

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

CLIFFORD DEAN
(and comments by Mrs. Erma Dean)

August 7, 1972
Santa Fe Railroad, Roosevelt County

By Mrs. John Burroughs

BURROUGHS: This is Mrs. John Burroughs, I am visiting this bright Monday morning, August the 7th, 1972, in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Dean. Good morning friends, it's so nice for you to let me come and talk to you. Mr. Dean, will you tell me your full name, and date, and place of birth?

DEAN : Clifford Roy Dean, I was born at Crandell, Texas, December the 13th, 1897.

BURROUGHS: Then you came to Roosevelt County with your parents?

DEAN : That's right. We came in 1909, in early January.

BURROUGHS: Where did they homestead?

DEAN : My parents homesteaded east of Delphos, about 2½ miles east of Delphos.

BURROUGHS: What were their full names, and do you know their dates of birth?

DEAN : Well, John E. Dean, my father, he was born December the 11th, 1851.
My mother . . .

BURROUGHS: Do you know her full name before she married?

DEAN : Sarah Jane McClaren, she was born April the 6th, 1857.

BURROUGHS: And who came beside you? Were there other brothers and sisters?

- DEAN : Well, one brother, Robert A. Dean, was living here when we came. I think he came in 1906.
- BURROUGHS: Was he a homesteader?
- DEAN : Yes Ma'am. He homesteaded in the same section with my father.
- BURROUGHS: Well, he was much older than you, then?
- DEAN : That's correct. He was a ..., he worked in the. . . He first worked in Portales as a bookkeeper for Blankenship and Woodcock, which was a general mercantile company at that time, located where the City Hall now stands.
- BURROUGHS: Can you tell me something about your homestead life there? And what kind of house did you live in?
- DEAN : Well, we had a five room house, was a little better than average for those days, and actually had more barn than we had house. We had real good barns.
- BURROUGHS: Did you keep hay in the barns?
- DEAN : Well no, mostly the feed was harvested with a row binder, and it was stacked and we wouldn't have had enough room for that. It was stacked outside in ricks.
- BURROUGHS: Then did you keep lots of cattle, or were you farmers or ranchers?
- DEAN : Well, farmers. We had cattle, both dairy and beef cattle. But we wouldn't be considered ranchers.
- BURROUGHS: What kind of water supply did you have?
- DEAN : We had wells, deep wells. The water was piped into the house, the garden, the yard and also for the stock.
- BURROUGHS: So that was more or less a luxurious setup, compared to the way some people lived.
- DEAN : Well it was, I guess.
- BURROUGHS: Why did your Dad come out here?

DEAN : Well, actually he came on a visit, to visit my brother, and somewhere in the deal, my brother just talked him into moving out.

BURROUGHS: So you had two families really living on the same homestead plot?

DEAN : Section?

BURROUGHS: Section, was it a section?

DEAN : We were on the same section. About the same time I had another brother, my oldest brother, J. Forger Dean came here. He worked for Citizens Bank, which was in the building where the old Tribune Building (the two story building). . .

BURROUGHS: The News Tribune, yes.

DEAN : Yes, that's right. He later went to work for Joyce Pruitt.

BURROUGHS: About what year was this?

DEAN : That would have been, he came in about 1909, and he worked in the bank, I really can't tell you the years.

BURROUGHS: But it was after 1909?

DEAN : It was after 1909, he worked in the bank and later worked for Joyce Pruitt and they were located where Wacker's is now located.

BURROUGHS: The old Woolworth. . .

DEAN : The old Woolworth building and also took in the Anthony's building.

BURROUGHS: That was a rather large mercantile.

DEAN : It was, yes Ma'am. It was real nice for those days.

BURROUGHS: Can you tell me about your source of water? You said you had a deep well, how did you dig such a deep well?

DEAN : They had well drills similar to the ones that have now. And it was just drilled with an ordinary drill.

BURROUGHS: And a man came around who made that a profession, just digging wells?

DEAN : That's correct, yes Ma'am.

BURROUGHS: Were there any people out there who had hand dug wells?

DEAN : No Ma'am. Not in that particular locality because I believe the wells were about 125 to 130 feet in that area. That was just a little too deep.

BURROUGHS: That was too deep to go?

DEAN : That's correct.

BURROUGHS: Did you ever have a time when the water got low in the well, or was it a steady flow?

DEAN : Well no, it was steady all the time. We had a windmill, and the windmill was running most of the time.

