

NEWELL, MARY

INTERVIEW

#9070

365

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

NEWELL, MARY.

INTERVIEW.

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Field Worker's name Anna R. Barry.

This report made on (date) October 26, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mrs. Mary Newell.

2. Post-Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 1005 South Rock Island.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 2 Year 1860.

5. Place of birth Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

6. Name of Father William Smith. Place of birth Wisconsin.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Harriet Smith. Place of birth Michigan.

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 5.

Anna R. Barry,
Journalist.
Oct. 26, 1937.

An Interview With Mary Newell,
1005 South Rock Island Street,
El Reno, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Mary Newell was born near Milwaukee, Wisconsin, December 2, 1860; the eldest daughter of William Smith and Harriet Smith.

She attended school three blocks from her home.

When she was still small her parents moved to southwestern Missouri, locating in Cass County.

In May, 1884, she married John Newell.

Alleyes were on Oklahoma, as "The Promised Land" away back in 1889, as that was the year it was opened for settlement. Even in the northern states people were anxious to get an opportunity to homestead on land. Some wanted to locate in Oklahoma because of a milder climate, others wanted to come here thinking it was more seasonable and better crops could be raised.

Near the first of March, 1889, the Newell family left Cass County, Missouri, accompanied by several other wagons of homeseekers. Each wagon was loaded to its full capacity with bedding, furniture, farm implements, cooking utensils and clothing. They rounded all their cattle and horses together and slowly started on a journey to seek a home.

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They traveled the first day until they came to a creek with plenty of water and with wood nearby, here they made camp. Some busied themselves getting wood, making campfires or hunting water, while others unhitched and hobbled out the horses.

After the evening meal was finished everyone was so tired that they were glad to crawl into their beds, which were made on the ground.

After everyone in camp had settled down for the night, everything seemed quite peaceful, but from every direction came the howl of the wolf and coyote. This kept the children frightened most of the night.

After the homeseekers reached the Indian Territory they met up with Indians. Each time they met these Indians they told them they had no right in this country, but they always gave them milk and a chicken or rabbit if they happened to have one, and these Indians went on their way without any trouble. Mrs. Newell said that they traveled along pretty rapidly until they came in sight of Fort Reno and as everyone seemed to be going in the direction of the Fort, they went on. She said she never would forget what a crowd of people were camped on the Fort Reserve. They camped there until the day of the Opening. People flocked into this camp from every direction, in wagons, buggies and horseback.

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On April 22, 1889, people were up early, getting breakfast, harnessing horses and getting ready for the run. Most of the women and children stayed in camp while their husbands, sons or daughters made the run for a claim. Mr. Newell made the run from the westside, just west of where El Reno now stands. Mrs. Newell and the children stayed in camp at Fort Reno. Mr. Newell succeeded in locating on a claim, seven and one-half miles southeast of El Reno.

Their first house on their claim was a little two room frame house, sixteen by eighteen feet. The lumber to build this house was obtained at Council Grove, a distance of about twenty miles. They fixed the house comfortably with good windows and doors. Mr. Newell plastered this house, the only plastered house for miles around.

People seemed happy when they came to Oklahoma to settle. They did not see the grinding hardships, the desperate struggles and crop failures that they later faced.

People were good to help one another in those days. One of Mrs. Newell's neighbor women and her family from Texas had settled on the claim adjoining them. This lady didn't know how to make home-made light bread. She came to the Newell home twice a week to make her bread until she learned how to make it. Sometimes she would walk, always bringing her children, other times she rode horseback.

Fresh fruits were almost unknown to people who settled in Oklahoma for the first few years. There was an abundance of wild plums to be found along the rivers and creeks.

Sugar was so scarce that women made very little jelly and fruit jars were almost unknown.

Mrs. Newell cooked the plums, ran the pulp through a home-made sieve, added a few cups of sugar and cooked this very thick. This mixture could be kept several weeks in an open jar.

Mrs. Newell dried corn, peppers, pumpkins and beans. When drying corn, she cooked the corn on the cob in large vessels. After it had cooled they took knives and cut the corn from the cob, then spread the corn on boards in the sun to dry, turning it over and over each day. After several days of this process it could be placed in a flour sack and hung up until it was needed.

In later years when apples and peaches could be obtained Mrs. Newell dried many of these for her family. She also made kraut from cabbage and made turnip kraut from turnips.

When the Newell family first located in Canadian County, Reno City was their closest trading point. After

El Reno was established they traded here. It was on their claim that Mr. and Mrs. Newell reared their family of four children, three boys and one girl.

In later years this family moved to El Reno. In 1933, Mr. Newell passed away and is buried in the El Reno Cemetery.