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

Field Worker's name Mary D. Forward

This report made on (date) June 29 1937

1. Name Mrs. Ralph J. Lamb

2. Post Office Address ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Tulsa

3. Residence address (or location) 704 South Florence

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1864

5. Place of birth London, England

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

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 11

Mary D. Derward, Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History S-149
June 25, 1937

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PIONEER MISSIONARIES IN INDIAN TERRITORY
(An interview with Mrs. Ralph J. Lamb)
794 S. Florence, Tulsa, Okla.

Mrs. Ralph J. Lamb, born in London, England, in 1864, married Mr. Lamb and came to Toronto, Canada, in about 1889. While in Toronto the Lambs came in contact with a man from Indian Territory who was seeking helpers for a school he had established in Vinita. Responding to the call the Lambs set out from Toronto and not long after arrived in Indian Territory.

While her job was the less spectacular one of keeping the home fires, she yet had need for a great courage to meet a new life in a rough country, with many hardships and often perils to face, yet she says that her first impressions were of the beauty of the country.

SALARY

When we first came to Vinita we received no salary. Our only remuneration was a share in the supplies brought in to the school by the patrons. The man in charge was something of a rascal and didn't always allow us a share of what was brought in. Once when Mr. Lamb had been away

for some time our supplies got down to where we had nothing left but a few crusts. I said to my little boy, "We'll talk it over with the Lord, and we'll go among our friends and maybe something will turn up." Then we went to the home of a friend where we had lunch. After lunch we returned home still not knowing where more food was to come from. When we reached home and opened the door a fifty-pound sack of flour fell over on the floor. I was wondering where it could have come from when my little boy said, "Well, Mama, didn't we talk to God about it?" To this day I do not know where the flour came from. Soon one of the other teachers from the school came in and found us shedding tears over the flour. When we explained how desperate had been our need she saw to it that food was sent over at once. All I have ever known about the flour was that it did not come from the school supplies.

While at Vinita Mr. Lamb had studied and been ordained to preach by the Presbyterian board. From Vinita we were sent by the church to Foyil, Oklahoma, to take charge of the Presbyterian church there. Our salary for that first year in Foyil was \$150.00 together with food supplies sent in.

EARLY DAY CONVENIENCES

Our first year of two at Foyil we lived in a little one-room log cabin on the outskirts of Chelsea. The one room was quite large and we called it our four-room house. The corner where our bed stood we called our bedroom. In another corner my husband had his desk; that we called the study. The dining table was in the center of the room so we called that the dining room, while off in another corner was our cookstove which made up the kitchen.

Our water supply came from what we could catch in rain barrels. When that gave out we carried it a quarter of a mile in the washboiler hung under the cart.

When we went anywhere all of us, my husband, our two children and I, crowded into that little two-wheeled cart, with our luggage swung underneath.

PRAIRIE FIRES

Prairie fires were frequent and terrible. A great wall of flame would come rearing out of the distance, sparks flying, flames leaping ahead for forty feet. The men hauled water in barrels and fought the fire by dipping gunny sacks in the water and beating the grass with them. Once I was,

alone with the children at the cabin when a fire came rearing up from behind in the opposite direction, and almost before I realized it it had gotten in the leaves around the cabin. I shut the children inside the house and went to work beating out the fire myself with gunny sacks. When I got through I was as black as the charred and blackened leaves. I wish you might have seen and heard this charming little white-haired person telling the story, dropping her h's all over the place as she talked. Where ever did she get the courage to face such hardships?

COWBOYS AND OUTLAWS

Many times our lives were in danger in these days. While we were in Vinita we lived part of the time in the home of a farmer on the outskirts of the town. We had been conducting services each evening for about a week. One day our hest went to the spring for water and while there he heard voices. Listening intently to what was being said he learned of a plot in which my husband was to be shot and I was to be kidnaped. The plan was for five men to attend services. Three of them were to remain

by the rear door, while the other two were to seat themselves at the front, where at a given signal one was to shoot the preacher and the other to carry me off. Our host tried to prevail upon us not to go to the church that night as it would mean certain disaster for us both. But Mr. Lamb said, "Well, I'm going, anyhow," and I said, "I'm going, too."

Sure enough the meeting was just getting started when here came the five, three of them remaining by the rear door, the other two coming to the front, where one seated himself on a chair on the platform, the other seating himself directly in front of Mr. Lamb. My husband started his services by saying,

"I have heard all about what has been planned for tonight but before I am shot I want to read from the Bible what I call my life insurance chapter."

Then he read the ninetieth Psalm, the one which starts, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place for all generations." Then he talked about the chapter and how the Lord was taking care of him, and if it was not the Lord's will nothing could harm him. Then he said, "Let us pray," and while he prayed I, remembering that the Bible says also,

"Watch while ye pray," watched out of the corner of one eye, and as I watched I saw these men at the rear beckon to the two in front, and pretty soon they all trooped out without having molested anyone.

