

FARRIS, ETTA B.

INTERVIEW

#4205

85

INDEX CARDS:

Oklahoma Territory
El Reno
Living Conditions
School Teacher

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

86

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora Lorrin, El Reno.This report made on (date) May 28, 19371. Name Miss Etta B. Farris2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) 619 South Foster.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

5. Place of birth' Born in the northeast part of Missouri.

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

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 4.

Nora Lorrin,
Field Worker.

An Interview with Miss Etta B. Farris,
619 South Foster, El Reno, Oklahoma.

Miss Etta B. Farris was born May 14, 1868.

She came to Oklahoma from Elk County, Kansas, with her father, mother and brothers, in 1891. They came in covered wagons, three wagons and three teams, and brought their belongings and furniture with them. She said that most of the hardships, or hard pioneering had occurred before they came to Oklahoma, and that from the time they arrived in Oklahoma, circumstances were very good for them.

They, or rather the father, had an acquaintance here by the name of Snow. He it was who got them in the notion of coming to this community. He also helped to locate them after they had arrived.

Her father bought the improvements and the right to a claim a few miles northeast of El Reno and then filed on it himself. The first man was just a squatter and had never filed on his claim. He was glad to sell his improvements, which consisted of a half dug-out (half underground and half on top). They only lived in this dug-out for a few weeks, as they immediately started building a three room frame house, and later they added two more rooms.

-2-

There was a good well of water on the place when they bought it and a creek of running water that meandered through the 160 acres furnished plenty of water for the stock, which consisted of the usual cattle, hogs, horse and chickens.

Their fuel supply was wood, they also burned cobs.

A few acres was already broken out when they bought the claim and they broke new ground from time to time until they had a good many acres under cultivation. They also built a large barn and granaries, fenced the land, and set out some fruit trees.

Their conveyances were two top buggies and a surrey, and these vehicles were used as long as the father was alive. Miss Etta Farris bought her first car about six years ago.

The people dressed just about as nice then as they do now, only the styles were different. She rather resents the fact that the Pioneer celebrants exaggerate the differences until they are ludicrous, stating that when you saw a man with a ten-gallon hat on, you thought he was up from Texas.

The foods, as she remembers, were about the same as now except there were not so many packaged foods; and their

-3-

butter, eggs, and milk were produced on the farm and did not have to be purchased. They usually got a higher price for their butter and eggs than the usual market price, because of the cleanliness and care they took to have their products clean and fresh. The lowest price they ever had to take for their eggs was ten cents a dozen.

Miss Farris gave the names of some of their nearest neighbors of those early days. Luther Foster was then the closest neighbor. Will Lambe and his mother and sister, Lowel Shaw and Allison Shaw, were some of their neighbors. Most of the old neighbors are dead, only one of them remaining in that neighborhood. Miss Farris' brothers were all married from the old homestead. She had four brothers.

They have always been "Church people" and the church services were held as a rule in the "Glenn Elm" school house.

Miss Farris was a school teacher, having taught school for seven years, and liked it fine. That was the first and only work she ever did aside from her own housework. She says she never spanked her pupils. She switched them sometimes, but she never had any trouble with them. The schools that she taught would average around thirty pupils

-4-

to the school, some of them had more than that and some less. The largest school she taught had forty pupils. Among the schools that she taught were "Sunnyside" "Glenn Elm" and "Rich Valley". Some of her pupils had to walk two miles to school, some only a half mile. At the close of the term they always gave a picnic dinner and also a program.

One of the pioneer customs was the Christmas tree at Christmas time and this was held at "Sunnyside School". Someone in the audience would hand out the gifts. They never had a dressed up Santa Claus while she was there. The children would recite their pieces and sing.

Because of the fact that they were in pretty good circumstances when they came down here, the differences between that time and now do not strike her as forcibly as they do many of the other pioneers. She says that "she was fortunate to live in a community where things were carried on well".

As for her contact with Indians, she states that there were not any as far as she was concerned. There was a lot of Indians, and of course she saw them whenever she came to town, but she made no friendships among them.