

COX, MARY ELIZABETH

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Augusta H. Custer, Investigator,
October 23, 1937.

Interview with Mary Elizabeth Cox.
Geary, Oklahoma.

I was born August 1, 1856, in Richland County, Illinois.

My husband, George Cox, and I went from Illinois to Kansas in 1880, but on November 13, 1893, Mr. Cox chartered a car to move to Oklahoma. We loaded our four horses and five head of cows and calves in one end of the car and our household goods, farm implements and our dog in the other end of the car. The two children and I came on the passenger train. We landed at El Reno, unpacked and went to the bank of the North Canadian River, where we camped all night.

Three relatives and neighbors came to El Reno to meet us, Will and Henry Frazee and Bob Smith. They helped us move our things. This camping out was a new experience to me. I had never slept out under the stars before and while we were camped a "norther" came up and blew and snowed some. We had our wagon-sheet over the load and had to make our bed down on the ground and keep the covers on as best we could. There was plenty of wood but the wind blew so that the smoke and flames were worse than to try and keep covered up in bed.

We had plenty of warm clothing and we needed it as

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the river had lots of ice the next morning and we had a hard time getting any breakfast. We were all black with smoke and cinders and it was too cold to wash our faces so we just packed up our bed clothes and went on. We did not get to my sister's until almost eight o'clock that night. We had stopped and fed the horses at noon and made some coffee. We were tired, cold and hungry. The roads were so very rough. Just two plowed furrows over the rough prairie, no bridges or culverts over the small ditches. This generation can scarcely imagine how rough the roads were. Now the roads are graded where the high places are and smoothed down by road graders.

Our home paper in Illinois liked to have those who left write back and tell the home folks something about the experiences of those who were brave enough to go pioneering in a new state. I wrote, and it was quite a nice article, and I got a copy and was keeping it as a keepsake, when one of the neighbors borrowed it to show her husband. I charged her to be sure and take care of the paper, but one of the children put it on the floor for her father who had tuberculosis to spit on and it had to be burned.

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We never owned a place of our own until we moved into Geary and bought this little home. We always leased Indian land and George ran cattle.

Our daughter wanted to go on to school and learn to be a teacher. George promised her that when we got one hundred head of cattle that she might go if I would move into town and stay with her. Well, when we got the one hundred head of cattle there was just so much to do, hired men to cook for and hogs to cure for meat, vegetables to can and other household duties to take care of and George's health began to fail and we just never left the cattle ranch until after she was married and had a home of her own.

Neighbors were sure good to each other in those days. When anyone was sick everyone who was needed went to sit up, and loaned them any home remedies that they happened to have. I know we took care of Manuel Brazee when he had a spell of typhoid fever. He was a bachelor and was just working around for other people. He built a three-wire fence around three quarter sections for us. He was slow but everything had to be done just so, with him. He was down three weeks, and he did not want anyone to sit up with

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him. We had a doctor and he said that we would just have to get up once in a while and go in and see if he needed anything. Several nights when George went in he had to hold the light close to his face to see if he was still alive.

We always had Sunday School and sometimes preaching. Our first Sunday School Superintendent was J. R. or Bob Smith, next was Papy Scott and then Old Man Smedley, that was in the Evergreen school house. Then there was Mr. Goone, who sometimes preached and was Sunday School Superintendent, also. We all thought a lot of him and we pieced a memory quilt and gave it to him. All the women around the neighborhood pieced blocks and we charged ten cents to embroider the names of the people on the quilt. This helped to buy the cotton and lining. The sheriff was out at my house and I asked him if he wanted his name on the quilt. He said, "Sure thing," and he gave me twenty cents but we only put his name on once.

The Indian land we leased belonged to a man named Lariette and Yellow Eye.

We would gather up a crowd and go to the different homes and dance. The first time I ever saw John Williams

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and his wife was when we went there to a dance. They had a carpet on the floor and that was the only carpet that I had heard of in the country. We just took the tacks from around the edge of it and took it out and danced. They were so glad to see us that they did not care what we did to the house.

On Decoration Day one year there was no cemetery, no one had died and we wanted to go somewhere and celebrate. Mr. Frazee went down to the South Canadian River and caught fish and when we got there he had a large dishpan full of fried fish. I don't know that I ever enjoyed fish any better than that day in the spring, the weather was so nice.

Mrs. Moorehead taught our first school, had about sixteen pupils. I don't know how she was paid but it was not a subscription school. This was County C at that time.

Charles McBryan was County Clerk.

Wisners raised four acres of peanuts and as there was no market for them he gave them to the neighbors. We went over to his place and got one and one-half bushels. Wisner invented a way to clean them. The little root always clings to the end. He took a small nail keg and drove nails which were about three inches long, from the outside of the keg,

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and let the nails stick through on the inside. He then put a straight iron rod through the keg from end to end. One end was made as a lid so that it could be raised and put peanuts inside the keg. There was a frame to rest the keg in and a crank on one end to turn it over and over. It worked much the same as a barrel churn. The nails on the inside cleaned all the stems and rough pieces off the shell of the nuts. We thought this quite an invention in those days.

My children had all the peanuts that winter they could eat and were as fat as little pigs. Sometimes I would roast the peanuts in the oven, they also liked them raw.

I had been used to cooking dry beans with pork and thought this was the seasoning that went best with ^{them}. But just try beef if you never have.

We used to butcher a beef and give our neighbors a quarter and then when they would butcher they would give us our share. In this way we had fresh beef all through the winter.