When once outside we could hear them fussing as to which one had been the traitor! They went out by a haystack and drank themselves to sleep. We never knew which gang they belonged to. I felt that I would much rather have been shot than carried off by them.

At another time I walked right into a hold-up without realizing what was going on. We were living in Red Fork at that time. Miss Sanford, one of the teachers in the mission school, and I had gone to the postoffice for the evening mail. The postoffice was in the store kept by Mr. Derman. As we went in we noticed all the men standing around, their hands on their hips with thumbs out. We stepped up to Graybill, the clerk, and asked for our mail. He said, "Go on down, there's a man there taking care of the mail." We went on back to where the proprietor and the rest of the men were lined up, with their hands at their hips in the same manner as the others. In front of them was a strange man with a Winchester in his hands, slowly

swinging it back and forth in front of him. At the same time I noticed another strange man going through the contents of a drawer. By that time I had begun to sense what was taking place. One of the men said to us, "You had better go back into the back room," and turned to the outlaw with the gun, saying, "It will be all right, won't it, for them to go back there?" The outlaw finally agreed, so we went into the back room. We were afraid to try to talk much and looked about to see if there were any possible way out, but the windows were barred with heavy iron bars. It was a good thing we couldn't get out because if we had tried the guards outside would have shot us sure.

Just about then the man with the Winchester demanded that Mr. Derman open the safe. Derman went about it very deliberately, whereupon the bandit told him to hurry up a little, saying, "You don't seem very much afraid," Derman replied, "I've met your kind before." They didn't get much money, but they carried away high-topped boots, canned goods, jackknives, and such things out of the store. When they were ready to leave they ^{marched} all the men to the back of the store, then fled while their backs were turned. I learned later that it was the Dalton gang that did this.

We often had cowboys in the church services at Red Fork, and once in a while Cherokee Bill would be with them. They would come trooping in and someone would call out, "Put up your guns and give the preacher a chance." They completely filled the little church, Miss Sanford and I being the only women there. She played the organ and I would sing to them. They, and especially Cherokee Bill, liked my little boy and always wanted him to take up the collection. They'd say, "He stands there and shakes the basket and makes us give something."

After services were over they would go out and paint the town red, riding up and down the streets yelling and firing off their six-shooters, but never harming anyone because they shot up into the air. They were not bad boys, just lonesome and out for a little excitement.

Mr. Lamb performed the marriage ceremony for Emmett Dalton, thirty years ago, he married the widow of one of the dead bandits.

We faced perils every day; not from the Indians, they were peaceful and law-abiding. They had their own courts and tried and punished offenders. It was the poor white.

trash that menaced us. They were outside the jurisdiction of the Indian courts and there were no others.

When we were at Park Hill there was firing every day and especially at night. The men who bothered us were not allowed inside the mission fence so they would conceal themselves in the woods and shrubbery, which was very thick around the mission, and then fire off their guns, the bullets often whizzing through our windows. One evening there were a hundred and fifty shots fired around us. Many a time we have had to duck when the shots began coming through the windows. We would lie on the floor without lights until they had gone.

One time we were driving home from a wedding at Tahlequah when the bullets began to whiz past us and we had to duck to escape them. At that time the nearest railroad was at Fort Gibson, with a stage between Tahlequah and Fort Gibson and there was scarcely a day that that stage wasn't held up.

Once Mr. Lamb was called to Blackjack Grove to see a sick man, as the messenger said, but someone overheard the messenger boast that he was "going to teach him something with my little pocket Bible (six-shooter)." I felt sure

it was only a trick and persuaded my husband not to go.

At Park Hill there was a full-blood Indian who followed Mr. Lamb everywhere, unknown to him, at a distance of about a quarter of a mile, simply to guard him. Almost all the Indians were devoted to us, but one day this Indian who followed my husband came upon another Indian who on some occasion had been rebuked for something and at this time was just about to heave a brick at Mr. Lamb when the first Indian caught him and told him where to head in.

The dances used to be pretty rough affairs. At one of them a girl was shot through the foot because she wouldn't dance the way the men wanted her to.

Another time Mr. Lamb was called to see a man who had been shot at a dance, the bullet passing entirely through his body so that they drew a silk handkerchief through the wound to stop the flow of blood. He didn't live long.

CUSTOMS

At the Indian funerals there was always a great deal of moaning and groaning, and dancing.

Mr. Lamb sometimes officiated at marriage ceremonies, sometimes having to speak through an interpreter. He, of

course , used the ritual of the Presbyterian church and when it came time for the Indian to make his response he would say, slowly, " I reckon."

EPIDEMICS

While we lived in Krebs an epidemic of smallpox broke out among the miners. It lasted for a month or more and my husband assisted the authorities in carrying the victims to the pest camps, but no one in our family got it.