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BROOKHART, MAUD SPEER

INTERVIEW

#8780

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

Field Worker's name Robert W. Small

This report made on (date) October 1st, 1937 193

1. Name Mrs. Maud Speer Brookhart

2. Post Office Address Tonkawa, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 412 N. Main St.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 28 Year 1876

5. Place of birth Calloway County, Kentucky

6. Name of Father John T. Speer Place of birth Tennessee

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Emily Morris Speer Place of birth Kentucky

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 _____

Robert W. Small
Interviewer
October 1, 1937

Interview with Maud Speer Brookhart
412 N. Main St.,
Tonkawa, Oklahoma

Born in Calloway County, Kentucky, October 28th, 1876, Mrs. Maude Speer Brookhart moved from Kentucky to Guthrie with her father's family when she was fifteen years of age.

When the Speer family settled in Guthrie, in December, 1891, Mrs. Brookhart's mother had a boarding house on Oklahoma Avenue and her father, Mr. Speer, worked at the carpenter trade.

The likelihood that Oklahoma lands would be opened to settlement was the principal factor in determining Mr. Speer's move from Kentucky, as he was unable to buy any of the high priced land in the country where he lived.

When the Cherokee Outlet was opened to settlement Mr. Speer made the "run" from near El Reno on a horse which he had acquired for that purpose. He staked a claim one half mile north of the present site of Ceres, after which he soon moved his family onto the

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claim and they lived in a little tent until they built a sod house with a wood floor in it and a basement beneath.

Since he had no team Mr. Speer hired a mule team and wagon to move his family and household effects from Guthrie to his claim but being unable to buy feed for the one horse he had after he moved to the claim he was forced to sell it.

He was greatly handicapped in not having a team to work with on the new place but managed to get teams from some of his neighbors at intervals when their use was almost indispensable.

For some little time after moving onto the claim they had neither horse, cow, hog or chickens, but they had enough grim determination to "stick it out" some way.

Mr. Speer worked at the carpenter trade when he could find any such work to do and when he could not find that kind of work that he worked at other jobs.

A store and post office were two and a half miles distant from the Speer claim and Mrs. Brookhart walked to the store and post office every few days. The name of the post office was McKinney.

BROOKHART, MAUD SPEER.

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In the Spring of year Mr. Speer would get teams from his neighbors and put out a crop but nothing much was raised the first few years and work was so scarce that extra money to buy teams or any kind of stock was very difficult to get; it usually took all the family could make to keep something to eat and wear.

Mrs. Brookhart, then Maud Speer, had a few cheap dresses when they moved from Guthrie to the claim and she wore them all threadbare before she got any more and when she got a new dress it was of five cent calico. Her shoes were of heavy grade leather and they produced a loud squeak with every step she took until the shoes were half worn out. She wore a sailor hat or a sun-bonnet every time she stepped out of the house and when she bought material for a new bonnet and made it herself, she used the old card board splits from her old bonnet to put into the new one as card board was not plentiful or easily obtained.

Maud Speer was graduated from the Eighth Grade at Long View school when she was nineteen years of age and was then qualified to teach school, which she did the following year.

Their first Sunday School was held in Dunham's Grove on Red Rock Creek where home made seats and benches were placed beneath the trees in the shade of the grove; this place was only used during warm weather. Church services were occasionally held at some private home until school houses were built over the country and then church services and Sunday School were held in the school houses.

Maud Speer taught her first school six miles east of Pawnee in a new frame building that replaced an old sod school house. She received \$22.50 per month as wages and paid \$8.00 per month for board. She built the fire in the mornings and did her own janitor work at school. She says that she had twenty-five pupils attending school and that sixteen of them were Bohemians, who talked very broken English and that it was a very difficult job to teach them English. When she taught school her best dress was made of percale, which cost fifteen cents a yard.

Before and after Maud Speer began teaching school she was her father's principal assistant in making sorghum and one season they made 2,000 gallons of sorghum.

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They ran a custom sorghum mill and farmers for miles around would haul their sorghum cane to the Speer Mill, and have it made into sorghum on the shares; Mr. Speer charged one half for making the sorghum and usually sold the larger part of their share, which brought from .15 to .25 cents per gallon. Occasionally they would have a candy pulling party at the Speer house; the candy was made from the sorghum and usually the girls attending the party would wear ribbons in their hair which was often plaited and which hung down their backs in long strands. They invariably got their hair and ribbons well saturated with molasses candy and the boys' clothes would be sticky too, but such occasions were lots of fun to the young folks.

Mrs. Brookhart, then Maud Speer, taught school three years, from 1898 to 1901. Her boy friends often came to see her, using a two wheeled vehicle, known as a cart for conveyance.

They lived thirteen and a half miles north of Perry and seldom went that far away and when they did go they went in a farm wagon or on horseback. During the first six years they lived on the claim Mrs. Brook-

hart was never farther away from home than the town of Perry.

The first Christmas tree program she attended after they moved to the claim was given in a private home.

Pianos were unknown in the country and only a few organs were to be found; there were still fewer people who could play either piano or organ.

Their first few years on the claim were very hard and trying times and they often ground kaffir into meal on the old coffee mill and made hot cakes from the meal.

Mrs. Brookhart worked out in the hay fields or on the prairies helping her father put up hay and did lots of other outdoor work.