

ROBERTS, CORA.

INTERVIEW

9156

445

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

446

Field Worker's name Augusta H. CusterThis report made on (date) November 12, 19371. Name Mrs. Cora Roberts2. Post Office Address Geary, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) Two miles south, one east.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year 18665. Place of birth Illinois6. Name of Father Leonard Broadstone Place of birth IndianaOther information about father Farmer7. Name of Mother Katherine Meyers Place of birth Indiana

Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_

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 6.

ROBERTS, CORA.

INTERVIEW,

9156.

Augusta H. Custer,  
Investigator,  
November 12, 1937.

Interview With Mrs. Cora Roberts,  
Geary, Oklahoma.

I lived in Kansas before this country was opened to settlement. We took up a claim and have lived here ever since except when I went to California for a few months at one time, went back to Kansas one time, and went on a trip to Illinois with my husband ten years ago for a visit.

Mr. Roberts left me and the baby in Kansas while he came to Oklahoma Territory to see if he could get some of the Government land and was gone almost three months. When he came back he said he had staked a claim but could not file on the place as there were too many ahead of him.

My husband loaded some of our furniture and farm implements, a few chickens and a team of mules in an emigrant car and shipped them to Okarche where <sup>he</sup> met me and advised me to ride on down to Darlington, a Government Indian agency, on the train.

ROBERTS, CORA.

INTERVIEW.

9156.

-2-

From there we loaded on the wagon on top of the furniture and other necessities. There were no roads; we just headed across the country. When we got to the North Canadian River it was up so high that we had to turn east and cross near El Reno as that was the only bridge across the river. The country was so rough that I had all I could do to hold onto my baby and stay on the wagon, as the load was higher than the sideboards. It took us two days to go from Darlington to the claim, and it was twelve o'clock when we got there. My arms ached and I suppose that I went to sleep, for when I awoke I did not have the baby in my arms and began to scream that he was lost. But one of the men with my husband told me not to worry that he had taken him away from me and was carrying him safely.

George Lyman filed on the place just east of us and Mrs. Lyman came with me as far as Okarche. She did not get over on their place for over a week after I got to my shack.

The first thing we did when we got to our claim was to set up a bed and get to bed as soon as possible. I

ROBERTS, CORA.

INTERVIEW.

9156.

-3-

never was any more tired in my life than the first night in the shack on the claim -- and well do I remember the second night. There was a low heavy cloud in the west and north that developed into one of the hardest rains I have ever seen. That little old shack made of boards set on end and another board over the cracks and a tar roof was not adequate to turn that rain. It just came on through the roof and ran down the wall on the inside of the room, on the west and north side. We had gone to bed and had to get up and light the lantern as the water would have broken the lamp chimney. We moved the bed clothes about from ~~here to~~ there when a new leak would spring up. The men tried to laugh and joke about the matter but it was no joke to me with my baby wet and crying; no place to get him dry and comfortable.

Then another one of my difficulties was the water. I had been able to keep my child's dresses white and clean when we were in Kansas. Here we got water out of a hole; the water was gyp and soap would curdle. The baby, seven months old, would crawl around on the dirt floor and this red dirt nearly drove me frantic. I could not wash and

ROBERTS, CORA.

INTERVIEW.

9156.

-4-

keep those dresses white. So I wrote to relatives in Kansas to send me some colored dresses and they did-- ready-made ones, which was a blessing as I had no sewing machine.

We brought canned fruit and vegetables with us and had some meat and lard. This was more than most of our first neighbors had. I remember a family named Crane; they had nothing except five children. He had filed on a claim south of us and they were forced to go to El Reno and spend the first winter where the county helped them and he could get a little work. I was always thankful that I did not have to receive help from the county.

An old bachelor taught me how to make sour dough bread. I was accustomed to making light bread and biscuit with sour milk but we were here over a year before we got a cow and did not have milk to make bread. Sour dough bread is made by letting some biscuit dough set until it sours, then add some water and soda with this, together with salt and shortening. You keep a "start" from this for your next batch of bread. Neighbors often would give

ROBERTS, CORA.

INTERVIEW.

9156.

-5-

a starter to each other so that they could have the sour dough biscuits. Many do that way with a light bread sponge or yeast.

We used to enjoy going to literary society meetings. Many of our neighbors had ox-teams and as we had mules, we could go much faster than they could. When we started out we picked up as many as we could and took them along with us.

There was a big dugout just east and a mile north of us where many of these gatherings were held. I remember one night there was a large crowd in the room and a big fire in the fireplace. Some of the small boys went outside and placed a big stone over the stove pipe and smoked us out. It did not take the men long to get those boys rounded up and keep them in the dugout.

Mr. Lyman played the violin. He also worked in a store at Okarche and he and Mrs. Lyman came back to their claim over the week-end and called it their home enough to prove upon their place, then they sold it and moved away. But when he came home he would play and we would

ROBERTS, CORA.

INTERVIEW.

9156.

-6-

have dances somewhere in the neighborhood. Everyone went and took all the children.

We had very little sickness and never needed a doctor. I remember Dr. Powell rode the longest-legged horse I ever saw and he passed by our place quite often. When the weather was extremely warm he would carry a parasol over his head, which looked odd to me. He was rather a short man and his legs did not come down under the horse as most riders legs do. One time our son was playing with a lot of little articles and among them were some pennies. He put some of them in his mouth and swallowed one. I was very frightened and thought as soon as my husband came in from his work I would have him take the boy on a mule to the doctor. But in a short time I looked down the trail and saw Dr. Powell coming toward our house. I ran out to stop him and when I told him my trouble he said not to worry that the penny would not hurt the boy. It was such a relief to know that and sure enough there were no bad effects from his unusual diet.



ROBERTS, CORA.

INTERVIEW.

9156.

-7-

When our son was old enough to go to school Mr. Roberts went with him on a pony. Richard rode a pony when he was seven. He usually came home alone, especially when the weather was nice.