

[Mrs. Winona Sawyer]

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

[Name is on 2nd page *1] 5241 - LA DUP

NAME OF WORKER Cecile Larson ADDRESS 430 South 17th

DATE October 6, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

1. Name and address of informant *1 Mrs Winona Sawyer Orle Apt. — 14th & [K?] St., Lincoln
2. Date and time of interview Oct. 6, 9:00 till 12 a.m.
3. Place of interview Her apartment, 14th & K
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant Mr. Robinson of Historical Dep't
5. Name and address/ of person, if any, accompanying you None
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

A very nice apartment — she being the owner of the apartment house. C15 [2/27/41?]
[Nebraska?]

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Cecile Larson ADDRESS 430 South 17th

DATE October 6, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

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NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. Winona Sawyer, 14th and K Sto., City [?]

1. Ancestry English

2. Place and date of birth Williamsville, N. Y., Aug. 8, 1847

3. Family Three brothers and sisters

4. Places lived in, with dates New York, Penn., Illinois, Wis., Ind., constantly travelling as her father was a Baptist missionary.

5. Education, with dates

Miss Shimer's school for girls, graduating 1871

6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates Teacher for 4 years - 1871-1875

7. Special skills and interests A great deal of handwork

8. Community and religious activities Helped hundreds of young people gain an education

9. Description of informant Very intelligent, kind looking, white-haired, thin-little old lady who graciously gave an interview even in bed after the effects of a broken hip. Trained nurse in attendance.

10. Other points gained in interview

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

My father was a Baptist missionary and traveled a great deal establishing new churches. He was paid a very meager salary, about \$200 a year and people gave us what was called "donation parties." He eagerly looked forward to those when we usually received great quantities of foods and cloth, for dresses, sheets etc. Father established 19 churches in Ill.

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I always made my way from the time I was aged 13. My mother died when I was 3. While I was walking down the street in Springfield, Illinois an advertising circular with the picture of a large house blew in front of me but I paid no attention to it. As I continued down the street the same piece of paper blew in front of me and I paid no attention to it except to wonder if it was the same piece of paper but as I turned the corner I again saw it and this time I picked it up and found it was an advertisement of a school in Mount Carroll, Illinois which offered part or full time employment to girls who otherwise could not afford such an education.

After repeated applications I gained entrance and attended until my graduation in 1871. The head of the seminary was Mrs. Francis Shimer, helped me and guided me and became a lifelong friend. I became a member of the board of trustees and in 1925 I was glad to donate a residence for the president of the school and several pieces of hand work which is still in the house.

I met Mr. Sawyer while teaching in [?], Illinois and was married in June 1875. We took a short honeymoon and a few days after our return he came rushing home and said that there was an excursion to Nebraska, a new country, and he was going out there.

He came to Lincoln and wrote me a letter saying that he thought this would be a good place to open up a law practice but that the country had a few drawbacks. He said the *2 streets were very wide and that there were a few frame buildings but the buffalo had rubbed the corners off the buildings.

Our first home, a small cottage out on the prairie outside the city limits, was also the home of a little German boy who is now head of a bank in Kansas and for 30 years he had sent us a turkey each thanksgiving from one of his farms.

We built several greenhouses and carried on a retail and wholesale business and gave work to many young people. I studied law and was admitted to the bar — the second woman in the state to have such an honor. I never practiced because we adopted two

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brothers whose parents had died very closely to each other. We built a large home on 17th and F in 1887 and put into it all the features that both I and my husband wanted. I planned an Octagon room and my husband a mansard roof and towers. We had a community center for nearly fifty years and had a traditional New Years party there for 26 years. 150 guests always attended and we read letters and greetings.

We completed this apartment building in 1907 — the first in Lincoln. The floor plan was my own idea.

At about this part of the interview she asked the nurse to get her some papers and when she brought them she handed them to me saying, “I am not giving these to you in a spirit of [braggadocia?] but I think you can get more than I can tell you.” Seeing that she was tired, I left her and have attached the papers to this article. — C. Larson