

FARRIS, OLMSTEAD, ALICE B. INTERVIEW 4269

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

4269

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora Lorrin, El Reno, OklahomaThis report made on (date) June 3 19371. Name Mrs. Alice Farris2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma3. Residence address (or location) 1219 E. Watts4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month Sept. Day 16 Year 18825. Place of birth Clay Center, Clay County, Kansas6. Name of Father Joel Olmstead Place of birth New YorkOther information about father Died April 5, 19167. Name of Mother Betsey Sheldon Olmstead Place of birth MassachusettsOther information about mother Died April 30, 1894Father and Mother were married Sept. 1871 at Coffeyville Kansas

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 .

Mrs. Alice B. Olmstead Farris
Pioneer and biographic

Mrs Alice B. Olmstead Farris, was born in Clay Center, Clay County, Kansas, on Sept. 16, 1882. She was one of a family of eight children, of which two only are surviving. They are, Mrs Ethel Leske, of 900 West Hayes, El Reno, and Mrs. Alice Farris. There were three boys and five girls in the family.

Her mother taught school in the city of Coffeyville, Kansas, where she met and married Mr. Joel Olmstead. He had homesteaded a claim, and a year after their marriage, they settled on a farm two miles south of Morganville, Kansas. Here four children were born to them. Three of these children died while they lived on that farm. They went to Colorado in 1882, taking the surviving child, Ethel, with them. They came back to Clay Center and Mrs. Alice B. Olmstead Farris was born. In 1863 her family moved into the city of Morganville, Kansas, as her father at that time was bookkeeper for the Morganville Milling Co. Her mother taught music, and she was also a nurse. In 1887 another daughter, Blanche, was born. Mrs Farris' mother died on April 30, 1887, having contracted typhoid fever by nursing a family with that disease. She had been a great church worker, and was also the organist at the Baptist Church. On May the 7th, 1894, Mrs Farris with her father and sisters came to live with a sister of her father, Mrs. Sarah A. Sheets, who resided eight miles straight west of El Reno..

FORT ENO

When Mrs. Farris came here Fort Reno was a regular Fort.

It had lots of soldiers and it continued until the Spanish American War. Since then it has been a remount station. At sun-up and sun-down the cannons at the Fort would be fired.

They used the firing of the salute to tell time, for sun-down and sun-up, as they were living in sight of Fort Reno.

At that time the Government would issue rations about once a month to the Indians. The place was at the government issue pens, which were north of the Fort and about a mile west of Darlington. They would kill beeves and divide them among the hundreds of Indians that would come to get the meat. Mrs.

Farris said it was a great sight to see, as they would come in covered wagons, on ponies and on foot. Every wagon had a dozen or so dogs trailing along behind. She said "I have seen the Indians take a paunch (cow's stomach), empty it, and cut it up, divide it and ^{then} they would go about eating that raw meat (tripe) just like that". There were hundreds of white people that came out of curiosity to watch them, so there was always a crowd. The squaws always carried their babies on their back in sort of beaded buckskin basket. The men would often ride lying down in the back of the wagons while the squaws did the driving.

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STAGE LINE

There was a stage line that ran from here to the western part of the state, Roger Mills County, and other western counties. She has forgotten the name of the line, or the name of the man who ran it.

FERRIES

There was a ferry at Union City crossing on the South Canadian River, and another one at Bridgeport, which was used to cross the South Canadian River. She has forgotten the name of the persons that ran them.

RANCHES

The only ^(ranch) one she knows about was out near Foss, Oklahoma, owned by a man named Thurman, as the land around El Reno was broken up into claims and farms when she came here.

ROADS

There weren't any roads to speak of, mostly trails. The best one she remembers was one that went to and through Powder Face Canyon. It was named after an Indian ^{whose} ~~name~~ name was Powder Face. This Indian got his name from the fact that he had been shot in the face and had powder marks on his face; she remembers him as a great big Indian.

BURIAL GROUNDS

There was a large burial ground on the east side of El Reno City. It was abandoned, and the people who own that land now are plowing over the graves of those that were not moved.

