

LORENZEN, MARY BARTH SMITH. INTERVIEW ,,9485

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BIOGRAPHY WORKS

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora Lorrin.This report made on (date) December 23, 1937.1. Name Mrs. Mary Barth Smith Lorenzen.2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) 913 Sunset Drive.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 15 Year 1876.5. Place of birth Illinois.6. Name of Father George Barth Place of birth Germany,
June 22, 1839.Other information about father Died July 16, 1894.7. Name of Mother Theresia Reintz Barth Place of birth Germany,
December 16, 1840.Other information about mother Died December 3, 1913.

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.

Nora Lorrin,
Investigator,
December 23, 1937.

An Interview With Mrs. Mary
(Barth) Smith-Lorenzen,
913 Sunset Drive, El Reno.

Mrs. Mary Barth Smith-Lorenzen was born in Illinois,
March 15, 1876.

Her father, George Barth, was born in Germany, June
22, 1839, and died July 16, 1894.

Her mother, Mrs. Thresia Reitz Barth, was born in
Germany, December 16, 1840, and died December 3rd, 1913.

Her parents were married in Germany. One son, A. C.

~~Barth, was born in Germany, September 21, 1867. He was~~
one year old when they came to America in 1868. They
settled in Illinois. There were six children, five boys
and one girl. They moved to Butler County, Nebraska,
when Mrs. Lorenzen was seven years of age. Her parents
rented a farm and lived on it for ten years. When they
came to Oklahoma, in 1893, two of the boys came through in
a covered wagon. She and her mother and the other boys
came on the train, and her father came with the stock,
furniture and implements that were shipped in a freight
car. They brought both horses and cattle, coming straight

LORENZEN, MARY BARTH SMITH.

INTERVIEW.

9485.

-2-

to El Reno and unloading at the old depot on South Choctaw street that is used as a freight depot now.

They arrived in November of 1893. Mr. Carl Berveidt had been married only a short time and he owned some improvements on a quarter section of school land, twelve miles southwest of El Reno. He sold his improvements on the school land to Mr. Barth, Mrs. Lorenzen's father.

The family lived on this farm for twenty-two years. The house was a little one room frame house with a shed kitchen and a straw barn. There was ten acres broken out and they planted it to Kaffir corn in the Spring and did not raise enough feed for two cows. They brought ten head of horses with them to Oklahoma and all of them died but one. The horses were taken sick with the blind staggers and worms as they were not used to this dry prairie hay that they had to subsist on, and died.

The whole family got out and worked, one of the boys joining the army to help out. Two of the boys went back to Nebraska, to shuck corn. Mrs. Lorenzen went to Fort Reno to work for the chaplain, whose sister lived with and kept house for him.

LORENZEN, MARY BARTH SMITH.

INTERVIEW.

9485.

-3-

not

You could buy anything "on time" at all then. The Barth family had some money when they came to Oklahoma but they had to buy horse feed and cattle feed, as well as to feed a large family and the money did not last long.

Mr. George Barth was killed in July 1894. He was hauling a load of lumber out from El Reno, with a pair of young mules, and it was supposed that they ran away with him. No one saw the accident, so they did not know just what had happened.

Her mother stayed on the farm and tried to farm it with the help of her boys. The third year her mother had the boys to break out fifty acres of ground and plant it to wheat and they raised just exactly fifty bushels of wheat, one bushel to the acre. They brought a single horse buggy with them from Nebraska, and their farm tools consisted of a walking plow, a harrow and of course a lumber wagon. In going to their farm from El Reno, they did not follow section lines but went straight across country, southwest to their home. They went to the Caddo country and got wood for fuel. If it had not been

for the abundance of wood in the Caddo country, that was free, and all people had to do was to go after it, many families would have suffered and almost starved. But when they needed money anyone could go out to the Caddo country and cut and chop a load of wood and bring it to town and sell it, usually getting 1.50 for the load.

Their main diet was meat, bread and potatoes and any vegetables that they could raise in their gardens. They raised lots of tomatoes. A neighbor family named Beard ground Kaffir corn and used it for making pan cakes. When they first came to Oklahoma it was so dry that you could hardly raise anything and the Caddo country was ablaze continually. Always someone was having to fight fires. The prairie grass was so dry that it caught fire easily.

Mrs. Lorenzen was married to Sergeant Bill Smith, September 14, 1897. She had one child, a girl, by him. He went to the Spanish-American War and was killed.

She worked in a hotel that used to be located right where the Crystal Laundry is, now at 110 North Choctaw Street. This hotel was run by a family named Fack;

LORENZEN, MARY BARTH SMITH. INTERVIEW.

9485.

-5-

they called the women "Ma Flack" and Mrs. Lorenzen worked there for three years. She also worked for a time in a laundry run by a man named Hamilton, when his laundry was located just south of the present Larman Foundry at 420 North Macomb Street.

Thousands of Indians used to camp near the Old Fort Smith and Western Depot on East Woodson Street. There were no houses there at the time. They would hold their dances there and white people would often go down there to watch them dance.

Mrs. Lorenzen has a glass cream pitcher that is sixty years old and three pickle dishes the same age. One of the pickle dishes has a picture of Minerva pressed in the glass on the bottom of the dish. She also has a black headed china doll that is sixty years old. It is quite large, and has beautiful blue eyes, rosy cheeks and black hair, and leather hands. The body was given her by a neighbor family in Illinois,

Mrs. Lorenzen's father got the head for the doll in Chicago.

She and Mr. Lorenzen were married December 22, 1915.

LORENZEN, MARY BARTH SMITH. INTERVIEW 9485

- 6 -

They have bought their supplies in El Reno ever since she first came to Oklahoma, and she has resided in and around El Reno ever since she came here in 1893.

When she came to Oklahoma there was a large corral just southeast of where their present dwelling stands, a nice home at 913 Sunset Drive.