

CRIPPEN, ANNIE K.

INTERVIEW

#12321

467

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

Field Worker's name Nannie Lee Burns
This report made on (date) December 2, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Annie Crippen
2. Post Office Address Wyandotte, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) _____
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 27 Year 1853
5. Place of birth Princeton, Indiana.

6. Name of Father Ebenezer Keeler Place of birth Ohio
Other information about father _____
7. Name of Mother Deborah Keeler Place of birth Virginia
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 9.

Nannie Lee Burns
Investigator
11-2-37

Interview with Mrs. Annie K. Crippen
Wyandotte, Oklahoma.

My father, Ebenezer Keeler, was born in Ohio
and my mother, Deborah Keeler, was born in Virginia.

I was born in Princeton, Indiana, August 27, 1853.

My husband, Emanuel Crippen, was born in Illinois,
April 18, 1854.

We were married in Fall River, Kansas.

I came with my parents to Kansas when I was
twenty-nine years old and the following fall I
married there. We had a very easy trip to Kansas
as my father just chartered a car and brought the
things that he would need here, including stock,
farm implements, household goods and even some
provisions.

Up until my coming to Kansas my life
had been very ordinary. I went to school when
I was growing up and between times helped with
the homework. The war had not hurt us

and it was not until after we reached Kansas, that we realized that life was different anywhere from where we had been raised.

After Marriage.

Life with my husband was different, for then we began to move from place to place trying to find a better place. I was thirty-four when we left Kansas and moved to Missouri. We were there but a few seasons when my husband decided that Arkansas offered a better opportunity so to that state we went and lived near Van Buren. It was not long until he decided that the Indian country offered a still better opportunity so we loaded our children in a covered wagon and driving our stock we came this way.

Life in the Indian Country.

First, my husband rented a small log house of one room and a shed from Mr. Carter. This place was on Sycamore Creek south of Wyandotte. Here he farmed and soon began to help at the mill on the Scrimshire place.

As the houses on the places that could be rented were so poor my husband built us a two room

frame house that he could take apart. That is, he built it in sections and these he fastened together or I might say he tied them together. So after this when we moved to a different farm he could take our house apart and move it along with us.

We brought this house with us when we came to Wyandotte and it is a part of the three room house that stands just west of the present mill. Later we added another room to it but we built this house here south of the mill and I have lived in it for more than thirty years. They tell me that the water from the Grand River Dam will cover this place and I do not know where I will go then.

When we lived in the country here when my children were small we did not have schools that were handy and there were few children of their own age whom they could see and their days were spent mostly playing around the house; they would build playhouses near the creek and would watch eagerly for their father to come from the field and when they saw him coming they would run to meet him for the pleasure of his allowing them to ride the

horses across the creek to the barn.

The Crist Mill

On the bank of beautiful Lost Creek, almost due north of the present mill that was later built by Mr. Hollingsworth, my husband built his first saw and grist mill. It was built along the bank of the creek and a long shed covered the saw and machinery. The power was furnished by a steam engine.

The demand for mining and dimension timber was so great that he had little time for grinding, so seeing that this would be a good location when the town of Wyandotte was decided on, Mr. Henry Hollingsworth decided to build a mill and give all of his time to the custom grinding and making of flour.

As this was to be a permanent building, he had to obtain permission to build the mill on Indian land. He did not build the building himself but he hired carpenters to build it and he bossed the building. He built a mill race and built a runway out over the water.

While this was being built there came some heavy rains and the water covered the floor

of the runway and one of his sons, knowing that the floor had not been laid out very far, called his father's attention to something out a distance. His father thinking that the runway had a floor and that the water was not very deep, started out towards the object of attention and walked off into the deep water and came near drowning.

W. H. Jones, who was the second post master in Wyandotte and who came to that vicinity in 1887, recalls that Mr. Hollingsworth bossed the building of the mill. That he afterwards lived in the little house still standing just west the one nearest to the mill. At first, Mr. Hollingsworth ground the meal and some little flour.

Mr. Jones also states that his brother, J. C. Jones, Uncle Jimmie as he was called by the townspeople, was Wyandotte's first blacksmith away back in the days when there was only one store in Wyandotte and that was run by Alfred Mudeater, a son-in-law of Mr. Robitaille. Lee Zane, also had a ferry across Spring River on the road to Miami. Audrains had a ferry

across Grand River west of Wyandotte, and as for roads, no work was done on them and sometimes they got so bad and the mud so deep that you would break the doubletrees trying to pull through them. You just tied the double-trees together with ropes and went on. When Mr. Jones first came to this country he farmed north of the Seneca Boarding School and remained there until he moved to Wyandotte to take charge of the post office. The building at the Hollingsworth Mill has been enlarged and modernized since it was first built and in large letters across the south end of the mill is the following, "The Hollingsworth Milling Co". At present, for the first time, the mill is not in operation but a little custom grinding and storing is being done. They have not ground and made flour there for eighteen years. My husband's sawing became so heavy and in such demand and the roads were so bad that teams with the logs from across Sycamore Creek and south would stick in the mud. They would have to stop and double teams on the big hill. All this took so much time that a team could not make more than

one trip to the mill during the day. They would come in in the morning and return in the afternoon.

Also the better timber was getting farther away so my husband decided to move his mill and he located it near the mouth of the Elk or Cowskin River.

On Cowskin River, he sawed gunstocks, walnut squares for table legs. He built a large barn here and here the stocks and the squares were kept until they were inspected and Oked. Several years ago he sold out and during the last years of his life he only farmed the little ground we had around the house here.

He sawed the lumber for our home here and for our buildings. The house referred to is a full two story house of not less than eight rooms and a large double porch on the north and a smaller one on the southwest corner.

THE FLOOD

I think in December of about 1896 it was that we had the flood here. I confuse this with the water spout or cloudburst that they had near Seneca and the

8

water came down Lost Creek and came out over our little town. This did not last long and the high water passed quickly and did little damage.

It rained every day during the flood and the water soon began to come over the creek banks and as it continued raining the water not only came from Lost Creek but began to back up from the Spring and the Neosho Rivers. It continued to rain until the water covered all of the place where the town is except a house or two in the extreme eastern part of town. When the water came into the house we took some things and camped on the hill south of town not thinking we would have to stay many days.

We packed some of the things in the lofts of our homes, things that we thought the water would damage. Among other things, I remember my two little girls bringing me their dolls and having me to place them in the loft. The water got five feet and eight inches in our house. Standing in the water, the veneer came off of the sewing machine and a sticky, dirty film was left over everything.

Every family in the bottom here had to leave home. The stock all had to be removed to

higher land and some stock was drowned. One family stayed in their home and went to the upstairs and had to be taken from the house in boats.

There were many families camped on the hill and at night you could see many camp fires. The fire-light reflecting in the water below where we could see the roofs of some of our homes in the great ocean of water was to us a dismal sight. We were compelled to stay here some time and it was only the day before Christmas that we were able to move back to our home. It was the strangest Christmas that I have ever spent; there was no Christmas for the children and we were busy trying to dry and fix our things.

Conclusion

My husband died eleven years ago last November and I have continued to live here and have kept some one here in the house with me. At present, my daughter, Mrs. Risner, and my nieces are with me.