BURROUGHS: You mean you had a tank to fill up?

DEAN : Yes Ma'am. We had an overhead tank and then a place for the overflow to go.

BURROUGHS: Well, so many people have mentioned having to haul water, and if they hauled water, how did they fill the barrels? Did they have to hand dip it?

DEAN : That's correct. I do know that there were places out there that people hauled water. They just had barrels and wagons and would dip it from the barrel that the mill was pumping into, and pour it up in the barrels and the wagon. Maybe three or four barrels. . .

BURROUGHS: Yesterday I heard someone say they were caught someplace on a trip, in a wagon and they ran out of water. They stopped by a place that had a well, and they had to buy water. Did you ever hear of an experience like that?

DEAN : No Ma'am, I never have. In fact they didn't charge people. They would haul water from your well, and they were never charged for it.

BURROUGHS: So, if you had a deep well, you shared? Is that correct?

DEAN : That's correct, yes Ma'am.

BURROUGHS: Well, what about the people who had to go to Portales Springs, in the claims right around the springs. Did they go over there and dip that water into barrels?

DEAN : I knew where the springs were at that time and passed along the road out there any number of times, but I don't know about getting water from the springs, how they handle it at all. I imagine they dipped from a bucket and carried up the hill.

BURROUGHS: Carried it to the bank and then filled the barrels. So that was a tedious, laborious procedure, wasn't it?

DEAN : I would think it would be.

BURROUGHS: I know some people had to do that, because they weren't able to dig wells, or they couldn't afford them. I heard someone mention previously they hired a well digger at a dollar a foot. They had to go down 165 feet, which was quite expensive. Not many people could afford that.

DEAN : Well, that would be correct. However, I don't believe that there would be too many wells that would be that deep, even out in the dry land where we were. But they did charge by the foot, but I don't recall what we paid for our well . . .

BURROUGHS: How much per foot . . . Can you tell me about the food that you had? Where if your father had cattle, you had plenty of meat then?

DEAN : Yes Ma'am. That wasn't a problem at all and we did all right for food, which most of it came from the store.

BURROUGHS: Well, how did you get water on your garden from the windmill?

DEAN : Well, the garden was near the mill and it was piped out to where we could get it to the garden.

BURROUGHS: So you did irrigate your garden then from the windmill?

DEAN : That's right.

BURROUGHS: That made a certain crop?

DEAN : Yes Ma'am.

BURROUGHS: Well, not many people were that lucky, were they?

DEAN : No, no.

BURROUGHS: Will you comment on the weather at that time? Did you have more rain-fall and more snow in winter than we seem to have now?

DEAN : I really don't know. It seems that we had more snow at that time. I would say that we may of had a little more rain, some years anyway. But there is another problem there, the wind, I believe blew a lot more in those days, and harder. One thing, we were out in the open. If you went someplace you went horseback or wagon, and if there was a wind blowing you noticed it and felt more like it was pretty bad, than you would in an air conditioned car.

BURROUGHS: Yes, there is a great contrast.

DEAN : That's right.

BURROUGHS: What about the sand, was enough of the land broken up where you had bad sandstorms?

DEAN : That is true, especially where we were. It was naturally sandier than it is in this area. There was little broken up on nearly every quarter. It started blowing pretty bad just about the next year after it was plowed out.

BURROUGHS: So it had dried enough where it moved every time the wind blew?

DEAN : That's right.

BURROUGHS: Where was your school located?

DEAN : The first school I attended in New Mexico was Shelby. It was about four miles or four and one half miles from our home. There was quite a few youngsters, I don't remember just how many in the school. The only members of the school that I can recall that live here now . . . There is Mrs. Schumpert, (Hattie Page Schumpert), and Mrs. Breech (Esther Tinsley Breech), her brother, Bill Tinsley, his older sister, Francis Tinsley.

BURROUGHS: Who was your teacher?

DEAN : Mrs. rather Miss Maude Lang, was the first teacher. That was in 1909, in 1910 my brother Bob taught school that one year and about the same youngsters I guess were there that was the first year. The

next year I came to Portales and entered school here in the seventh grade.

BURROUGHS: Now that was about 1911?

DEAN : 1911, yes Ma'am. And my brother also came there as superintendent in 1911.

BURROUGHS: Superintendent of the public schools?

DEAN : That's correct. The school was where the old L.L. Brown School now stands.

