

STANDARD, BERTA FARNHAM

INTERVIEW

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

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora LorrinThis report made on (date) May 31 19371. Name Mrs. Berta Farnham Standard2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) 711 South Foster.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November. Day 19. Year 1875.5. Place of birth Binghamton, New York.6. Name of Father Albert A. Farnham Place of birth Vermont.Other information about father Died in the Spring of 1898.7. Name of Mother Hannah Elizabeth Farnham Place of birth Ashtabula County, Ohio.Other information about mother Died in the Spring of 1904.Her maiden name was Hannah Elizabeth Parker.

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 7.

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Lora Lorrin,  
Field Worker.  
May 31, 1937

An Interview with Mrs. Berta Farnham  
Standard. El Reno, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Berta Farnham Standard was born in Binghamton,  
New York State, November 19, 1875.

Her father, Albert A. Farnham, was a contractor and  
architect and did some work in Philadelphia and also in  
Camden, New Jersey. They came directly from Camden, New  
Jersey, to Emporia, Kansas, in 1879.

Her mother was born in Ashtabula County, Ohio, and  
her people were originally from Connecticut.

Mrs. Standard is one of six children born to Mr. and  
Mrs. Albert A. Farnham, all girls.

The family came to El Reno in 1889, but did not all  
arrive at the same time. They lived, at the time, in  
Emporia, Kansas, and before starting south Mr. Farnham  
built two small, one-room houses, loaded them on his wagon  
and drove through to Guthrie and lived in them while he was  
there. He was there for the run, though he did not partici-  
pate in it.

He brought his little houses with him to El Reno when  
he came here. These houses were arranged quite handy, the  
beds were hinged to the walls and the bedding was strapped  
on. In the day time the beds were pulled back up against  
the wall out of the way.

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The family occupied these little houses for three years. The location was about where the Benson Funeral Home is now located, at the corner of Barker and Woodson Streets.

Their first furniture was home made; chairs were benches made from lumber. They used this furniture until ~~a furniture store was put in operation.~~

Mr. Albert A. Farnham was the very first Mayor of El Reno, and the first articles of incorporation were written up by him in his own handwriting. Mrs. Standard states that the document is still in the possession of the family.

Being a contractor and architect, he built several large buildings at Darlington and also at Fort Reno. He also has some bridge building to his credit. They came country, as did so many other people, here because they considered the as a "land of promise". They had been up in Nebraska and western Kansas and there had been a drouth up that way, and as this country looked like a good place for new business and new opportunities, they came looking for them. Her father filed on a claim (Cheyenne and Arapaho), though he was not a farmer.

Mrs. Standard arrived here on her fourteenth birthday, November 19, 1889, her parents having arrived here before she did. She came with an Uncle, and older sister to

Oklahoma City. Her father met them there with a covered wagon and brought them to El Reno, as there was no train into El Reno at that time.

Her father moved the big Caddo Hotel from Reno City to El Reno.

The thing that impressed her most about the Indians in those early days was their curiosity. They would peek in the windows of houses and when they came calling would just walk right in without knocking. They were friendly, would shake hands and say "How!" They would nearly always want beef and they called it WO-HAW.

There was an old blind Indian who had two squaws, who called on them sometimes. A squaw would be on either side of him guiding him. They would shake hands sit down and, though they were very friendly, they did not say much. They nearly always wanted something to eat and called it "chuckaway".

In 1890 Mrs. Standard went on a two day Sunday School picnic. They were supposed to be fishing but the biggest fish they caught was about four inches long. They camped near the home of a Mrs. Pickle and slept in her house at night. She remembers the names of a few that were with them. Among them are B. D. Tinklepaugh, Alma Russell, Mamie Grant and Shirley Chapman (a boy who worked for a local paper).

She remembers that there was a grocery store in 1889, where the Anstine Hotel was later built and is still located. It was the first place she went after she got to El Reno. Her mother sent her there for some groceries. A livery stable was somewhere about where the Wilson Funeral Home is now located. The houses were scattered and there were not many.

