

FOSTER, SARAH R

INTERVIEW
BIOGRAPHY FORM

8855

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Ida A. Merwin

This report made on (date) October 15, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Sarah R. (Deppen) Foster

2. Post Office Address Perry, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 735 Ivanhoe St.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 21 Year 1868

5. Place of birth Reading Pennsylvania

6. Name of Father Franklin Deppen Place of birth Lancaster Pennsylvania

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Emma (Gring) Deppen Place of birth Lancaster Pennsylvania

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 6

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Ida A. Merwin,
Interviewer,
October 15, 1937.

An Interview with Mrs. Sarah R. Foster,
735 Ivanhoe St., Perry, Oklahoma.

In December, 1893, I came from Kansas to Oklahoma, making the trip on the train. My husband, George Foster, Sr., in company with J.M. Taylor and others had come to Oklahoma before the opening of the Cherokee Strip. They crossed the strip of land that was to be opened for settlement and the day of the race Mr. Foster made the start from the south line, near Orlando.

He secured land on the Red Rock Creek, about ten miles west of the town of Red Rock. After he had filed on this land he returned to Kansas and made arrangements to move. He planned to ship the furniture and implements, but as he returned he drove a team and brought a camping outfit, leaving me and the children to come later.

I arrived at Red Rock, December 26, 1893. I had written Mr. Foster about three weeks previous

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to the date I expected to come, but he did not get my letter, and when I arrived he was not there to meet me. Our children were quite small, and I did not know how I could manage to find him. I did not know the number of the section where he had the land and there were no accommodations at Red Rock. Upon inquiry at the store I was advised to wait at the Section house, and he might come later, but on account of the children I could not do that. There was a man in the store who lived west of Red Rock and he said he would try to help me find him if I cared for him to. It was a cold, dreary day and a misty rain was falling. We started west and all we could do toward finding him was to inquire along the way. We crossed the creek several times and the roads were bad. I began to think we would not find him, but at last we were told there was a Foster about two miles farther west. We went on and I saw a spotted horse and recognized it as the one he brought from Kansas and had ridden in the race.

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The land he secured was claimed by several others at the time of the race, but he had bought them out and had put a wire fence around the farm. When we came to the fence the man held the wire down and I drove the team across it.

Mr. Foster seeing this done, thought "there comes a contestant with his family", and came over towards the wagon expecting to meet a contestant, but found his wife and two boys. He was living, or rather batching in a tent and we lived in this until we could get a house built.

The next day he went to Perry and bought a cook stove, and made plans to build a house. He hauled lumber from Perry and built a six room house, and we moved in it, March 1894, but did not finish the inside until the next fall. The barn was built of native lumber which was made from logs that were cut on the land and sawed at a sawmill.

A Mr. Armstrong, one of the parties who claimed the land, had made a dugout. Before Mr. Foster could deal

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with him and when he did agree to sell, it took about two hundred dollars to buy him out.

We had owned some land in Kansas which we had sold and this gave us money to buy out others, and make improvements and provide a living until a crop was raised.

The water was hauled from a spring until a well was dug, which provided plenty.

For fuel we used wood from the timber on the land.

We bought some of our supplies at the small country town of White Rock, about four miles northwest of our home, but after the town of Billings was established White Rock was moved to that townsite.

Mr. Foster usually made a trip to Perry once a week.

He bought a spring wagon and the trip was usually made in this and could be made in a day.

During the first year, we broke the sod and planted crops. I do not recall what the first crops were, but wheat was our main crop the following years.

He had been a great wheat raiser in Kansas and felt this was the best crop to raise. He also encouraged others to raise wheat, and often furnished seed wheat for those

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unable to buy. He would take a per cent of the crop for his pay.

Mr. Foster had good implements which he would moved here from Kansas, this made his farm work much easier. He also loaned machinery to the neighbors, as most of them did not have sufficient tools. We dealt in cattle quite extensively.

When bidding on school land was done, Mr. Foster was the successful bidder on two quarters and stocked them with good cattle.

In 1899, Mr. Foster was elected Sheriff of Noble County, and we moved to Perry. During his second term as sheriff we lived in the sheriff's quarters adjoining the jail. This and the jail had just been built and we were the first ones to occupy the living quarters.

During 1899-1900 he used a bicycle to make most of his official trips; he often rode seventy-five miles a day.

After two terms as sheriff he was appointed Deputy

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United States Marshal, and on completing this in 1921, became undersheriff of Noble County under Bill Ricker and was still serving at the time of his death, in 1928. While sheriff of Noble County, in the fall of 1903, he was successful in capturing Joseph (Shorty) Baker, who was wanted for the murder of Rolla Wright, and for doing this work he received a very liberal reward. During the time he served as sheriff he won the good will and confidence of the Indians. If they were needed on any occasion he would notify them to come on a certain day and they always did as he asked of them. Many times while living in the sheriff's quarters, the Indians were in our house, and there was always a friendly feeling, and many of the Otoe Indians looked upon Mr. Foster as a great friend of theirs.