

MURRAY, W. J.

INTERVIEW

#4346

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

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Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora Lorrin,

This report made on (date) June 9, 1937

1. Name Mr. W.J. Murray,

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma, R.R.1

3. Residence address (or location) 3 miles west and 1/2 mile south of the mills.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 18 Year 1858

5. Place of birth On a farm in DeKalb County, Illinois

6. Name of Father W.J. Murray Place of birth Perthshire, Scotland

Other information about father Died September 2, 1897

7. Name of Mother Mary Campbell Murray Place of birth Argyle-shire, Scotland

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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Nora Lorrin,  
Field Worker,  
June 9, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. W. J. Murray,  
R. R. 1, El Reno, Oklahoma.

Mr. W. J. Murray, Junior, was born to Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Murray, November 18, 1858, on a farm in DeKalb County, Illinois.

The Senior W. J. Murray was born in Perthshire, Scotland, April 23, 1823, where he received his education. He was married to Mary Campbell in Argyleshire, Scotland, in 1850. They were all members of the Campbell clan in Scotland. In the latter part of 1850 they came to the United States and settled in DeKalb County, Illinois, where their son, W. J. Murray, was born.

His mother, Mary Anne Campbell Murray, was born in Argyleshire, Scotland, about 1825. The elder W. J. Murray resided in Emporia, Kansas, for thirty-seven years, holding various offices at that place, and he died there on September 2, 1897, leaving four children, two girls and two boys, one of whom was Mr. W. J. Murray now of El Reno.

Florence Farnham Murray, wife of W. J. Murray, Jr., was

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born in Ithaca, New York, "in the shadow of Cornell University". She lived some years in Philadelphia, and graduated from High School there when she was fourteen years old. She moved from Philadelphia to Kansas in 1878; she was a school teacher; and met Mr. Murray at a Free Methodist revival meeting.

They were married at Emporia, Kansas, on June 1st, 1883, and there were five children born to them in Kansas before they came to Oklahoma. Another boy and girl were born to them in Oklahoma on their claim, just eight years younger than the youngest of the older children.

Mr. Murray's object in coming to Oklahoma was to have a home of his own. He considered this a very good chance to get one.

He came to Oklahoma on the train and made the "run" from two miles south of El Reno; he said he didn't see much on the way, but a man on a big white horse had an accident. ~~Almost~~ before this man got started the horse stumbled and fell on its head, and the man went "head over heels" and lay there. Mr. Murray did not stop to see if the man was hurt or not,

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and never found out about it afterward.

The land for two miles past the starting line was Indian allotments, and no one was allowed to stake any of that land. Of course, lots of people did not know about the Indian allotments and went ahead and staked it anyway and some even drove stakes on the Government Reservation, but those who made that mistake got no land.

A couple of gamblers used the Indian allotment idea to help them get the farms they wanted. A day or two before the opening these men got an Indian to go out and build a tepee on the land they wanted, hoping that the runners would think it an Indian allotment and go on. The scheme worked, and they got the claims they had set their heart on. Mr. Murray saw them stake it. One of the gamblers gambled his place away one night, giving it a valuation of \$4000.00. It did not do much good to get it in the first place.

Mr. Murray passed another man who was a "Sooner"; the man came up out of a hollow; just as Mr. Murray passed him, he waved; he had a long stake in his hand with a big board on it having this sign in large letters. "This Claim is Taken." The man tried to get Mr. Murray to stop but he would not stop.

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He figured that the man would be contested, and he did not want to be in his neighborhood. The "Sooner" lived on his place five or six years and then sold his relinquishment to someone.

Before the "run" the grass was all burned off, making the count~~er~~ all black, but the cornerstones were easy to see although some of the markers had been pulled up. Mr. Murray staked his claim about twenty rods from his present home to the south. He broke out some sod and planted some corn, about five acres of it, a little kaffir and some garden, and the next day after he had staked his claim he went to El Reno and bought a one-room house from some contractors and builders. You could hook the house together in fifteen minutes.

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Mr. Murray contends that it had two rooms. Mr. Murray says that it used to be cold in that house as the walls were thin, and that she and the children used to have to go to bed in the daytime a good many times to keep warm in the winter, and that one day they had to brace the wall with a plank to keep the wall from blowing in on them. They dug a cyclone cellar right away, in the fear of cyclones and bad winds.

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Mr. Murray remembers seeing wild buffalo in Kansas but has never seen any in Oklahoma. There was an abundance of quail, rabbits and prairie chickens here when they came to Oklahoma. One day Mrs. Murray went into the yard and saw a mother quail and hunted around until she found its nest, and she said it contained thirty-two eggs. She had an incubator setting at the time and she put the quail eggs in it and "every last one of them hatched". She made a little pen for the quail and tried to raise them but the mother quail would call to them and they would find a crack and would run out, and soon the mother quail had all of them back. Mrs. Murray and her son were in the yard one day, sitting ~~on a log, when they saw ten of these little quail filing into~~ the kitchen. Either Mrs. Murray or her son made a noise and they all scurried away. This happened sometime in 1904.

About 1895 an Indian stopped at their place while Mr. Murray was away. The Indian said he was "Black Coyote Scout", and wanted to know if Mrs. Murray had seen a bunch of ponies. He asked the same questions over and over. Mrs. Murray had noticed a drove of ponies that had passed over the hill south

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of their place a short time before, and she told him about them and he rode on and came back in a little while driving the ponies back to the reservation. He stopped again, all smiles, and shook hands and thanked her over and over again, and every time he passed after that he would stop, shake hands and say "Thank you, found ponies". One time he said, pointing to himself, "Black Coyote Scout, to South Canadian River; never cross Canadian, Caddo! Ugh!" He evidently did not like, or was afraid of the Caddoes.

Mr. Murray has "kidded" her about her Indian sweetheart ever since.

The men at the agency would send out notices whenever any of their horses or ponies had strayed from the Reservation, and they would sometimes send Indians to tack the bills up on a tree. Mr. Murray ran onto an Indian who was trying to post a bill. The Indian was turning it around, first one side up, and then the other when he saw Mr. Murray, and motioned for him to come where he was standing. The Indian would say "M,M,M, John," then he would turn the bill over and say "M,M,M, John," again; he wanted to know which side went up. He could neither read nor talk it seemed. Mr. Murray said that



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most young fellows of that time would have let this Indian post the bills up-side-down just for fun as they "kidded" the Indians a lot at that time, but he showed the Indian how to fix these bills and went on his way.

Mr. Murray was a delegate to the first convention when Oklahoma became a state, in 1907. He was a school officer for twenty-four years. He organized the <sup>first</sup> Anti Horse-Thief Association on October 18, 1905 in this county. They held their meeting three miles south of the Murrays' present home. He was also a delegate to the first annual meeting of the Board of Agriculture, in 1908.

Mr. and Mrs. Murray have built twice since that first ~~little one room house and now have a nice large dwelling on~~ their claim with barns and garage; Mrs. Murray is an accomplished artist and the walls of their home are decorated with her handiwork. She has made several beautiful oil paintings and she also works with pastels. They have lived many happy years on their claim.