

STEEN, MINNIE.

INTERVIEW

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

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STEEN, MINNIE (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Mildred B. McFarland

This report made on (date) May 26, 1937.

1. Name Mrs. Minnie Steen

2. Post Office Address Edmond, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 224 E. 2d, Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 17 Year 1888

5. Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

6. Name of Father-in-law John N. Steen place of birth Hannibal, Missouri.

Other information about father Born June 27, 1859.

7. Name of Mother Cordelia Steen Place of birth Jackson County, Kansas.

Other information about mother Born Dec. 10, 1866.

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 Eight.

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McFarland, Mildred B. - Investigator.  
Indian Pioneer History-S-149.  
May 26, 1937.

Interview with Mrs. Minnie Steen  
Edmond, Oklahoma.

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My husband's father came to Oklahoma Territory in November 1887. He had been working as engineer of a pile-driver for the Santa Fe Railroad Company, in New Ingalls, New Mexico. When the company located a watering and coal-ing station for the Santa Fe trains in Edmond, they trans-ferred him here.

A well had to be dug and it was started in the Spring of 1886. It was slow work, so in the following year, 1887, they brought Mr. John N. Steen from Mexico to take charge of the construction work. For some reason the digging was not completed until May, 1888, just two years from the time it was started. When the well was finished it was thirty feet in diameter and one hundred twenty-eight feet deep. One hundred and ten carloads of rock were required for its walls. Mr. Steen built a two-roomed house in which the pump was in-stalled. When this was completed he sent for his family. My husband, Charley Steen, was then one year and ten months old. He was the first white child to live in Edmond.

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All the furniture was home-made. The beds were bunks built on to one side of the walls. They had a cook stove and a home-made table and chairs. The boiler and pump for the well was in one corner of the front room. It made the room very comfortable in winter, and in summer the beds were moved out to the yard.

The Steen family and the few men necessary for the station work were the only inhabitants of Edmond. The most interesting events were the arrival of the trains, one passenger and one freight train a day, which stopped for coal and water. It took quite a while for this and sometimes passengers got off the train to visit with Mrs. Steen and Charley.

This well and little red pump house are still there. The porch is gone and the windows are boarded up. I think the railroad company is going to tear the little house down and fill up the well soon.

Before the Opening, Edmond was the shipping outlet for cattle, and the inlet for supplies for the trading posts of the Iowa and Kickapoo Reservations. The Kickapoo Reservation was located about fifteen miles east of Edmond. The Indians brought venison and wild turkey to exchange for coffee, flour and trinkets. They would carry these things on their backs to

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the pump house and if Mr. Steen was not there and if it was after dark, they would call "Meat, Shon," meaning "Meat, John". Mrs. Steen would not answer and the Indians would wrap up in their blankets and sleep on the porch until he returned. Mrs. Steen always carried a revolver under her apron for protection. The Indians called her the "Heap Brave Squaw". To the pioneer she was the "Brave Pioneer Woman". She cooked for the train crew, as there was no restaurant then. For pastime Mrs. Steen would take Charley and wade in the buffalo wallows. These wallows were low places where the water stood and the Indians said that the buffalo would rest and cool their bodies in them before the "Big Iron Horse" came. The big water tank had a narrow ladder on its side that Mrs. Steen would climb upon to see when the Indians were coming. Mrs. Steen would cook and bake for the Indians which formed a lasting friendship.

Charley, at the age of two and one-half years, attempted to climb the water tower to look for "Indians". When his parents discovered him he was almost at the top. They were frightened to death until they got him down. After that they tied him with a short rope not far from the door to play.

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Just three months before the Opening Mr. Steen killed a large deer. It was standing where the Edmond Light and Water Plant now is. The day of the Opening was one never to be forgotten. Train loads of people came. Some were on horseback, some in wagons and some were walking. Mrs. Steen had prepared twelve large hams and plenty of bread and coffee for these hungry people, as most of them had arrived without food.

Mr. Steen worked for the Santa Fe Railroad Company until he retired and was pensioned. Charles Steen took up this work and was engineer on the same pile-driving engine that his father had used in Mexico. Charles Steen spent his life in Edmond. His health was getting poor so he gave up railroad work and was made a peace officer in 1923. He served six years at this and then was jailor for Stanley Rogers for one year. In 1929, he was made Fire Chief of Edmond and served until his death in 1934.

Mr. Steen's ancestors were Holland Dutch. Jan Steen was one of the greatest Dutch painters in the seventeenth century. His wife was the daughter of Rembrandt. Charles Steen and his daughter, Adeline Steen were very good painters.

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A newspaper picture of Edmond before the 1938 opening  
is attached to the original copy of this manuscript.-Ed.

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