

LILLIE, ~~IDA MAY~~, Le Grange.

INTERVIEW

#9483

118

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

LILLIE, IDA MAY (LE GRANGE). INTERVIEW.

9483.

Field Worker's name Nora Lorrin

This report made on (date) December 22, 1937.

1. Name Mrs. Ida May (Le Grange) Lillie.
2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) 714 North Choctaw Street.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 14 Year 1869.
5. Place of birth Olney Illinois.

6. Name of Father Wm. D. Le Grange Place of birth Indiana.

Other information about father Died in 1894.
Grange.

7. Name of Mother Martha (Parsons) Le Place of birth Alabama.

Other information about mother Died March 22, 1897.

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 8.

LILLIE, IDA MAY LE GRANGE. INTERVIEW.

9483.

120

Nora Lorrin,
Investigator,
December 23, 1937.

An Interview With Ida May Le
Grange Lillie, El Reno, Okla.

I was born in Olney, Illinois, October 14, 1869. My father, William D. Le Grange was born in Indiana about 1837 and died in 1894 at the age of fifty-seven years.

My mother, Martha Parsons Le Grange, was born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1844 and died March 22, 1897.

There were five children, three girls and two boys.

We came to Kansas on the train and settled on a farm near Mound City, in Linn County. The country round about Mound City was rough and rolling. My sister had married and moved out there two years previously, and she had persuaded us to come.

It was already a pretty well settled country when we came there and I lived there with my parents until I was married to Mr. Thomas K Lillie, in 1888. I was the mother of three children before we took a notion to come to Oklahoma, in 1897.

We started to Oklahoma in a covered wagon that had an over-jet, which made our outfit pretty tall. We started south following the harvesting. The children and I would

LILLIE, IDA MAY LE GRANGE. INTERVIEW.

9483.

-2-

stop in the towns, and my husband would go out and get work in the wheat fields, staying in each place until the work would run out and then going on to another place.

We were in Cottonwood Falls, Kansas, over Sunday and stopped awhile at Clearwater, Kansas. I used to get so tired riding on the wagon seat that I would crawl back on the bed with the children.

At one stop we found a crow with a broken wing. Some hunter had shot it and Mr. Lillie, thinking that it might make a nice pet for the children, picked it up and brought it to the wagon. The baby held her little fingers out to make friends with it, and the mean old crow bit them so hard that we had to force it to let go of her finger. We did not kill it but turned it loose. Before leaving Kansas, we held a sale and sold off all our furniture and stock, except our team. One of my sisters was moving also and we pooled our stock and furniture and sold it all at the same sale.

We had to cross a railroad north of the Cimarron River, on our way to Oklahoma and we tried to go under a viaduct and our over-jet and wagon top was too high and we had to back out and cut a man's barbed wire fence in order to get around the viaduct and over the railroad.

LILLIE, IDA MAY -E GRANGE.

INTERVIEW.

9483.

-3-

We went to visit my sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. S. D. Haverly, who lived out in Blaine County, close to Geary and Watonga on a claim. My brother-in-law was about ready to prove up on his claim, although there were quite a few colored people in that neighborhood, and my sister and brother-in-law were more or less dissatisfied on that account.

Neither of us liked Oklahoma when we first came and we wanted to go back to Kansas. We visited in Blaine County for two weeks and then came to El Reno. The house we occupy at the present time is located on a spot that was a wheat field when we first came here. Nearly all the buildings were frame, only a few of them being made of brick. What sidewalks there were, were made of boards and no paving at all. After we moved to El Reno, my husband got work and so did I.

I took in washing and ironing, did house cleaning and as I was a good cook, baked and sold home-made bread and pies and with Mr. Lillie's work and mine, we got along pretty well.

Our first home in El Reno, was in the northwest part of town and it was a small three roomed house. We paid

LILLIE, IDA MAY LE GRANGE.

INTERVIEW.

9483.

