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ALLARD, FRANCES GIBSON

INTERVIEW

#9007

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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 LorrinThis report made on (date) October 22, 19371. Name Mrs. Frances Gibson Custard-Allard2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) 407 West Wade Street4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 17 Year 18695. Place of birth Winterset, Iowa. on the farm6. Name of Father William E. Gibson Place of birth Ohio, 1836Other information about father Died in 19257. Name of Mother Eliza Anderson Gibson Place of birth Ohio 1840Other information about mother Married July 3rd, 1856

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,
Interviewer
October 22, 1937.

An interview with Mrs. Frances
Gibson Custard Allard.
407 West Wade St., El Reno, Okla-
homa.

Mrs. Frances (Gibson) Custard-Allard was born on a farm near Winterset, Iowa, on January 17, 1869. Her father, William E. Gibson, was born in Ohio in 1836 and died in 1925. Her mother, Eliza (Anderson) Gibson, was born in Ohio June 12, 1840. Mrs. Allard's parents were married July the 3rd, 1856. When Mrs. Allard was nine years of age, her parents sold their farm in Iowa and moved to Brown County Kansas. Her father farmed in Kansas but rented a farm instead of buying one.

There were seven children in the family, two boys and five girls. Mrs. Allard had a married sister who lived in Smith County, Kansas, and when Mrs. Allard was seventeen years old she went out to Smith County to visit her sister. She met a young man there by the name of Morris B. Custard, and married him September 21, 1887.

She and her husband lived in Smith County, Kan-

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was, one year. Smith County was very dry, drouth was the rule rather than the exception. They came to Oklahoma, reaching here March 5, 1890, hoping to get a homestead, making the trip overland in a covered wagon. There were two wagons, as her brother came at the same time and they drove through together, being about two weeks on the road.

They brought a dozen chickens with them, a gift from some of their relatives. They brought part of their household goods with them and shipped part of it. Coming across the Cherokee Strip, which at that time was unsettled except for cattle, cattlemen and Indians, they came across the largest band of Indians that they had seen on their trip about where Ponca City now stands. Some of them wore civilized apparel and others were dressed Indian style.

As we were too late to get a homestead, we settled on school land, which we really had no right to do, for at that time there was no law regarding what should be done with school land, whether it should be put up and sold to the highest bidder on forty years

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time or leased for a number of years to the highest bidder, and we also took a chance of being put off of the land by soldiers at any time.

This school land was about four miles south and two miles west of the present city of Yukon, which was not in existence at that time. There was no way at that time of leasing school land, you just squatted on it and hoped to be permitted to stay. The soldiers could come and put you off it, if you did something displeasing to them, such as cutting timber or anything else that they thought might be detrimental to the value of the property.

And so, since money was scarce and everything uncertain, how long we might be permitted to stay, our buildings were put up as cheaply as possible. Our house half dugout and half lumber, with two half windows, one in the north and one in the south, with a door in the east. Bank barn or stables (dug out of a bank) and a bank chicken house. A good dug well of water close to the house. Every little while we would hear that the soldiers were putting the settlers or squatters off the school land.

However they lived on their school land a year. By that time there was a form of school land lease in effect. The school land was to be leased to the highest bidder, giving the first settlers the first chance if he wanted to pay the price. There was no sub-leasing or sub-renting.

But she and her husband wanted some land of their own and did not want to lease the school land. They found a buyer for their improvements and took him to Guthrie and arranged for him to lease the school land and then he paid them for their improvements. The school land leased for the same amount that other land near by it leased for.

There was a certain day set for opening bids, as your bid had to be sent to the Governor at Guthrie, and on the day of opening bids they had to be there in person. Or if they had a chance to get a little something for their improvements and could fix it up with the Governor, when said party's name was called, you pushed your man up and let him sign up.

After they sold their school land improvements, they rented a farm and then on April 29, 1892, the

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Cheyenne and Arapaho country was opened and Mr. Custard made the run from Minco, and got a claim just twelve miles west of El Reno. The present Highway 66 goes right by their old home. They lived on that farm for twenty-eight years.

