

[E. A. Houston]

[S-24-Kno?] DUP

FORM A Circumstances of interview

NAME OF WORKER Harley Anderson ADDRESS [Nisbram, Neb.?)

DATE Nov. 17, [1938?] SUBJECT Early Day Folklore

1. Name and address of informant E. A. Houston, [Niebrara?), Neb.
2. Date and time of interview Nov. 17, [1938?] 1 P. M. to 4 P. M.
3. Place of interview In [Niebrara?) at E. A. Houston's office
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant Everett J. Houston
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you None
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. Just an old frame buildin for office on main street decorated with deer heads mounted timber owl and other birds has all shelves full of books and many pictures of old hunting [parties?] on the walls.

FORM [B?] Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Harley Anderson ADDRESS [Niobrana Neb.?)

DATE Nov. 17, 1938 SUBJECT Early Day Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT [E. A.?) Houston [Niobrara?) Nebraska

Library of Congress

1. Ancestry American
2. Place and date of birth Marion, Iowa. Does not care to give date of birth
3. Family A. P. Houston, father; Catherine Houston (mother) Father was a farmer
4. Place lived in with dates Lived in Iowa until her moved to Nebraska at Niobrara, Knox County, in Oct. 1884. Has been there ever since.
5. Education, with dates Iowa Public School, Cornell College, situated at Mount Vernon, Iowa 1879-80-81.
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Lawyer, admitted to the bar in Iowa in Oct. 1883; admitted to the bar in Neb. in late fall of 1884. County Attorney Knox Co. Neb. 1890-91 At present City Attorney, Niobrara, Neb
7. Special skills and interests Took great interest in baseball in younger days. Played on Niobrara team (shortstop) in 1886-87-88. Enjoyed hunting when younger
8. Community and religious activities Chamber of Commerce, Mason, Supports churches but does not belong to any particular denomination.
9. Description of informant Height 5 ft. 6 in; Weight 160 pounds; dark blue eyes; black hair when younger, now grey, light complexion; heavy set. Extraordinary physical strength for small man when younger. Name among Indians was: "Little Stout."
10. Other points gained in interview Family in this country originated from two brothers who came to this country from Ireland before American revolution, being forced to flee to Ireland to escape hanging for attempting to start rebellion in Ireland against the British. One brother (southern branch of family) settled in Virginia and retained spelling of name as in Ireland , [via?]: "Houston". Other brother went to New York and in hope of deceiving the

Library of Congress

British dropped the "o" from his name, spelling it "Huston". Sam Houston (of Texas fame). A son of [?] A. Houston, Everett T. Houston is practicing law with him in Niobrara.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Harley Anderson ADDRESS Niobrara, Neb

DATE Nov. 17, 1938 SUBJECT Early Day Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT E. A. Houston, Niobrara, Nebraska

I came to Nebraska from Iowa in the fall of 1884. Was born and brought up in Iowa, my father being a farmer. I probably would have been one myself but for a disheartening experience common to farmers in those early days. My father had a mortgage on his farm and was figuring on paying it off by raising and selling hogs. He had a nice bunch of them all ready for the market by the night before he was to take them to town they got the cholera. In the morning practically all were dead. My father lost his farm and I resolved to become a lawyer, and did.

When I arrived in Niobrara in the fall of 1884 it was a typical western frontier town full of cowboys and Indians. It was a place of about 700 people with six saloons, three gambling palaces and two churches, Methodist and Presbyterian. It was at that time the county seat of Knox County, Nebraska.

Jackrabbits were thick and it was a frequent occurrence to see a bunch of cowboys racing their ponies after them down the main street. The cowboys were pretty good fellows, but reckless with guns.

One night a bunch of them were carousing in the barroom of a hotel here. Directly above the barroom was a bedroom where a traveling man was trying to get some sleep. The

Library of Congress

cowboys cut loose with their forty-fives, the bullets going through the ceiling of the barroom and whizzing all around the traveling man. He got out of there in short order.

Cowboys came through here frequently with large herds of cattle longhorns from Texas — and they usually swam the cattle across the Missouri river with the cowboys on either side of the herd trying to guide them. It was dangerous work, but the cowboys didn't seem to mind it.

Some interesting things come up in law practice in a place like this. I remember one case where land boundaries were involved. There was a job in the range line of about eighty rods and it became necessary to establish in court as to how this came to be.

It seems a certain Government surveyor ran a range line to the Niobrara river near the mouth of the Verdigre creek. It was necessary to [establish?] establish in court as to how this came to be.

Straightway the surveyors forgot all about surveying and turned the boat downstream to regain the jug of whiskey. They got it but by the time they crossed the other side they were about eighty rods downstream from where they started.

Instead of going back to a place opposite to where they started the surveyor is reported to have said, "This is a d—n good place to start a range line." And he ran it from there [which?] of course made a jog of about 80 rods in the range. line.

One of the interesting sights here in the early days was to watch the Ponca Indians cross the Niobrara river on the ice when the river was frozen and yet not frozen so solidly that it was safe to cross.

The Ponca Indian reservation was west of the Niobrara river, the river being between it and the town, and the only way the Indians could get to Niobrara was by crossing the river.

Library of Congress

The current of this river is very swift and in places the water is deep, and if a person broke through the ice-crust and was swept underneath the ice by the swift current— it was just too bad.

To make the crossing as safe as possible the Indians were in the habit of cutting themselves a ten foot pole. They would grasp this in the middle and hold it in front of them when crossing on the ice, and if they did happen to break through the ends of the pole would catch on solid ice and they could pull themselves out without being swept under the ice by the current.

Nevertheless it was risky proposition, and in order to eliminate it the Government build the first bridge across the Niobrara river in this vicinity. That was done in 1885.

Mr. Houston will permit his picture to be taken.