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Mrs. Fred Kemp

interviewed by

Mrs. J. A. Burgess

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ORAL HISTORIES OF FORT WORTH, INC.

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Interviewer: We are visiting with Mrs. Fred Kemp who lives at 6758 Church St. Where were you born, Mrs. Kemp?

Mrs. Kemp: I was born in 1885 in Denton County up close to a little town called Lebanon. My parents were T. J. and Selina Cook. All that I can remember about my grandparents were the name of Lewis and Elizabeth.

I went to school in Denton County; a little place called High Point. It was a one room school house with about thirty-five children. I remember several of the teachers...Hattie Hedgecoates, Hattie Woolwine, Clay Haggard, Mary McCamey and Bess Austin. The children played townball and baseball. That is all there was up there at a little country school.

We lived a mile from the school so I walked. We played dolls as children. There wasn't much fun playing around there. There was too much work going to have much fun. We worked in the field and helped in the house.

I went to church at this same little school house for awhile. Then later we went to Lebanon to church and Sunday School.

I was married in 1907. I was at a dance and ran off from the dance and got married...up in Denton County. I went down to a preacher's house by the name of Farrington. He was a Baptist preacher at Stuart's Creek at a little church down there. I didn't go home but went to a friend's and stayed a week; then I went back to where my husband worked. We stayed there until we got us a little house out in the country on the farm.

Mr. Kemp was a railway mail clerk. His run was on the T&P from Fort Worth to Little Rock. That is all the work he ever did after we left the farm. We lived in Tyler for just one year. Then we moved back to Fort Worth and moved to Handley in 1914.

All I have ever done is a housewife's work. WWI didn't affect us since my husband was working on the railroad. I had two boys and two sons-in-law in WWII. Jack was in the Navy and Fred in the Army. All my children graduated from Handley High. Some of their teachers were Mr. & Mrs. Krisden, Mrs. Baker, Mr. Munden, Mr. Carter and Mr. Edes. Three of my sons played football..Paul, Jack and Fred. The youngest boy, Bennet, was a coach on a basketball team. They all worked parttime. Paul drove a delivery truck for a cleaning and pressing shop; Fred worked in a drug store, Jack worked in a drug store some and Bennet rode a milkwagon.

All my children belonged to the Baptist Church on Church out here. I taught a class for boys in Sunday School for a while.

Interviewer: What other organizations have you belonged to other than church?

Mrs. Kemp: I never belonged to anything else except the Pythian Sisters. My husband belonged to the Knights of Pythias and the Ladies' lodge was the Pythian Sisters.

Interviewer: Do you remember how the Baptist Church got started?

Mrs. Kemp: When we got here there was a little white church on the corner. This small church was organized in 1905 and called the Calvary Baptist Church. There were 21 charter members when it started. Then in January of 1906, a lot on Hunter and Church was donated and a red building was completed. In 1914 the church called its first full-time pastor by the name of Reynolds. Other ministers were Rev. Howard, Goss, Pritchard and Hereford.

When we moved here there wasn't very many houses around here. Up and down here and from here to Handley there were board sidewalks. There were two little grocery stores and one little variety store.

Interviewer: Why did you decide to move to the Handley area?

Mrs. Kemp: Well, we thought it would be cheaper on us with three children so we moved here. My husband rode the interurban backward and forward. We depended on the interurban altogether because we had no vehicle of any kind. He rode the interurban as long as it stayed here. When it went off and they put on buses, he took the bus.

There used to be an amusement park right down here. It was called Lake Erie and had a dance hall on the lake. We used to go down to this little park for Sunday School picnics and things like that. It was kinda popular on Sunday afternoon when people from Fort Worth would come out. They really thought they were out in the country. I have hated the tearing down of the old buildings and moving things around but one good thing has been building the Handley Power Plant. I don't think I would ever want to go back to the old times.

You know that Handley was one of the largest unincorporated towns in the state before it was annexed. Some wanted it and others didn't. We knew that there would be a rise in taxes but we didn't have any police or fire protection until we went into the city.

Interviewer: Have you ever been honored in any way through the church or other organizations?

Mrs. Kemp: Nothing only I received three books for being the oldest mother at church, three years in succession.