BURROUGHS: That was the first school in Portales?

DEAN : Yes Ma'am.

BURROUGHS: Can you tell me what the building looked like?

DEAN : The building was made out of concrete blocks. It was a two story building. There was six classrooms on the second story and about the same number, maybe five, on the lower floor, had a basement, no lights, that is electric lights. The building was heated, each room had their own stove, a big coal stove. Many, many people remember the building because it stood there until about 19. . .

BURROUGHS: About '48 or '49 before they tore it down, wasn't it?

DEAN : Well . . .

BURROUGHS: My daughter went to school there in about 1947 or '48.

DEAN : I guess that's correct.

BURROUGHS: And it was built about 1909?

DEAN : No, the building was built before that. I don't really know, maybe . . .

BURROUGHS: It stood a long time, then didn't it?

DEAN : It did. Yes Ma'am.

BURROUGHS: How did you get from Delphos to this school? Or did you live in town with your brother?

DEAN : No, I came to town and lived in town. I lived with one of my brothers.

BURROUGHS: The one who was the superintendent?

DEAN : Yes Ma'am. But I would go home every weekend, I'd go back horseback.

BURROUGHS: How many miles is that?

DEAN : Approximately twelve, I believe.

BURROUGHS: Too much for you to ride every day, then?

DEAN : It would have been a little long, that's right.

BURROUGHS: Especially in bad weather?

BEAN : That's right.

BURROUGHS: Where did you go to high school?

DEAN : I went to high school in the same building. All of the schools were there in ~~that~~ one building at that time.

BURROUGHS: How many in your first graduating class?

DEAN : Twenty-four.

BURROUGHS: That was about the first graduating class, wasn't it.

DEAN : No Ma'am. There were several classes before that, but one thing that I do remember, it was the largest class at that time. I believe it was the first class that had caps and gowns.

BURROUGHS: Oh, very formal, wasn't it?

DEAN : That's correct. There are several members of that class that are still. . .

BURROUGHS: I'd like for you to name them. Mr. Dean is looking at a picture of that graduating class of 1917. Can you name those as you look at it?

DEAN : Marion Stinnett, Howard Hex [Hecks], Lurline Morrison, Hallie Mitchell, Charles White, Cymbeline Warnica, Marie Phillips, Nigden Jones, Leta Smith, Sidney Pearce, Esther Mars, Lucy Johnson, Hattie Maxwell, Sybil Autrey, Esther Tinsley, Eddie Stovall, Orma Sandefer, Nola Keen, Della Prine, Mable Burke, Laura Fullerton.

BURROUGHS: And then there are two that you don't recall?

DEAN : That's right, yes Ma'am.

BURROUGHS: Some of those are still living, but I do recognize that some of the people are deceased. That was predominately a class of girls, wasn't it?

DEAN : Twenty girls and four boys.

BURROUGHS: Well, weren't you the kings of the walk with that many girls fluttering around?

DEAN : I wouldn't say that.

BURROUGHS: I bet that you're just too modest to mention. What did you do after you graduated from high school?

DEAN : Well, I went to work for the Santa Fe, July first, 1917, and I worked there until . . .

BURROUGHS: In the office?

DEAN : In the office, I was cashier. I worked until June the 15th, '66, when I retired.

BURROUGHS: And that was a long time, wasn't it?

DEAN : Nearly forty-nine years.

BURROUGHS: All working in the Santa Fe office?

DEAN : That's correct.

BURROUGHS: That railroad has played such an important part in the life out here, because it actually was the life line that enabled people to stay. Can you comment on some of the early happenings of the Santa Fe Railroad? The traffic that was on it and the type of thing that was hauled, how many trains?

DEAN : Well, even after I went to work, we received any number of migrant cars, which would be where people just moved everything they had and chartered a car.

BURROUGHS: I'm interested in the word emigrant. Emigrant?

DEAN : That's right.

BURROUGHS: That's what you call the people who moved in?

DEAN : That was one way they have of expressing it. They would charter this car and livestock, chickens and anything they had would be put in the car along with their household goods.

BURROUGHS: How much was the fee on that charter?

DEAN : It depended on where it came from. And actually I don't recall, most of them were prepaid when they came to us, and I just don't recall what the charge would be, but it was pretty reasonable, I guess it was high for those days, but it wasn't too bad.

BURROUGHS: Did families ride in the cars too?

DEAN : If they had livestock they were allowed one attendant that could come with the car, but the families usually came by passenger train.