RAILROADS

The Rock Island line, running north and south, was here when she came. She states it went at least as far south as Fort Worth, Texas. About 1896 the Choctaw built a road into El Reno, and through to Sayre, Oklahoma. In a few years they sold out to the Rock Island Company and today it is known as the Pan-Handle division. She remembers when the first train went through Calumet. There was a crowd there and they were all glad to see it come. She remembers Calumet before there was a town there; it was only a farm, and a family by the name of Todd lived on it.

The Kerfoot Hotel was the out-standing building in those days. She saw the old Caddo Hotel when they were moving it from Reno City to El Reno. She stated that it took them three months to move it, and she saw it from time to time while the removal was in progress. There was an ice plant on Foreman Street, only it was not called Foreman at that time-it was "The Ice Plant Street".

CAMPS

The only camps she remembers were Indian Camps, at Darlington and around Fort Reno. The southwest part of Maple Township was occupied by practically nothing but Indians. Mrs. Farris had an uncle by the name of Ed Sheets, who used to make their assessments. These Indians did not have to pay

taxes but it was done to let the Government know just how much property they had. When asked about their affairs they would say, "Me no savvy". She was personally acquainted with a Cheyenne woman named Cheyenne Fan. She knew Powder Face and family, and the Indian called Big Nose and others. Big Nose was named because of his big nose; she said that undoubtedly he had the biggest nose she ever saw on a human face.

INDIAN TRAINING SCHOOLS

She remembers two-Darlington was a big Indian training school and Jaddo Springs was another, (Jaddo Springs is now called Concho). Darlington was also the Indian agency, there were large United States Commissaries there. She attended her first school at the Oaks school house located eight miles west of the Mills. It was just a one room frame building. Two or three years later she went to the only Calumet school, which was located a mile east and about a half mile south of Calumet. One of her sisters, Blanche Olmstead, was married to Mr. Elmer Brown, June 30, 1907, at Sunnyside School, nine miles northeast of El Reno. There was a big camp meeting ^{on} join. ^{on} at the time and all the countryside for miles around were there, and knew that the couple were to be married. The marriage ceremony was held in the large camp meeting tent, and when the couple

marched in from the back of the tent, Mrs. Farris played the wedding march for her sister. She said it was the hardest thing she ever did. A Rev. Hanson performed the marriage service. Because of the immense crowd that was present instead of shaking the hands with the bride and groom, as that would take too long, they just wished them joy by waving their handkerchiefs at them. Mrs. Farris said that such a fluttering of handkerchiefs, you never saw. The bride died three years later leaving two little children. Mrs. Farris made her home with her aunt, Mrs. Sarah Sheets, on the farm west of Illeno, until she went to Mr. C. W. Shaw's in Jan. 1899. She met her future husband, Mr. Harry R. Farris, at the Sunny-side School on Jan 26, 1899. She was then making her home with the Shaws, taking care of a baby, (who is now Mrs L.C. Booth of the Booth Furniture store). On December 24th, 1899, she married Mr. Harry R. Farris, at her father's home seventeen miles northeast of Illeno. Her father had married a second time on the 4th of July in 1898. Her father's farm was near a town called Reidmont. There was only a station there at that time but it was named Reidmont later. The Fort Smith and Western railroad, (now abandoned), ran through Reidmont. At the time of her marriage her husband was working in the Old Cement Mill, five miles south and two miles west of Arcene. She said that he moved to his sister's place, a mile

west of the Cement Mill. His sister still owns this claim.

She got the land in the second run of 1892, of Cheyenne and

Arapaho lands. Harry T. Farris drove the team, from which

Miss Etta Farris staked her claim. Mr. and Mrs. Farris lived

for nine years on his sister's farm and four children were born

to them there. In Jan. 1909, the family moved to El Reno and

my husband built our home on a tract at 1219 East Watts

Street. We have lived here ever since, although Mr. Farris

died Dec. 5, 1931.

MISCELLANEOUS

In 1894 I attended a big Fourth of July celebration at

Reno City. The main attraction of that event was a Merry-go-

Round driven by a team of horses but I was too proud to ride

on it. There was plenty of barreled drinks such as lemonade,

and they all used the same cup.

