

KNOX, NELLIE POLLIE.

INTERVIEW

#8993

306

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

307

KNOX, NELLIE POLLIE.

INTERVIEW.

8993.

Field Worker's name Elizabeth L. Duncan.

This report made on (date) September 10, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mrs. Nellie Pollie Knox.

2. Post Office Address Pond Creek, Box 93.

3. Residence address (or location) Three blocks east of Main Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 16 Year 1867.

5. Place of birth Albion, Michigan.

6. Name of Father Oristus Glespie Sprague Place of birth Syracuse, N. Y.

Other information about father Farmer.

7. Name of Mother Welthy Rice. Place of birth Syracuse, N.Y.

Other information about mother School teacher and housewife.

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 9.

Elizabeth L. Duncan,
Sept., 10, 1937.
Interviewer.

An Interview With Nellie Pollie
Knox, Pond Creek, Oklahoma.

Nellie Pollie Sprague was born in Albion, Michigan, April 16, 1867. Her parents moved to Columbus, Kansas, November 1, 1877, where Mr. Sprague homesteaded. They were located some fourteen miles from Columbus and there Nellie attended the Star Valley School until she graduated from the 8th grade.

Nellie was married to Mr. James G. Knox on the 24th of November, 1884. As soon as they were married they started out for Vinita. About nine o'clock they crossed the Neosho River, at McCune, Kansas. The first night was spent at Chetopa, Kansas. Chetopa was known as a homesteaders gathering place because under C. G. Carpenter's leadership a number of homesteaders came down into Oklahoma Territory. Mr. Carpenter was not the only man who lead them and the homesteaders came in from every side it seemed.

President Hayes soon issued a warning to the people to keep out and it was not long before the War Department sent troops down into the Territory to keep the homesteaders out.

KNOX, NELLIE POLLIE.

INTERVIEW.

8993.

-2-

The next day Mr. and Mrs. Knox arrived in Vinita and found that the Rains Ranch was located closer to Adair than to Vinita. The Rains Ranch was a large cattle ranch and Mr. Knox was to work on this ranch. On their way down, Mrs. Knox saw quite a number of Cherokee Indians. Not having seen any before, she was very much frightened.

They moved into a log house and Mrs. Knox stayed in the log house for a year and a half, as Mr. Knox was gone practically all the time, out riding the range; perhaps he would be at home some evenings but most of the time she was by herself. She made up her mind not to stay by herself any longer so she moved in with the Rains.

The other ranchers around were in the habit of stealing the cattle from Mr. Rains and they had range wars and sometimes they would be pretty bitter.

Mr. Rains brand mark was X-L Y. These ranchers had to have a brand of their own since that was the only way they could distinguish the cattle when they would have the roundup in the Spring. Then there would be the calves and they would have to brand them. Many cattle had their brands changed by cattle rustlers.

KNOX, NELLIE POLLIE.

INTERVIEW.

8993.

-3-

This country was new, all wide open prairie with no trees and no neighbors to visit with. Mrs. Knox found it very lonesome. They stayed a year and a half after Mrs. Knox came to live at the Rains Ranch. Then in the early spring of 1887 they left for Clinton, Missouri, where Mr. Knox's father had owned six hundred and forty acres of land. He had left this land to his son so that Mr. and Mrs. Knox thought that this land was to be their home.

In March, 1887, a daughter, Pearl, was born to Mr. and Mrs. Knox. They lived on the farm for a while then Mr. Knox sold the farm and moved to Clinton where he secured work running an engine from Clinton to Bolivar on the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad. After working on the M. K. & T. for five years, he decided to go to Colorado. Mr. Knox and his brother bought a saloon. While his brother ran the saloon Mr. Knox freighted from Canyon to Boulder and to different points in Colorado.

Mr. and Mrs. Knox lived in Canyon City for six years; Mr. Knox then heard that the Cherokee Strip was to open up to homesteaders; he brought some household things, bedding,

KNOX, NELLIE POLLIE.

INTERVIEW.

8993.

-4-

eight head of mules and six saddle horses, and he and some other men came through in a covered wagon; he also had provisions. He came down in here to look the land over to see where to locate. After looking the country over, Mr. Knox then went back to Canyon City on the train. He sold out the saloon and came back to Caldwell. He left Mrs. Knox and the three children in Canyon City until he made the race for a homestead.

When Mr. Knox came to Caldwell to register there were many fights among the people.

He stayed in line for two days before he got to register. He had no trouble in registering.

He waited five days after registering before the Opening.

The day arrived when the people prepared to make the run. The day was very hot and dusty. The dust was ankle deep and the ground was very dry as they had had no rain for quite a while. Mr. Knox had ^{a man} to drive the covered wagon which he was to follow, riding a fast Colorado roan.

