

FORSYTHE, SARAH (PESTER) INTERVIEW #9420 208

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

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Field Worker's name Mildred B. McFarland

This report made on (date) December 10 1938

1. Name Sarah (Pester) Forsythe

2. Post Office Address Edmond, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 32 E. Ayres St.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 18 Year 1869

5. Place of birth Audrain County, Missouri

6. Name of Father Reece W. Pester Place of birth Cole Center, Pennsylvania

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Sarah (Force) Pester Place of birth Crawford, 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 5

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Mildred B. McFarland,
Investigator,
December 10, 1937.

An Interview with Mrs. Sarah (Pester) Forsythe,
Edmond, Oklahoma.

I lived with my husband in Lenape, Kansas, at the time of the Opening of Oklahoma in 1889 and as we had a small child, fifteen months old, I stayed in Lenape with my sister-in-law when in the latter part of March, Mr. Forsythe and his brother started for Oklahoma, driving a covered wagon. They arrived at the line on April 21, 1889, and at noon the next day they left the wagon and each one rode a horse. My husband staked his claim one mile north and five miles east of Edmond on what is known as "Cow Bell Creek". His brother staked the claim next to that of my husband. They proceeded to throw up a temporary shelter on the brother's place and stayed there together, until logs could be prepared for the two houses. They worked early and late cutting down trees. After they had cut the trees down they hewed them on both sides by hand. The neighbors made a proposition to my husband, that if he would hew logs for them in exchange they would help him build his house. This he did, After the

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house was finished in October my husband sent for me, and sister-in-law, the baby and I came on the train. My baby, Robert Elmer, contracted spinal meningitis and died two months later. I felt that I had lost everything in life worth while. As there was no settled burial ground, we buried him in the yard of our home. About a year later we exhumed his body and took him back to Lenape, Kansas, and buried him beside my mother. On our way there we had to cross the Kaw River. My husband made a raft on which to take the small casket across. The river was "up" and the waters were swirling in whirlpools and the raft almost capsized in midstream. My husband was almost drowned, but by working frantically he finally made the opposite shore with the raft still intact.

We had no stove in our new home, so we built a platform about three feet high and four feet long. This was made of logs and thickly covered with earth. In the center of this the fire was built and I had a large iron "Dutch Oven" with three legs, that I place in the fire, to cook

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with. A hole was cut in the ceiling directly over the fire to let the smoke escape. I cooked this way for over a year. We fashioned our table, chairs and cupboard from dry goods boxes and made our bed from peeled poles. Our dishes consisted of tin cups and tin plates. Mr. Forsythe whittled our forks and spoons from wood. We had one knife, which ^{was} his hunting knife. My broom was made of tough long grass, fastened securely to a pole. I used this for a year. I had no coffee mill, so I put my coffee beans in a tin can and pounded them up with the handle of the hammer.

That first winter was pretty hard for we did not get the land broken up in time to plant anything. Our meat consisted of wild deer, turkey, prairie chicken and rabbits. As my husband was quite a hunter he kept the table well supplied. When he killed a deer he would dress it and hang it from a pole at the corner of the house. Often at night, the wildcats would raise quite a disturbance trying to get the fresh killed meat hanging outside.

The next spring we began to break the soil for planting.

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We had a lovely garden and I canned quite a lot of vegetables for the coming winter. There were plenty of wild grapes and sand plums. I canned these and made jelly. We dug a large shallow hole in the ground and lined it with dry grass. In this we placed cabbages, potatoes, turnips and pumpkins. We covered them with more grass and dirt and they kept fresh and nice all winter this way.

Before we had proved up on our place we sold it. The law allowed us to file on a place in the Kiowa country and Mr. Forsythe filed on a claim three miles south of Carney, and we established a nice home there, but we had to drink creek water for about six months. We then dug a hole in the ground until we struck water. We never walled the well up, but left the dirt sides. Two years later we sold this place and moved into Edmond. We have watched the Central State Teachers' College grow from the one building "Old North Tower" to what it now is.

Mr. Forsythe died in 1929, and I have had many hours to think of the happy times we spent together in establishing a

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home in the once wild country of the Indian lands. I have a son and daughter with homes of their own now who still like to listen to the tales I tell them of our experiences here in the early days.