In 1894 Mrs. Farris' folks traded with the C.M. Buckles

store. It was a general merchandise store, having just about

everything; drygoods, groceries and notions. They sold Indian

moccasins and bead work such as pocket books, belts, belts for

gun holders, and beaded sashes to tie around blankets. They

obtained these things from the Indians and re-sold them. Kerfoot

and Crowe had a dry goods store, also. A man by the name of

Pinklepaugh had the main hardware and implement store. Fryberger

had a general store, drygoods and every thing. McCall's shoe store and the C.R. Miller drug store were in operation. The drug store is still here.

Mr C. R. Miller's wife was a Miss M. Alice Setton, and was a teacher in the Central school at one time. Miss Etta Dale was one of the first teachers. There were some frame buildings, three or four where the Central school is now, on South Rock Island. The county court house was an old frame building that was located at the corner of Lake Street and Rock Island, the southeast corner, and the old Caddo Hotel was moved to the corner just across the street, west of the court house, where a filling station is located. She remembers the building of the Sanitarium. The first Post Office was on the west side of Bickford street, in the one hundred block but she has forgotten whether it was one hundred north or south. Early in 1900 they moved the Post office to the two hundred block on the east side of Rock Island street. They moved it again back on Bickford street, in their old building and later moved to their present location. It was on Bickford street in 1894.

Mr F. F. Hensley had the first automobile, (to her knowledge). It was one of those high wheeled affairs and looked like a top buggy, (horseless). Irving School, where the drawing was held in 1901, was the first brick school house to be built. Central and Webster were built the same year, in 1909.

Her husband, Mr. Harry T. Farris, was on the first grand jury ever held in the Canadian County Court House. He was one of the men who inspected the court house from basement to dome. One of the old time characteristic events was the old camp meetings which were held from 1894 till 1907. One Mrs. Farris attended was on Grand Phillips' place, where the Red Rock church used to be. Mr Phillips donated the ground to the church and cemetery and it is located ten miles west and a half mile north of Foreman Street. This was also called the Stand Pipe Road after the water works stand pipe was put up on Choctaw and Foreman Street. This stand pipe belonged to the El Reno Water Supply Company.

They had a very large tent for the meeting to be held in and people came from far and near to attend. They brought tents, wagons, and other camping equipment, and they would camp out during the meeting, which would last two weeks and sometimes longer. These ministers would always be either Methodists or Holiness people. People would come from all over Oklahoma to these meetings to hear the first preachers in Oklahoma who were circuit preachers. They would have several places to preach within their circuit.

The farmers would raise watermelons to sell to the Indians. They would take them to the camps sometime, and also bring them

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to town. Wherever there were Indians the melons would sell like hot cakes. They sold wagon load after wagon load.

SALOONS

Saloons were open and at almost every other door on the business section, they were thicker than fleas.

Henry Schafer's Saloon

Paulson's Saloon

Hoffman's Saloon

Adam's Saloon

There was another one by the name of Buehweylor's Saloon. Schafer's saloon was located where the Safeway Grocery now stands at 201 South Bickford, Paulsons saloon was located where the Jones drygoods and notion store is now located at 121 South Bickford. These two were the only ones she could locate for me, and she said there were others whose names she had forgotten.

MISCELLANEOUS

There used to be a stone livery stable on the corner north of the present post office. A big red livery stable called The Big Red Barn was located across the street north of the Catholic Church.

The first Star mail route out of El Reno, that went west was called the Cameo. The office was located eight miles west of town in a store run by A.A. Cowden; all the neighbors called

at this place to get their mail but this route was discontinued around 1900, after the Calumet R.F.D. came in.

Her husband, Mr Harry T. Farris, who, first came here in 1889, hauled freight between Oklahoma City and Reno City in 1890, for a Mrs A.B. Davis. She ran a general store in Reno City and also kept the post office at Reno, at that time.

NATIONALITY

English on her mother's side, Scotch, Irish, and French on her father's side. Her husband's father's people came from Kentucky and his mother's people came from Ohio. He came with his folks from Howard county, Kansas, in 1889, driving down in a covered wagon.