-4-

\$6.00 or \$7.00 a months rent for it. We had to buy water and paid 10 cents a barrel for it. A man brought it in a large tank from Caddo Springs. Our water man's name was Al Aldridge. We often got wood from the river and cut and sold some black jack wood. Black jack wood was equal to coal and it sold for \$.50 for a large load and so we often bought wood, instead of going after it, especially if we were very busy. Mr. Lillie had a large team and did lots of hauling; he hauled brick from the brick yard about two miles northwest of town for Frybergers first business building, that is located at 204 South Rickford Street. Our main food consisted of fat pork, fat side meat, potatoes, cabbage, and we made our own hominy.

We would go and gather wild plums and can them and make plum butter and plum jelly. We made so much of it that getting tired of it I took a lot of plum butter and plum jelly to the stores and traded for something else. Our children were very fond of crackers and one time I bought a large wooden box full of them. The box of crackers cost \$1.50 and they lasted a long time. Eggs

LILLIE, IDA MAY LE GRANGE.

INTERVIEW.

9483.

-5-

were about 5 cents a dozen, and a lady brought butter to us for 15 and 20 cents a pound. Flour was 75 and 80 cents for a fifty pound sack. Sugar sold twenty-one pounds for a \$1.00 and side meat was 5 cents and 6 cents a pound. The first year that we were in El Reno, we kept my sister's boy so that he could go to school; we kept him until my sister moved to town. My sister's husband gave us a big hog for taking care of the boy: when dressed it weighed over two hundred pounds.

Mr. Fryberger had a combination dry goods and grocery store and we traded with him a long time.

We also traded with a Mr. Prince.

Dr. Roberts was our family physician; he was a good doctor who was in El Reno in the early days and was a practicing physician in El Reno for a long time.

I was afraid of the Indians. I had never seen an Indian before coming to Oklahoma, and had never seen cotton growing until on our first trip South. On our way, coming down here, we kept seeing some green stuff growing and kept wondering what it was and on asking, it turned out to be cow peas. We had never seen cow peas before and did not know what they were. There were lots

LILLIE, IDA MAY LE GRANGE. INTERVIEW.

9483.

-6-

of Indians here; you could go up town any Saturday and the town would be full of them. The Indians would dance right up in the streets and we used to go up and watch them, just for amusement. Lots of people would kill rabbits and put the legs and backs down in brine, for later use.

In 1898, we went on a trip into the Indian Territory, thinking that Mr. Lillie could make some money chopping wood for fuel and selling it by the load as he was out of work at the time, but he was taken sick with malarial, or slow fever as they called it at that time. Then one of our horses died. We had just gotten through paying for a new \$60.00 sewing machine, and we had to trade it for another horse. A woman named Mrs. Smith got me a job, cooking for a college or an Indian school that was located at that time in the edge of Wagoner. There were thirty-five students here. It was a Government school and Mrs. and Mr. Lincoln were Superintendent and Manager respectively. I received \$5.00 per week and lodging and meals for myself and family. There were two buildings and we lived and did the cooking in the basement of one of the large buildings. It was a nice place to stay and

LILLIE, IDA MAY LE GRANGE.

INTERVIEW.

9483

-7-

I kept the job until school was out, and then came back to El Reno. While we were down in the Creek country, we crossed the Arkansas River on a ferry boat, paying 25 cents to get across. We have gone over toll bridges also, and usually the fee was 25 cents.

A lot of bridges were toll bridges to begin with, that is toll was collected on them until their cost was paid and then the toll was discontinued.

There were lots of snakes, tarantulas, centipedes and horned toads when we first came to Oklahoma, and we went to the cyclone cellar nearly every night or so, because of the bad wind storms. I had a brother-in-law who lived at Warner. He lost a team, wagon, and quite a bit of money in the quick sand. He drove into the river without knowing about the quick sand and his outfit sank before he could do anything about it.

We went to Arizona in 1925, selling all of our belongings here before we went; one of our children was out there then and is still there. We have five children now; two were born in Oklahoma and three before we came here. We did not like the mountains of Arizona and so

LILLIE, IDA MAY LE GRANGE.

INTERVIEW.

9483

-8-

came back to El Reno. We have a nice home at 714 North
Choctaw and both of us are still pretty well and busy.