

WHITE, NETTIE ROCKENBACH.

INTERVIEW

9167

257

BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

258

WHITE, NETTIE ROCKENBACH.

INTERVIEW.

9167

Field Worker's name Nora Lorrin

This report made on (date) November 16 1938

1. Name Mrs. Nettie Rockenbach White.

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 500 North Shephard

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month May Day 24 Year 1880

5. Place of birth Cowley County, Kansas

6. Name of Father Charles A. Rockenbach Place of birth Bowden, Germany

Other information about father Dead

7. Name of Mother Permelia Smith Place of birth Illinois

Other information about mother Dead

Notes of 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 \_\_\_\_\_

WHITE, NETTIE ROCKENBACH.

INTERVIEW.

9167.

Nora Lorrin  
Investigator  
November 16, 1937

Interview with Mrs. Nettie Rockenbach White  
500 North Shephard, El Reno, Oklahoma

I was born in Cowley County, Kansas, May 24, 1880. My father, Charles A. Rockenbach, was born in Bowden, Germany, May 8, 1846, and Mother, Permelia Smith Rockenbach, was born in Illinois March 10, 1851. My parents were married in Cowley County, Kansas, November 11, 1877, and I was nine years of age when we came to Oklahoma in 1889.

Father and a man by the name of F. H. Hall came across country in a covered wagon to Oklahoma Territory after the Run in 1889. They looked the country over and Father homesteaded a claim ten miles northeast of El Reno. He returned to his family in Kansas and came again in December with his three oldest children, leaving Mother and the younger ones to come later after the place was fixed up more comfortably. Walter, Lizzie and I came with Father in December, 1889. I was only nine years old at the time and it fell to my lot to do the cooking for the

WHITE, NETTIE ROCKENBACH.

INTERVIEW.

9167

2

bunch. We came in the covered wagon, stopping at Caldwell, Kansas, where we stayed three days visiting our grandmother (Father's mother). There was another brother in Caldwell and a man by the name of Elic Hidolph and they also came along with us. We came through the Cherokee Strip but had no trouble or adventures until we got to the Cimarron River. It was up and we were delayed on that account about five or six hours. There was only one wagon and we did not join up with a wagon train. We got to Kingfisher December 25, and landed on the homestead December 26, 1889, having camped all night in Kingfisher.

We had a small one room dugout with a fireplace and I did the cooking until Mother came in March. I learned to cook when I was four years old. As soon as we arrived, Father broke some sod and started building a sod house. There was a creek of running water on the farm and we found a spring and dug it out in order to have water to cook with. There was plenty of timber on the place and we used wood for fuel. On New Year's Day Father went hunting and killed a large buck deer. We skinned it and hung it up in a tree. It froze and we had venison all that winter.

WHITE, NETTIE ROCKENBACH. INTERVIEW. 9167

3

The first year Father planted kaffir corn and cotton and also put up a lot of prairie hay, of which we had an abundance and I rode the mule that was hitched to the Go-Devil while we were putting it up.

Deer was the only large game, but there were lots of prairie chickens and quail.

Everything was fixed up and the sod house ready to move into in March when Mother and rest of the children came. Okarche was the nearest railroad point at the time and the family came to Okarche on the train, where Father met them with the covered wagon. There were nine in the family, four girls and three boys, who came to Oklahoma. Mother arrived with a three months old baby.

About three years after I came to Oklahoma I went to Reno City to stay with a Mrs. and Mr. Ed Wellman, Mr. Wellman being a drayman hauling from Darlington to Reno City and later to El Reno. He had lots of business with the Indians and I got to know the Indian language and sign language well enough to interpret for the Indians when they came to Reno City to sell the things that the Government had issued to them. They would sell linseys,

WHITE, NETTIE ROCKENBACH.

INTERVIEW.

9167

4

ginghams, shawls, blankets, shoes, stockings, etc., for any price they could get, just to get a little spending money.

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They called me "Little white Papoose" ; they would come to the house where I stayed and get me to go with them when they went to sell their things, sometimes off the wagon on the streets and sometimes from door to door. These Indians had no business to sell the things the Government had given them but they would do it and they kept it up until the Government quit issuing clothing. It was lots of fun to go with them. I liked them and they liked me and I helped them many times. I have been to the issue pens at Darlington and have seen them issue meat to the Indians. Black Hawk, Wild Horse and Big Foot are three of the names of Indians I have known. Of the people in Reno City I remember there were Tom and Sant Richies, who ran a grocery store; a man by the name of Terrill ran a general merchandise store; a blacksmith by the name of Humbarger; a family by the name of Rugge, who had two children, Ed and Leona, and who ran an Indian relic store, selling beaded stuff and Indian stuff, moccasins, tomahawks, beaded belts and the usual

WHITE; NETTIE ROCKENBACH.

INTERVIEW.

9167

5

Indian stuff of that kind of a store; a man by the name of Norman McClain ran a saloon and the postmaster was Davis, I believe his initials were C. E.

The fourth year we were on the homestead we planted wheat and later we had a bank barn, wind mill, hen houses and granaries, the farm being pretty well improved.

Father broke sod for Truck Stansbury when he first came here to get the first cow we ever had. We raised most of our food while on the farm and had hogs, cows and chickens, and though there was a large family we did not need relief when the Government issued rations at Frisco. We had quilting bees, parties and dances, and there were a few cyclones, centipedes, snakes and coyotes. We rode in lumber wagons, buggies and two-wheeled carts, and there were more two-wheeled carts than buggies. The farm implements were hoes and a lot more walking implements than are used now. We did our trading at Frisco and Reno City. Two of the Frisco storekeepers were Coykendall and Cuttwright.

Of the Indians often four or five tribes would assemble at Darlington or Concho and would come for miles around to their pow-wows and dances, coming in wagons, on foot, in

WHITE, NETTIE ROCKENBACH.

INTERVIEW.

9167

6

spring wagons and on horseback and many an Indian has stopped at our door to ask for food or for some other reason but we were never molested by them in any way. I have sold them sweet potatoes and watermelons. They are very fond of sweet potatoes. We would hold up the five fingers of one hand when we meant 5 cents, one finger (the first) held up meant a dollar. They called their beef "Wo-Haw".

Father left the homestead in 1904 and came to El Reno to run a dairy. He delivered his milk with a five gallon can, dipping it out with a tin cup and pouring it out in pans, crocks or whatever containers his patrons set out for him to use.

I was married to W. A. White on July 29, 1901, and we came to El Reno to see the crowds when the Kiowa and Comanche Drawing was held here in 1901. I shall never forget it. We have six children, five girls and one boy. The old family homestead is still owned by the heirs and it is rented to an outsider.

Of relics, I have a small story book called "Uncle Dick's Story". It is the story of an old seaman, written by Mrs.



WHITE, NETTIE ROCKENBACH.

INTERVIEW.

9167

7

George Cupple and printed in London, Edinburgh and New York City. I also have a toy teapot and these two things were given to me by the wife of the Justice of the Peace who married my father and mother. I have a glass sugar bowl, too, that has been in the family since my parents were married and a wooden rolling pin and potato masher made by Father when he was 21 years old.