

MUIR, THOMAS.

INTERVIEW

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MUIR, THOMAS

INTERVIEW.
BIOGRAPHY FORM

10473

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Mrs. Nora L. Lorrin, El Reno, Oklahoma.

This report made on (date) April 19, 1938

1. Name Mr. Thomas Muir

2. Post Office Address Banner, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Route 2, 2 miles south of Banner.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 2 Year 1857

5. Place of birth Scotland

6. Name of Father Alexander Muir Place of birth Scotland, 1817

Other information about father Died October 15, 1881

7. Name of Mother Jean G. (Benning) Muir Place of birth Scotland, 1826

Other information about mother Died in America about 1898.

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 6

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Nora L. Lorrin

Investigator

April 19, 1938

Interview with Thomas Muir
Route # 3, Banner, Oklahoma

Mr. Thomas Muir was born in Scotland, September 2, 1857. His father, Alexander Muir, was born and died in Scotland. Here, word for word, is a copy of the invitation to Mr. Alexander Muir's funeral. It was printed on a card about half as large as a postal card.

In Affectionate Remembrance

Alexander Muir

My husband

Who died at Old Willowtown, Mauchline on
Saturday 15th, October, 1881 aged 64 years

The funeral to which you are invited,
will leave Old Willowtown on Wednesday,

19th inst, at 1 o'clock afternoon -

Place, interment Catrine Churchyard.

Mr. Muir's father worked in the coal mines in Scotland, and had charge of one of the shifts in a tunnel of the coal mine, when he was fatally injured.

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Catrine, Scotland, was their home town. There are two ways of classifying Scottish people. Those who live in the highlands are called the Highlanders and those who lives in the low lands are termed the Lowlanders, and the Muirs were of the Lowland people. Tom Muir's mother was also born in Scotland about 1826 and died after coming to America, about 1898. Her name was Mrs. Jean Hempseed (Benning) Muir. Mr. Muir came to the United States on a vessel called the "majestic" (An English ship, he thinks.) with his oldest brother John, in 1875. He was just past eighteen years of age. He was young enough, that he only needed one set of naturalization papers; if you are past twenty-one years of age when you enter the United States from a foreign country you have to have two sets of naturalization papers. His brother went to Livingston, Illinois, and turned farmer. Mr. Muir worked for his brother on his farm for two years and then he went to Iowa and worked for the banker in the Odell Bank, for two years. The president of the bank was John Mack Williams.

Five years after coming to America, he was still single and the only single child, and he and the family thought it his duty to look after his mother. So he went back to Scot-

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land and brought her over. He was married at Lamar, Missouri, April 7th, 1891, and he bought and sold stock, horses, cattle, etc, also hay. Then he got a job in Hammond, Indiana, working for the Hammond Lighting Company. He worked for these people close to ten years. When he quit the Electric light company, he worked for the "Westward Ho Golf Links" of Oak Park, a suburb of Chicago, and did that work for two years. Mrs. Muir kept roomers and the Muirs had an organ. Mrs. Muir could play and sing, and did sing a good deal. One of her favorite songs was-

Oklahoma, Garden of the West.

It was when I left Old Michigan

A location for to find,

But this is Oklahoma Beauty (Garden) of the West

When I arrived in Guthrie,

I did not like the town,

The streets they were so narrow,

And muddy was the ground.

But this is Oklahoma beauty of the West.

T'is here they call us gophers,

As you may understand,

We are the common gophers,

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When gardens are in quest,
For this is Oklahoma, beauty of the West.

Oh! these gopher girls are cunning,
These gopher girls are shy,
I'll marry me a Gopher girl,
Or a bachelor I will die,

For this is Oklahoma Beauty of the West.

It was a popular song in the early days. Anyway, the song, and all the praises that he heard sung about Oklahoma, caused Thomas Muir to come down with a bad case of Oklahoma fever and nothing would satisfy him until he came. He wrote to his brother-in-law, Mr. J. A. Allen, who was already here at the time, and asked him to scout around and find him a farm. His brother-in-law found one for him located just two miles straight south of Banner and Mr. Muir bought the place outright, as it was too late to take a homestead. He and his wife and family came to Oklahoma, in 1902. The farm he bought was the quarter section, lying just west and adjoining the one they now occupy. It was flat prairie, with one little creek with a few trees along it but not many. There was a two roomed house on it, rather small, also a small orchard. The house that was put up on it when it

was homesteaded, a small boxlike affair, was on it still when they got it.

The house they moved into was pretty poor; you could lie in bed at night and count the stars through the roof. They came to Oklahoma on the train, shipping their furniture and other belongings. Mr. Muir also recalls that there were a million prairie dogs on the farm when he got it. He didn't count them of course, but it seemed to him like there were that many. He tried to drown them out by pouring water down their holes and they came up twenty rods away, on another farm east of them. There was almost a snake for every prairie dog hole. Some of the biggest snakes he ever saw. They finally got the prairie dogs killed off by putting some kind of a deadly gas which he calls Hoky Poky on some cobs and ramming them down into the prairie dog holes, and covering the holes up. The gas settled and killed the prairie dogs. He said that those little animals were cute as could be and smart and he hated to kill them but they ruined the land for crops, so it had to be done. They bought a team of horses and built a big barn, 32 by 46 feet. He also put up a machine shed 42 by 56 feet. When the St. Louis, El Reno and Western railroad, "blew up" and sold their depot here in El Reno at auction

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he bid it in for \$400.00, using it to build a large implement shed. He also built a very nice house on the place. He lived there from 1902 until 1933, when he sold out and moved to the place adjoining it on the east which he had bought in 1918; they still live on this place. The depression and financial reverses compelled them to dispose of their first farm, in order to clear the one on which they now live. Their present home is a hundred and sixty acres and has a very nice house on it, small barn and chicken houses and they have a lot of healthy looking chickens. North of the house they have a large patch of oats, that is very luxuriant. They were "hailed out" completely in 1914 and were almost completely "hailed out" another time. They traded in El Reno and went to a grocery store called "Fowlers Grocery Store", to get their groceries. It is no longer here. They traded at Pagles and Fryburgers when they wanted clothing or dry goods. Mr. Muir had five brothers and one sister. His sister, Mrs. J. H. Allen, lives in El Reno and one brother lives in Toronto, Canada. The rest are dead.