon, and pull out, then we went back and got the

rest, and went on to "Kiger Creek," where we got dinner. We started with one wagon at a time across the creek, and then went till we struck the lake. There we got stuck and had to go single file across, then doubled and went on to "Sand Creek." We dropped a wagon and pulled across one at a time, then we doubled and went on to "Rattlesnake"; put on brakes and went down flying, got stuck going up and had a long siege getting there. Finally succeeded with all hands at the wheels and two good whippers, went down the next hollow and something over to reach the top, went on then. By sundown we had reached Mr. Christian's, there we camped for the night. Pitched our tent, got supper, ate, and retired for the night. About half past one o'clock we were awakened by a man hollering that one yoke of our oxen was gone, headed west. They reached "Sand Creek" before Mr. Murry overtook them, but he got there just the same.

2nd day.

We got up at daylight, got breakfast, did our dishes, loaded our bedding and tent, yoked up, and started up hill. We got stalled but by hollering and pushing we succeeded in going and came to Ashland.

Ashland at nine in the morning, got our provisions and went on, reached "Bear Creek" for dinner. We built a fire,

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made our coffee, ate our lunch, got our teams and started. We had good luck, only got stuck twice. Ma rode the pony and Mr. Murry rode his ox. Got to "Sand Creek" then camped, pitched our tents and got supper. Such a place, sand burrs, cockle burrs, and sand. We upset our tea, and got the coffee too hot, but we got our supper and dishes done and beds made and cattle staked, then we were all ready for bed.

3rd day.

Got up at daylight, Ma began to ask if we heard the coyotes hollering and told us to just look -- the birds had nearly been in our tent, after crumbs. Got breakfast with Mr. Murry frying the eggs, and Pa boiling the coffee, and then all was ready. Loaded up, and yoked up and started on our way. Crossed "Sand Creek" all right, one wagon at a time, then crossed the Cimarron all right except Mr. Murry swore and George fell in the river.

Overtook the "Lost City" outfit on this side, drove together for five or six miles, then George ran a snag in his foot. We went on until about one and a half miles off of Snake Creek we got stalled. With good whipping

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and loud hollering we pulled up, then on to Snake Creek for dinner; boiled coffee and ate, then did our washing and greased our wagons and rested awhile. Then started on, got along fine; no bad luck at all, and for a little excitement Mr. Murry and Anna saw a wolf. We camped at Buffalo Springs for supper, then yoked up and started for a night drive. Drove all night, till we started up a sand hill and got stuck. Worked there for two hours, but had to back the wagon out and go around and came very near upsetting the wagon with all the children in it. Mr. Murry swore, and Ma hollered, but got out all safe, drove on to Buffalo Creek and camped for the night. Pitched our tent and all hands ready for bed at midnight.

4th day.

Got up at daylight (cold and cloudy) got breakfast, boiled coffee and eggs, and ate. Loaded up, yoked the oxen, and started out. Got stuck the first thing, dropped one wagon and pulled out and went on to Buffalo. Started in, got one wagon in the water and stuck again. One yoke of oxen got loose and started on, but Pa soon overtook them. Then we had to drop one wagon and pull out and up hill; go back and get the other wagon and go through the

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same performance again, wading water. We went four or five miles and got stalled, dropped one wagon and pulled up. All had to walk, but got all straight again and then on to Bow Creek. Dropped the hind wagon and pulled out, all walked up hill and camped for dinner. Two hours rest, then started and got stuck the first thing. Uncoupled and with good whipping succeeded in getting through but the next hill we had the same thing over again. Another such incident in about three miles more; our cows gave out, so we staked for the day, which was Sunday. We built a fire, and boiled some corn and Anna and Bell went out and gathered some lettuce for supper. About half past four Mr. Shaw overtook us and we all camped together. Got supper, pitched our tents, did our washing, set around camp awhile, and then went to bed.

5th day.

Got up early, got breakfast, made hardtacks, and ate. Then scraped up an extra team and led our cattle, and started on, Mr. Murry in the lead. We went on to Sand Creek and the hind wagon got stalled in the creek. We dropped all the livestock and pulled out, had to double again up

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the hill. Went on until within about eight miles of Supply and camped for dinner. We had to carry water a quarter of a mile. After dinner I wrote to Mary and family. Then we hitched up and started and got along all right until we came to the Devil's Gap and Devil's Luck. We all got out and walked across and it seemed quite scary. Lots of crawdads. We got through all right then, till we came to the reservation. Couldn't get through the gate, so Charley got on his pony and went to Supply, to get a permit. We were able to get through all right but too late to drive on through, so camped at the springs, two and one-half miles out of Supply. This was the nicest place in the land, and had plenty of wood and good water. We baked biscuits for two or three meals, had lots of company, sang songs, had a good time generally. About nine o'clock all went to bed and slept well except when the oxen came up and woke several up. We thought they might be Indians.

6th day.

Got up early, had breakfast. There were ten wagons in camp by morning and with all the whistling and singing

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around, it was like a camp meeting. Mr. Murry and Mr. Shaw had to go nearly a mile after the stock. We were then ready and pulled out, Charley in the lead. We got through Supply all right. The men went and registered and told them where we were going. Saw lots of Indians. We got through the Creek except Pa, and he got stuck in Beaver and Wolf Creeks, but got out all right with help. Went on then. In Woodward, for dinner about twelve. Had to wait a half an hour for Mr. Murry to come up with our grub box, then ate dinner.

A drove of horses and Indians went by and Sophia tried to see them and fell out of the wagon with her boy in her arms. Got ready and started on, went all right till we came to the North Canadian. There we had to double for about one and a half miles, as the sand was so bad. Bell rode the mule and drove, and Anna and Adda and Berta rode way up on high boxes. Went on then to Spring Creek, and camped for the night. We got supper, Mr. Murry and Mr. Stafford didn't get in camp for one and a half hours after the rest. We had lots of sand burrs, and company, made wild sage tea for the crowd. Mr. Shaw

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fell over in the water bucket and got all wet, then we went to bed.

7th day.

Got up at the usual time. Baked bread, fried eggs, and ate. Loaded up, then started on and had to double again up hill, went on to Woodward. We got in at eight thirty and stopped until after dinner. Baked some bread, then loaded up and bid goodbye which was hard for we had to leave a sister and brother and nephews again, went on two miles and watered the animals. We went on eleven miles from Woodward and camped in the sand hills for the night. Had a rabbit for supper and the children had a big time roasting peanuts.

8th day.

Got up, started early and got along fine. Stopped at Persimmon Creek for dinner; made corn bread and gravy. Then went on and made a good drive.