

FREDERICK, CLARA

INTERVIEW

#4627

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

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FREDERICK, MRS. CLARA.

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Field Worker's name Anna H. Barry.

This report made on (date) June 11, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mrs. Clara Frederick.

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Route 3.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 29 Year 1878.

5. Place of birth Sega, Reno County, Kansas.

6. Name of Father Edmund Bruch. Place of birth Indiana.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Sarah Bruch. Place of birth Ohio.

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 7.

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Anna R. Barry,
Field Worker,
June 11, 1937.

An interview with Mrs. Clara Frederick,
Route 3, El Reno, Oklahoma.

I was born in Reno County, Kansas, August 29, 1878.

My mother died when I was five years old. My older sister cared for the children, taking the place of my mother, helping to keep the little family together and sending us to school.

This interview brings back memories of the days forty-four years ago, when as a girl fifteen years of age, I came by rail from Kansas to Oklahoma to live with a married sister and her husband who had staked a claim in 1892, eight miles southwest of Okarche on the Canadian County line. My train pulled into Okarche late in the evening, the best I can remember, some where near nine o'clock at night. My sister and her husband met me with a wagon and team. I can still remember this slow ride to their home, and as we drove along I kept wondering what the country looked like, and whether I would like this new country, but as the night was very dark I was unable to see very much.

The first thing when I awoke next morning I swung open the window beside me, for it was on hinges, and poked my

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head out. I could see a small barn and a newer looking building with a metal roof, several stacks of hay surrounded by a fence and a row of trees near the fence and beyond these stretched the open prairie, limitless and beautiful in the clear morning sunshine. I breathed in lungfuls of clear dry air and I really believe it made me a little light-headed.

I calmly and critically looked about our shack.

Oh that shack! That shack!

In the first place it seemed no bigger than a wagon-box. It was made of lumber and not of logs and was about twelve feet wide and fourteen feet long; it had two windows on hinges and only one door. The floor was rather rough and had a trap door leading into a small cellar where vegetables could be stored for winter use.

In the house was a little cook stove and a row of shelves served as a cupboard for holding canned goods, books, cooking utensils, gun cartridges, carpenter tools and a coal oil lamp. There was also a plain pine table, a few chairs, one rocking chair which had plainly been made by hand, and a flour barrel in one corner of the room. Outside the door was

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a wide wooden bench on which stood a big tin wash basin and a cake of soap in a sardine can that had been punched full of holes along the bottom. Above it hung a roller towel which looked a little worse for wear. and this was to be my home for years and years to come, that little cat-eyed cubby hole of a place. I sat down on an overturned washtub about twenty feet from the shack and studied it with calm and thoughtful eyes. It looked infinitely worse from the outside. The reason for this was that the board siding had first been covered with tar-paper for the sake of warmth and over this had been nailed pieces of tin of every color, size and description. Some was flattened out stove-pipe.

I went into the house, fixed my own breakfast, and all the while I was eating that meal I studied those shack-walls and made mental note of what should be changed and what should be done. I realized how different this new life must be from the old. I did something which startled me a little, something which I had not done for months. I got down on my knees and prayed to God. I asked him to give me strength to keep me from being a piker and lead me into the way of bringing happiness to this home that I was to share. Then I rolled

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up my sleeves, put on an apron, tied a face towel over my head and went to work.

I was determined to like this new home and life. I worked hard in the garden, planted a few flowers around the house, fixed a good door step, hung some curtains at the windows. I could see so many things to fix but with our limited means we didn't dare buy anything but something to eat.

After a few months on the farm I learned to ride horseback. I got acquainted with several young girls. we would go horseback riding, also would ride to Sunday School and church on Sunday; usually the crowd would go home with one of the girls to spend the rest of the day.

~~We would play baseball, marbles, go swimming, maybe make swings and go fishing. As time passed, I began to like this carefree life of the great outdoors, therefore, I thought less of our hardships, didn't notice the small house and its furnishing nearly so much. I had began to see the happy side of frontier life.~~

The first year here I started to school in a little one-room frame school building, three-fourths of a mile from my

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home. Despite all the flowers, beautiful lawns, fine schools for the children, it makes us feel sort of sorry for all the youngsters who seek fun these days, because of the cramped space they have to play in. For instance, take the lads with their marbles, they don't have marbles today that can begin to compare with the matchless beauties of forty years ago, with pretty little stripes of blue and pink that criss-crossed here and there around the little spheres; and in the matter of skipping the rope. How could any child hope to ever find the fun in jumping a flimsy old rope?

What we used to have was a long-wire like grape vine. Anxiously we school children would search the canyon for a vine of just the right kind and with pocket knives we would cut it four or five feet from the ground and then piled our ~~added weight upon the upper part to pull it from the tree-~~ top. Boy, there was fun in skipping with a dozen other laughing girls and boys through a rope like that!

And then on returning to the grape-vine stump in the woods a few days later we would often find a number of girls gathering up the fragrant clear sap that flowed specially to make a country lass' hair pretty and curly.

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I remember well the broad prairies of waving grass, with mere trails for roads.

We found the going hard, sometimes not knowing where the next meal was coming from.

My brother-in-law and other neighbor men would take their teams, go to the South Canadian River, slip in there, cut down cedar trees and make posts; they would haul these posts back to Okarche getting 5 cents each for them.

In 1896 I was married to a young man who had settled on a claim five miles southwest of Okarche, and this is where we reared our family; here I found many true friends and neighbors who proved to be neighbors in every sense of the word. Helping each other in sickness and busy times, standing by through trouble, working hard all week, and on Sunday hitching the horses to the wagon and the whole family going to church services which were usually held at a neighbor's house. In all these pioneer days we encountered nothing worse than the hardships that pioneers should expect in building new homes, towns, roads, bridges, schools and churches. Most of us went through some rather trying and painful experiences.

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I have lived to see our rude little frame shanty transformed into a comfortable farmhouse and the nearby village of Okarche, of two stores and a blacksmith shop, grow into a thriving town with paved streets, water works and brick business blocks.