

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

FORD, HANNAH THOMPSON. INTERVIEW. 10554.

Field Worker's name Nora L. Lorrin.

This report made on (date) April 21, 1938. 193

1. Name Hannah Thompson Ford.

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 510 East Rogers Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month January Day 31 Year 1861.

5. Place of birth Iowa.

6. Name of Father Mathias Thompson. Place of birth England, 1824.

Other information about father Died at Farley, Iowa, 1897.

7. Name of Mother Marie Ann Gooding Thompso Place of birth England, 1829

Other information about mother Died in Iowa in 1865.

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,
Investigator,
Apr. 21, 1938.

Interview With Hannah Thompson Ford,
510 East Rogers Street,
El Reno, Oklahoma.

I was born in Iowa, January 31, 1861. My father, Mathias Thompson, was born in Lincolnshire, England, in 1824 and died in 1897, at Farley, Iowa. My mother, Ann Marie Gooding Thompson, was born in England about 1829 and died in Iowa about 1865. My parents were married in England, came to the United States about 1848 and settled in Iowa where I grew to womanhood. I had one brother and two sisters but my brother died before I was born. He ^{died} while my parents were crossing the Atlantic Ocean and was buried at sea.

I was married in Dubuque, Iowa, in 1886 to James Ford and we are the parents of three children, two boys and one girl; only one of the sons is living now. My husband was a machinist and worked at his trade in Dubuque, Iowa, as long as we lived there which was about fifteen years, for we moved to the country to a farm near Storm Lake, Iowa, for awhile before coming to Oklahoma.

FORD, HANNAH THOMPSON.

INTERVIEW.

10554.

-2-

My sister took a notion to come to Oklahoma before we did and after she came to El Reno she liked it here so well that she kept writing back to us about it until we also became enthused with the idea and came.

We arrived in El Reno January 31, 1901. We came on the train and shipped our household goods. We located just two doors north of the Kerfoot Hotel, which would give our location as about 200 North Bickford.

We ran a small boarding house and it was referred to as the Ford Boarding House, though we never put up a sign with any name on it. We had a big long table down the center of the room and served the meals family style, putting everything on the table in dishes and bowls, and letting the people serve themselves. My husband had a wagonyard just across the street east of our boarding house, which made it very nice for us. When the farmers would come to the wagonyard to feed and care for their teams, they would leave the teams and their wagons in the wagonyard in the care of Mr. Ford while they did their trading and visiting about town. Then, because our boarding house was handy, the majority of people who put up their teams in the Ford Wagonyard would eat at our boarding house.

FORD, HANNAH THOMPSON.

INTERVIEW.

10554.

-3-

My husband sometimes helped me with the boarding house work, when he was not busy with his own business. Sometimes people, in remembering, get our place mixed up with the Stoneman's Livery Stable, but our business was not a livery stable and it was in the block south of "The Star Barn" as Stoneman's Livery Stable was called. It was the Star Barn that people went to to rent horses and rigs to go places, and many distinguished people and also many notorious people have patronized this livery barn. Jesse James and also Al Jennings were supposed to have used that livery stable as a place of rendezvous. Not that there was any implication that the owner had anything to do with it, it was a public place and served all comers and the Stonemans were fine people.

I had eight rooms that I rented and they were full most of the time and were crammed during the Kiowa and Comanche Drawing. The largest number of people that we ever fed in one day was one hundred and ten; that happened during the Drawing that occurred in El Reno, July, 1901.

There was a vacant lot just north of our boarding house and all during the Drawing it was full of people. They were

FORD, HANNAH THOMPSON.

INTERVIEW.

10554.

-4-

sleeping out there thick as fleas at night, and in the alleys there were cots in every available space. There was a bench in front of our building, and it was always occupied. Sometimes I would look out there at night and there would always be someone sleeping on it, and in the morning it would still be occupied but not always by the same person who had been there the night before. We fed lots of Indian men, but I do not recall that a squaw ever ate at our table, these Indians were always quiet and never caused us any trouble.

The crowd that was here during the drawing was very peaceable, not at all inclined to be fussy or quarrelsome, most of them had the time of their lives and enjoyed it. During the time of the Drawing I never had to hire any help; there were two young men who helped wait on the table and wash dishes for their meals and a place to sleep, and if we needed extra help there was always someone who was glad to do it for food.

There was no paving in El Reno then, in front of our boarding house and down Bickford Street, when it rained, the mud was at least a foot and a half deep. I believe that it

FORD, HANNAH THOMPSON.

INTERVIEW.

10554.

-5-

rained more then than it does now. We ran our little boarding house for two years, then went out on a farm. We found a farm six and a half miles west of El Reno, owned by a Mr. Lacy, and rented it and were on it for about three years, then moved to the Mattoon farm and lived on it a year and then came back to El Reno.

I started trading at Allison's Grocery Store when I first came to El Reno, during the rust of the sawing, and I have never stopped trading there. We have spent a lot of money at that store, especially during the sawing.

My husband took the children down town to see the first automobile that came to town and he and the children rode in it; the owner charged 10, a ride. I saw it but was too busy to ride in it.

I own my own house which we purchased twenty-five years ago, my husband died five years after we bought it.

I tried living with some of my people and renting my home but ten years ago I came back to it to stay. I helped to raise one of my grandchildren and often some of them are with me, other than that I live alone. About the only thing I do other than to keep my home clean is to wash and iron lace curtains and fine linen covers for my personal friends.