

CONSTANT, CLARK (MRS.) INTERVIEW 10459 141

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

142

CONSTANT, CLARK (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10459

Field Worker's name Amelia F. Harris

This report made on (date) April 18th. 1938

1714 N. May Ave. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

1. Name Mrs. Clark Constant

2. Post Office Address Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 2040 N 13th.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 1 Year 1875

5. Place of birth Ottawa, Iowa.

6. Name of Father T. S. Slaughter Place of birth Winchester, Ind.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Emma Slaughter Place of birth Roxbury, Mass.

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 22.

CONSTANT, CLARK (MRS.) - INTERVIEW

10459

Harris, Amelia F. - Journalist.
Indian-Pioneer History. S-149.
April 18th, 1938.

An Interview with Mrs. Clark Constant
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

My parents were married in Iowa, living there a short time before moving to Kansas, where they farmed, and where we children were born, went to school, and finished our education. Father was considered a progressive farmer but he could never seem to accumulate but very little more than what it took for us to live comfortably, and when Oklahoma was first opened to homesteaders in '89 Father wanted to come then and try for a homestead, but Mother wouldn't hear to his coming. Oklahoma was considered wild, full of outlaws and savage Indians, and she was afraid he would never return home but many of our neighbors came to Oklahoma and filed on homesteads and were not molested in any way and Mother regretted that she had interfered with Father's plans. Then, when the Kiowa-Comanche land was opened for homesteads in 1901, there were two districts, Fort Sill and El Reno, where you could register for a homestead. Father registered at Fort Sill and drew a claim twelve miles south and west of Lawton,

CONSTANT, CLARK (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10459

-2-

and several days after Father had registered, he hired a horse and rode out to look over his farm, then he returned to Kansas a very proud man. He set about winding up his affairs, selling everything on the farm but a few necessities, to start farming in Oklahoma. In that same fall he loaded up a wagon with things he had reserved and he and my oldest brother drove through to Oklahoma to make improvements, leaving Mother and the children who were at home to come later on the train.

I think you had three or four months to commute your claim and Father had but very little time left, and when he arrived at his claim, he found a family camping there ready to take the land in case Father didn't return before his time expired. This family did not cause any trouble and immediately moved. Father and Brother hauled lumber from Lawton and built a two-roomed, sixteen by eighteen feet, box house and they hauled all of their water at first from a branch that ran through the farm; later they dug a well and walled it up with rocks. Then Mother came out to Oklahoma on the Frisco train to Lawton.

CONSTANT, CLARK (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10459

-3-

Father met her there with the wagon and when they got near the farm he pointed with pride to the little shanty and said to Mother: "This is our home and no one owns it but you and me." Homestead days were filled with toil and hardships for both men and women and everybody worked to improve their farms; we lived here two years, sold out and moved back to Kansas.

I was the oldest child and was married a few months before my parents moved to Oklahoma and my husband and I remained in Kansas until the fall of 1902 when I came to Oklahoma and stayed with my parents in this two room house until my baby was born, and when he was six weeks old my husband obtained a position with the Gloyd Lumber Co. The lumber yard was on the northeast corner of Main and Broadway, and a spur of the Santa Fe railroad came across the lots where the Skirvin Hotel now stands. Oklahoma City was a boom town then; we had to wait two weeks for our house to be finished. It was located at 419 East 7th. It was almost like living in the country as modern improvements were unheard of. We used coal oil lamps, wood stoves and drew water from the well.

-4-

My husband worked for this lumber Company for four years, then we moved to McAlester where he took a position as Auditor for the T. H. Rogers Lumber Company. He kept this job for one year, then he got a position with the U. S. Dickey Clay Manufacturing Company with headquarters at Kansas City, Missouri, and he sold all the sewerage pipes for Oklahoma City, El Reno, Chickasha, and in fact for all of the larger towns. We moved to Edmond to educate and rear our children as we thought the smaller town would be better for growing children.

In 1912 my parents and Mr. Constant's parents came to live with us; his father died in 1914 and my parents died about three years later. In 1920 we moved back to Oklahoma City where my husband was active in business until 1927, when he died. My oldest son married and moved to Wewoka. I am now living with my youngest son.

My Husband's Parents.

David Clark Constant was born near Springfield, Illinois, in 1833, the year the stars fell, and he and his wife pioneered in Texas near Gainesville, where he

CONSTANT, CLARK (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10459

-5-

farmed and taught school at Pilot Grove, Texas, and was an active member of the Constitutional Convention of Texas. When the war broke out, my husband's parents, being from the North, had to flee for their lives, as the Southern people threatened to kill them. Mrs. Constant and two other women started back to Iowa. She had her guitar and a Masonic emblem which took them safely through the lines. She stopped at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and entered the hospital as a nurse and remained there until the close of the war.

Mr. Constant fled to New Orleans and worked in the Commissary there until the close of the Civil War and then went to Kansas and Mr. and Mrs. Constant taught school at Shaws Garden on King's highway. They also homesteaded land here in Kansas where they remained until 1870. They both were very religious and were staunch Presbyterians, and the United Foreign Mission Society of the Presbyterian Church prevailed upon them to accept positions as Missionary teachers to the Indians at Newoke, Indian Territory, which they did, and in this capacity they taught the Indians many things.

CONSTANT, CLARK (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10459

-6-

The missionaries really had to be versed in all trades, therefore they preached the Gospel, taught the Indians carpentry, farming and tried in many other ways to make these Indian children useful citizens. Mr. and Mrs. Constant both learned the language of the Seminole Indians and were much loved and revered by all the Indians near the school. Mr. Constant drew the picture of the world, in the history class and left the picture on the board; two or three days later the Indian Territory Mission Board visited the school and talked to the children along the lines of education and religion and they asked the children, "Who made you?" The children replied, "God"; then they asked, "Who made the world?" and one little Indian spoke up, "Why, Brother Constant he makit world". This little Indian was looking at the picture on the blackboard. Mr. and Mrs. Constant remained with the Indians for many years. Their children were born here and when my husband, Clark Constant, was born, Chief Chepko, a full blood Seminole Indian, came to visit them and wanted to adopt Clark into their tribe, but the Constants didn't understand just what constituted an adoption, and were afraid that the Sem-

CONSTANT, CLARK (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

10459

-7-

inoles might want to take their boy, so refused the golden opportunity of Clark's becoming one of them and obtaining an allotment. After remaining several years with the Indians, Mr. and Mrs. Constant returned to Kansas and later came to live with us until both died. During their work among the Seminole Indians, Mrs. Constant made a diary and I have many pictures of these Indians and many stories of their superstitions and witchcraft.

Note:

Mrs. Clement Constant of 218 West 11th Street, Wewoka, Oklahoma, is the wife of a grandson of Mr. and Mrs. David Clark Constant, and she has the grandmother's diary, written as stated above, in the 70's during her years as Missionary among the Seminoles.

Amelia F. Harris
Journalist.