BURROUGHS: How did they unload the household goods and livestock, and then get to where their claim was, what means of transportation did they have?

DEAN : Very often the team would be in the car also. The wagon would be in there, probably knocked down, the wheels taken off. They would just get them out, harness up and start moving.

BURROUGHS: Start moving.

DEAN : It took several loads, of course, and the livestock the same way.

BURROUGHS: That was a very convenient way to bring your own transportation and then go out.

DEAN : That's right.

BURROUGHS: How many miles did they usually have to go to get to their claim?

DEAN : That depends. . .

BURROUGHS: From the railroad.

DEAN : Some of them would go down in the Causey area and Rogers, Dora all of those inland places back out west of Floyd, east of Arch.

BURROUGHS: That was a day's journey at least, wasn't it?

DEAN : At least that, yes, Ma'am. A lot of those places, well you know about how far they are and you couldn't make too many miles in a day with a loaded wagon.

BURROUGHS: I'd like to know something about the time the Santa Fe Railroad came through here. The first railroad I understand came up from Roswell, it was the Pecos Valley and that was 1898. Now when did the Santa Fe come in?

DEAN : Well, that was the Santa Fe, well no actually it wasn't. . .

BURROUGHS: No, it was another line.

DEAN : I have that information here, but I can't recall just now.

BURROUGHS: It was later?

DEAN : The Santa Fe came down from the other end, from Amarillo. We had a line. . .

BURROUGHS: From Clovis.

DEAN : And the road came from, are you familiar with the way the old railroad used to come into Portales?

BURROUGHS: No.

DEAN : Do you know where the highway leaves the railroad, on the Clovis highway?

BURROUGHS: Yes.

DEAN : Well, the railroad at one time went directly east. I can't follow it, but it went into Texico, I can't say just how it went from there, but the roadbed, the old railroad bed was still there and the first highway to Clovis was on the road. . .

BURROUGHS: On the railroad bed.

DEAN : Railroad bed. And I think in 1908, when they made the, when Clovis was started, and they made the office, the division offices in Clovis. They connected that from Clovis down this side of the county line, and made the line come directly from Amarillo right in to, well actually it went on to Pecos, Texas. But most of it, the regular passenger train only went as far as Carlsbad.

BURROUGHS: Did the Santa Fe then use the roadbed and tracks of the other old railroad that had come up?

DEAN : They did, but they acquired that road in the early days, I don't recall just the date that it was, but they soon took over the whole thing.

BURROUGHS: They took over that and used the roadbed?

DEAN : Yes, Ma'am.

BURROUGHS: I wondered what happened to that little spur railroad that came up from Roswell, which actually was the first important link that enabled people to settle out here.

DEAN : From Roswell?

BURROUGHS: Yes.

DEAN : It's the roadbed that's there now.

BURROUGHS: Right now?

- DEAN : They connected up here just this side of Cameo(?), that was a little section up there, just a mile or two where the section house was, they connected to the old road there, and it's all the same railroad they had in the early days.
- BURROUGHS: This was a coal burning engine, I suppose on the Santa Fe.
- DEAN : Yes, Ma'am. I'm sure that's right, there wasn't much else to burn.
- BURROUGHS: Where did people get their supplies? I understand, you mentioned the buildings were heated by coal stoves, now where did all of this coal come from?
- DEAN : Well I handled billing on a lot of cars of coal, and it came from various places in New Mexico, Raton, and then there was some other mines.
- BURROUGHS: Was it Las Vegas?
- DEAN : No Ma'am not Las Vegas, it was in, it was between Las Vegas and Raton.
- BURROUGHS: What kind of coal was mined there? Hard or soft coal.
- DEAN : No, it wasn't hard coal, it was just the kind that was in use all over this area.
- BURROUGHS: I see, and you burned New Mexico coal?
- DEAN : That's right.
- BURROUGHS: That's an interesting fact. I also wonder when the gas line came in as the coal mines were depleted and they had labor troubles and miners left. How did you manage for fuel during that time? Do you recall how your office was heated and how did you manage for fuel?
- DEAN : I certainly do know. We had three big depot stoves and they would hold a scuttle or two of coal, and we had a coal house out there that they would send a car of coal down from the company, the railroad company, and would fill this coal house at the beginning of the season and it would usually last until spring.
- BURROUGHS: Then what were the people in Portales doing when the coal played out?