She remembers the old Jensen homestead, as she chummed with Nellie Jensen. Miss Nellie Jensen was the first person to graduate from the El Reno school.

The first school in El Reno was a subscription school, held in a store building. This store building was also used for church services when needed. It was located about where the Royal Theatre now stands.

One of Mrs. Standard amusing experiences happened because of the Jensen twins. The Jensens had a pair of twin boys, Tom and Frank. They boys had a beautiful cream colored pony, that they used to carry messages back and forth to town. Berta Farnham wanted to ride the pony and the boys were very obliging. She did not know how to ride, but wanted to learn. She got on the horse, he ducked his head and arched his back, and she went over his head onto the ground. She was not hurt

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but she lost her ambition to ride for the time being. Later she learned to ride but never became proficient at it. One of her sisters was an excellent rider. Mrs. Standard says that she has seen her many times galloping with her long hair streaming straight out behind.

Their water supply was the town pump, and wood was their fuel. It was very hard for them to get milk when they came here. They had to depend on the canned variety, and in those days the canned milk left much to be desired. It was not nearly as good as it is now. Later they were able to get milk at the Jensen homestead.

It was so warm in 1889 that flowers bloomed at Christmas, phlox and other kinds that were not supposed to bloom at that time of year.

Mrs. Standard taught one term at a school called "Lovely Valley" in 1892. It was located southwest of El Reno. She then taught the Mennonite school, north of El Reno, and taught another up near Okarche called the "Columbia School". She met her future husband, Roy Standard, while teaching at this school and they were married, November 15, 1899.

Groceries and other supplies had to be brought in by freight, overland. One pathetic incident she remembers was this. The Ladies Aid made some dresses for two motherless little girls, four and six years of age, who kept house for

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their father in a dug-out, located on what is now South Bickford Street. "We went to see them on Christmas morning, found them alone, they had broken a china plate and had tried to mend it with dough, and had placed it out in the sun to dry."

Mr. Patterson, the druggist, wore a long black beard, and sang bass in the choir. There were also a couple of soldier boys nick-named "Lee and Skee" who played a guitar and banjo for church benefits.

The young folks were obliged to make their own entertainment and one time a group of girls decided to do some serenading at the various homes. The business men were in session at the town hall, considering civic betterment, and the girls, on an impish impulse, stopped before the city hall door to sing. One of the town characters, a Mr. Fisher, had the floor and was making this patriotic speech at the moment of their arrival. "If El Reno can't shtan up for El Reno, jush let me shtan u up". He was so drunk, he was making a poor business of shtancing up. The girls broke in with a song about woman's rights, rather forward for the time, and broke up the meeting. Mr. Farnham, Mrs. Standard's father, told her later that they were glad of the interruption, under the circumstances.

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Mrs. Standard's father's people are of English descent, and she has a few family heirlooms. A very large soup tureen (English) Ironstone china, J Wedgewood, is at least a hundred years old and maybe older. A Wedgewood sugar bowl, (Pearl) Ironstone china; a large platter of Royal Ironstone china, with insignia of Lion and Unicorn, Alfred Meakin, England; a pickle dish, J. Meakin. The family also has willow platter, gray-blue, that is over a hundred years old. All of the above articles are as old as that, some of them older.

They also have in the family a silver cake stand that is about seventy-five years old and the most beautiful yellow gold bracelet that is eighty years old which looks as if it has just come out of a jewelry store. It has a bird of paradise and roses engraved and filled in with different colored gold. It is five-eighths of an inch wide, and is made hollow. There is also a solid gold brooch engraved with a wreath of English Ivy, with an Ivy Leaf in the center. It is lovely and has the name "Mary Farnham" engraved on the back of it. Mrs. Standard also has a tiny silver filigree violin, about an inch and a half long,

made into a pin, or brooch. It was brought up from old Mexico in 1880. These violin brooches are still made in Mexico but not of the same pattern.

Mrs. Standard's parents are buried at El Reno.