She was often alone on the farm and was very much afraid of the Indians. She says that though she has never run from the Indians as many of the neighbor women did, she has locked the door against them. She said that many of the pioneer women would grab their kids and go to the fields where the men were, when they saw an Indian coming.

An idiosyncrasy of hers was that she was much more afraid of the Indians that were on foot, than she was of the ones she saw coming in a wagon. The Indian trail from the Darlington Agency to the reservation went right by their house. One time her husband had gone to "Old Oklahoma" to get some feed for his horses, and left her alone with their four months old baby in her arms, and a caravan of Indians started streaming by, mostly in wagons. They were all dressed in native

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Indian attire, "Blanket Indians as they called them", the only language they spoke at that time was their own Cheyenne and Arapaho. She was so frightened, she thought her time had come.

She never got to know any of the Indians personally, but she has seen them go by her home as many as fifty, going or coming to or from the Darlington Agency. In refutation of their fears, anent the Indians, they were never harmed nor molested at any time by them. She was frightened several times when she was on that farm, but luckily each time "The big black bear turned out to be just a woolly dog."

One time she saw a crowd coming, it was so far away that she could not tell what it was. She saw something glittering in the sun and had begun to think her day had come again and when the cavalcade got close enough for her to realize what it was, she discovered that it was a six mule team hitched to a Government wagon with about fifty cavalrymen escorting it, and it was their bayonets that were doing all the glittering. There was some Indian trouble farther west somewhere and they were on their way to investigate the matter.

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Another time, there came a knock at the door. She was not alone this time, as there was a neighbor girl with her. She went to the door and there stood a very large negro. He asked her if she would tell him the numbers of her husband's farm; he had been trying to get the directions to El Reno, and no one so far would tell him and he thought he could tell by the claim numbers. She said that she had those numbers memorized and she did not need to look them up. She told him what they were. She had the broom in her hand when she opened the door and kept hold of it. He then asked to come in and warm a bit and she let him and says he filled the door. He warmed himself and then went on. The neighbor girl asked her what she intended to do if he did anything and she said she intended to hit him with the broom if he made a false move. She says that she probably could not have hurt him with it. She thinks now that everyone had been so afraid of him they would not talk long enough with him to give him the directions he was seeking.

They had a small box house, about 10x12 feet, a barn dug out of a bank and a good well of water. They

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used wood for fuel, mostly black jack and oak, getting it at first on their own place and later from the Caddo country. They had a team, an extra horse, two cows, a hog and some chickens. They raised corn and wheat and sometimes oats and cotton.

They were lucky enough never to be hailed out, but she says that they were dried out many times. She and her husband planted an orchard, but all that ever came into bearing that amounted to much were the peaches and cherries. There were wild plums in abundance and she made lots of plum butter. Their main diet was milk, butter, eggs, vegetables and home cured meats.

There were prairie chickens, quail and rabbits at that time but her husband was no hunter, so they did not get to eat many of them.

For amusements, they had their little church organizations, literary societies, Sunday school, church and picnics. The first churches that were held out there were conducted in private homes. Later they built the Red Rock Church, and after it was built the church and Sunday school was held there of course. The Sunday school was a Union Sunday school.

Near the Red Rock Church is a cemetery of the same name. Her first husband is buried there.

El Reno was their trading point and it took them at least two hours to drive that distance (12 miles) depending on whether they took a loaded lumber wagon or drove the surrey. They got their mail at El Reno at first, later the "Star Route" was established, and there was a store and post office called "Cameo" at a farmer's home. It was run by Mr. James Wallace. It was the first "inland" post office out that way and after the Star route was established, they got their mail at Cameo but still did their trading at El Reno.

They sold their farm in 1921 and moved to 1012 South Rock Island Street, in El Reno. Mr. Custard died on the 9th of December in 1925. She married Mr. Lyman Allard in 1930.