

## [Mrs. Lena Kempf Maxwell]

Interview

Mrs. Belle Kilgore

718 Wallace Street

Clovis, New Mexico 2 [?]

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1150 Words

MRS. LENA KEMPF MAXWELL,

School Teacher & Museum Manager

Clovis, New Mexico

Mrs. Lena Kempf Maxwell was born in Adamsville, Logan County Kentucky [?]. She came with her father C. J. Kempf in 1908 to New Mexico and took up land according to the fourteen month plan at that time. They could take up only 160 acres. They filed four miles north of Grady, New Mexico, west of state highway #18.

“Yes, I have had sorrow and privations mixed with the pleasant things that come to the life of a pioneer. I had been a bride, a mother, and a widow all within the space of one year. I came with my father, C. J. KEMPF, and settled near Grady, in 1908.

I had been prepared for a teacher and had taught four years when we came to New Mexico. I was a high school graduate, had training in the teacher normals in Kentucky and attended [?] [Bethel?] Female College and held a sixteen year state certificate from

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Kentucky, but I had to begin again to prepare for teaching [inNew?] Mexico, for nothing but work from accredited [collegesfrom?] other state will be recognized in this state. I entered the college at Las Vegas and continued my work until I acquired a college degree and thereby a life time certificate. I have taught sixteen years in New Mexico and have been principal of some of the best rural schools in New Mexico and incidentally in the United States. C18 - N. Mex.

2

The equipment for these schools was purchased by money made from pie suppers, tackey parties and festivals common in this state. There were also some private donations.

Yes, we have had 'hard times', cold weather, hot weather, storms snows and fires and other inconveniences common to people on the frontier. These have been years when peopled were compelled to use a great deal of ingenuity to be able to stick to their claims.

One story is told of a family after years of dry weather. [?] ground maize in a coffee mill [?] because there was not enough of the maize to pay the toll, if it was taken to the mill to be ground. At one time there was no [fuelso?] the mother soaked her beans several days in water and then they ate them witho'ut seasoning or salt. But these were rare instances, for the homesteaders were thrifty people and even instances like the above were caused by circumstances and not because the people were thriftless.

I remember about the prairies fire that swept everything from the face of the earth reaching from the south west [of ?] and Belleview to the north west and as far as Clayton New Mexico. One boy was caught out with his mules. The child's face was burned so badly and only his teeth on one side was left. The mules were so badly burned that they had to be killed.

Storms, [?] electric storm where we lived, four miles sou south of Grady and six miles directly south of the edge of the edge of the caprock. It was [??] in August, a big cloud stretched from east to west which was the blackest and angriest that I have ever 3 seen.

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The horses had come up and waited across the road. I knew that something had to be done to get them away from the wire fence The cows were against the fence too. "My little girl daughter and I got buckets of grain maize heads and went across to where the horses were. After flashes of lightning we crawled under the wire and ran down to the other end of the pasture and scattered the heads of grain. After the horses began to eat we went back to the house, leaving the bars of a lot down. When we went into the house and closed the doors, there were little sparks of electricity all thro'ugh the room just like sassafras wood sparks from an open fire place popping from the fire. The lightning got continually worse. We took the metal hairpins out of our hair and I took off my corset which had steel staves in it, put on our night dress and [craled?] into a 50 pound feather bed. My daughter put her arms around me. [lisaid?] 'do not do that dear, if I am struck and killed it will kill you too'. She cried, 'Mama if you ar killed I do not want to live.' So we lay clasped in each other arms until the [?] electrical display had passed over, which seemed at least an hour. That is the most terrible experience that I have ever gone thro'ugh with. That was perhaps in 1914 Or '15.

I think that it was in 1910 that we had a very severe snow storm. It was necessary for my father to send some money to the bank. He saw a man who was going to Clovis from Grady so he gave the money to him. That night after he had given the money to the man he heard of some of his dishonest dealings, so he awoke me about twelve o'clock, and told me to get a horse from the stable and lead him to my brother-in laws about three quarters of a mile and tell my brother to go to Grady and get the money and take it himself.

4

The snow had been on the ground for seven weeks, and the reason I had to lead the horse, the ice was so slippery that my father was afraid for me to ride. I had to go across the pasture and open the gates. I was nearly frozen when I arrived. I [awakende?] the family and my brother-in law set out for Grady at once. My sister begged me to stay until morning, but I knew that my father would be uneasy, so after resting a half hour, and drinking some coffee, I started home. Just outside the yard gate, I heard the wolves, but I

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went on. I found a stick and waved them back, but they came to within fifteen feet of me. I waved the stick and flung my bonnet around my head several times and halloed at them. I was at the pasture gate and I tho'ught that they would get me, but as I went thro'ugh, I yelled at them and threw the stick and ran with all my might to the house. The wolves were famished for they could find nothing to eat in the the two or three feet snow. They had eaten several young calves and colts in the pastures and human flesh would taste just [as?] good to them. The They attack some school children at San Jon a small school not far away., but the older children fought them off.

During the same time my sister and I climbed a snow bank 15 feet high to reach a feed stack on the other side. At one end of the [st?] stack the snow was not very deep. We would tie a rope around the bundle of feed [anddraw?] it up I would hold the feed and she would climb a little farther up.

During the snow storm, a ferocious [?] Jersey bull that was chained in a pen was covered up in about five feet of [now?] except just a breathing hole. We had to dig down and get the chain, and turn him loose. We shoveled the snow from around him [andby?] the time we got him 5 out of the snow some of the [fightwas?] taken out of him. Stock [suffe fered?] a great that year and several different times we have had some severe snows. I taught school several miles from home and often I have had to shovel two or three feet from out of the schoolroom before I could even get a fire built.

My brother-in-law, W. I Simms, was offered some lambs from the DeOliveria ranch near Grady. There was not much feed for the sheep and the snow was so deep that the sheep could not graze, so if the owners kept the [lambx?] they run the risk of [loosingboth?] ewes and lambs. So they gave the lambs to Mr. Simms if he wanted them. He took a number home with him. He had five good cows, and letting these lambs milk the cows was easier than to milk them himself or to try to feed the lambs. So he built two platforms far enough for the cows to walk between and just right for the lambs to stand on and he would drive the cows between the opening and then turn the orphan lambs in on the platform. I have

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always been sorry that I didn't have a Kodak. Each lamb knew its place at the table. In this way the cows got a milking about three times a day. I am not sure, but the wagging of the lambs' tails would have frustrated the camera man. He had a flock of [twenty?] of these lambs that spring

Yes, I enjoy the work in the museum. There is a great deal to do, but it is interesting and I am classifying the different sections, and have a great deal of information written about the different archaeological finds especially those of recent discovery in New Mexico. Some of the out-of-state visitors say that it is the best one (museum) they have ever seen in a town of this kind."

Mrs. Maxwell is a very interesting person and is glad to give any information that she has concerning the Clovis Museum, [which is?]

6

Mrs. Maxwell is a very interesting person and is glad to give any information that she has concerning the Clovis Museum, which is located in the Public Library on 8th and Pile Street.

Her address is 402 Connelly Street, Clovis, New Mexico.