The soldiers were riding back and forth trying to keep the people back until the appointed time which was

KNOX, NELLIE POLLIE.

INTERVIEW.

8993.

-5-

twelve o'clock and when the hour arrived, the soldiers fired the guns giving the signal to release the nerve-strained people. That was a mad, crazed mob.

Mr. Knox staked his claim. The southeast quarter. It took him an hour and fifteen minutes to stake it. He looked his location over, went back to look for his wagon, found it, and he came back to his homestead.

Sunday was spent in looking for the cornerstones of the place and breaking sod. The following day, which was Monday, he broke more sod and also located a spring on Wild Horse Creek which ran through the place. He dug a place out and sunk a barrel, put rock around it to hold it down.

Tuesday, Mr. Knox left bright and early for Enid to file. He had not been there longer than five or six hours before he got to file.

As soon as he filed, he started homeward as he had to build a house of some kind.

Wednesday, he went to Round Pond and got a wagon of lumber with which to build a half dugout and half frame house.

KNOX, NELLIE POLLIE.

INTERVIEW.

8993.

-6-

After building the house, he broke out more sod.

Then he went back to Canyon City, Colorado, to tell Mrs. Knox that he had things fixed so that she and the children could come on out but it was decided that she would not come out to Oklahoma until spring. James came on back so as to do what he could around the farm.

The following March, '94, Mrs. Knox and the children came out to the Territory. She bought a ticket to Pond Creek but they put her off at Round Pond. The drayman took her to Mainley and Crist's store to see where the Knox homestead was located. On their way to Pond Creek, when they came to the Salt Fork River, it was "up". Nellie asked the drayman if the river wasn't "up" too high to cross. The drayman told her that the river wasn't "up" at all as compared to other times. The children were so scared that they did not want to cross but they finally did. The water was up to the wagon box. After Mrs. Knox had inquired about the location, the drayman took her out to the homestead. When they arrived, they found James gone and the house padlocked. They broke the padlock and went in. The drayman left to go back to Round Pond.

KNOX, NELLIE POLLIE.

INTERVIEW.

8993.

-7-

Mr. Knox was kept pretty busy during the rest of the spring and summer building fence and breaking sod. That winter he went back to Canyon City to work, leaving Nellie and the children on the homestead. The days and nights were long. There was nothing but the flat prairie and they had plenty of cold weather.

In the spring of '95 Mr. Knox returned to the homestead to harvest the wheat which was pretty good. Mrs. Knox had planted a garden of sweet corn and field corn and it was the best garden that she had ever grown. The corn was the biggest corn she had seen for quite a while.

After the grain had been harvested, Mr. Knox planted wheat that fall; then he left for Colorado again to work for the winter, leaving Mrs. Knox and the children again to face the lonely winter months.

In the spring of '96, Mr. Knox built a big two room sod house, which was plastered also. The windows that he put in were wonderful. The house was warm, compared to the one he had first built.

The wheat crop was a bumper crop and it was that year that most of the farmers built homes and bought farming implements.

KNOX, NELLIE POLLIE.

INTERVIEW.

8993.

-8-

Mr. Knox built and opened up a saloon. So, Mrs. Knox decided to move into Pond Creek so as James was gone too much of the time, the farm was sold.

James ran the saloon until prohibition came in.

While James was running the saloon, a negro had been in a card game and he accused the other fellow of cheating. Then a fight started, and things kept on until the negro and the others were put out of the saloon. When they were put out, a fight was begun again outside. Then the gambler dropped his gun and Deputy Sheriff Smith saw it. He stooped to pick it up and the negro thinking he was the gambler, took his gun out and shot Smith. The people of Pond Creek grabbed the negro and some of them went for a rope. They strung him up to a telephone pole. The negro was working for John Eldridge. John went out to cut him down and some of the men in Pond Creek held a gun on him and told John Eldridge not to cut him down, that they would take him down in the morning. That was the first man to be hung in Pond Creek.

United States Deputy Marshal, Pat Murphy, came in right soon after the hanging of the negro. He was from Tennessee.

It was not long before Mr. Knox was appointed United States Deputy Marshal. He served at Pond Creek for eight years, then he was transferred to Guthrie as a guard in the Federal Prison.* He served there for quite a while, then was employed as a United States detective on the Santa Fe Railroad. He served there until he died.

* Note: (Mrs. Knox is evidently in error as to a Federal Prison being at Guthrie. She insists that Mr. Knox was a guard inside the Guthrie Federal Prison which had no cells but had a large pen and that Mr. Knox sat at one end with a table full of guns before him. Ed.)