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ALLEN, ^{H.}J. L.

INTERVIEW

#12508

140

MINISTER and HIS WORK

An interview of H. L. Allen, age 48,
Superintendent of Okemah Schools,
Okemah, Oklahoma

Billie Byrd, Field Worker
Indian-pioneer History
12-21-37

MY father, H. A. Allen, made his first step into the Indian Territory in the northeastern part of the country. He had taken up his life work as a minister and as he made moves into the new Indian Territory, he would stop at different places, erect brush arbors and hold meetings for preaching.

As he moved along in his work with his family, he finally made and stopped in western part of the present Oklahoma where he made settlement near the present Weatherford, Oklahoma. He was a minister of the Church of God and was the first man to ever bring the Gospel into the western country. Many people came to witness his first baptism which was made near Weatherford.

At the preaching and brush arbor sessions would be present a man with a camera whose identity and name is not known. He would take pictures of each

meeting and the occasional baptism that would be made.

As was the custom of the early missionaries, he moved from place to place but he established places of worship before he did move on to some other new place. Even though he did establish churches, some either failed from too poor support or lack of interest of the members. During his work as a minister, he ordained three ministers.

He would walk several miles to hold meetings during the coldest weather. He waded through the cold waters waist deep of a frozen stream after he had broken the ice from his weight--ice was too thin to hold him up.

While he was at Weatherford, my father was never appointed to any office and never increased his worldly possessions but remained only a minister of the gospel. After getting the church work started in Weatherford he moved west to Indianapolis on the present Highway 66. On the organization of a church at that place he moved to Thomas. From Thomas, he moved to Leedy, which was further northwest, on the present highway 34. From Leedy he went to Trail and organized a church there called

"gunshine". He left these places just as soon as he thought that the churches were organized to be self-supporting and moved on to the other places with the same purpose in mind. Some of the churches he had organized failed to carry on the work and he organized churches also at Rosalind and Texmo.

He organized a church at Indianapolis but the building was later bought and turned into a church by and for the Baptists.

The church at Leedy became a Methodist Church.

He established a church near Stroud but it was later bought by members of the same denomination, the Church of God, and moved to the town of Stroud and is still in use.

At Romulus, the church he had established was moved into Tecumseh, while the one at Big Springs, south of Wetumka, Oklahoma, was moved to Wetumka.

These are the only three organized churches in existence that he organized or were first established during his work as a minister.

The town of Trail was so named after the Bar-X ranch and the activities the ranch carried on in the cattle business as it had a trail leading from this place leading to the markets for cattle.

My father had no thought of holding any important offices or of increasing his possessions but the former Senator Owens recommended him for postmaster but he died before he received the appointment. He was buried at Weatherford, dying at the age of 45. He came into the Indian Territory from Missouri.

SPORTSMANSHIP

In and around the vicinity of Weatherford, the people would spend time in celebrating the 4th of July by entering contests merely for the sport of it. Everyone entered the contest and enjoyed every minute of the time.

In those contests, there was two poles placed opposite sides with cross piece much similar to the goals erected for foot ball goals. From the horizontal piece were attached strings and at the end of the strings were fastened three inch rings of iron.

The thing to do was to throw a spear like missile through the iron rings hung from the cross piece. The contestants, mounted on fast running horses, would try their luck by throwing the missile, with the idea to throw it through the rings. The spears either was caught in the rings or fell to the ground. When the rings were pulled to the ground by the spears, new rings was fixed to take ~~their~~ place.

BURIAL CEREMONY

On my return from Indianola, Oklahoma, to the camp of my father, and as I was passing one point of my road, I heard some singing. Not being familiar with the country and the custom of the Indians I was scared and hastened on to the camp where I told of what I had heard.

We were new in the country and it was not until we had become better acquainted that people told us what I had heard.

It seemed that an Indian boy, a son of Chief White Seal of the Cheyennes, had died. The sound I

had heard were the ceremonial for the dead that had been in progress.

The body of the dead was placed in a wagon box and all the possessions placed in with it. If he had a pony, it was killed and placed in the box along with the saddle, bridle, good blankets and other articles. There was a hole placed at one end of the wagon box where the food was to be pushed through for the dead. At night, the wagon box with the contents was pulled up into a tree where it was to kept over night. But, during the night someone had robbed the box of the the best articles--this caused the chief to call a council because he did not like it.

It was decided that a tribal medicine man was to keep watch over the dead, with the making and performing rites with the tribal medicine, and after four days the box and contents were to be buried. At the end of those four days the burial ceremonies were completed.