

WOOD, JOSEPHINE ANDRE REID.

INTERVIEW #12278

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Investigator
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Interview with Mrs. Josephine Andre Reid
1151 Maple Street
Muskogee, Oklahoma.

I was born August 28, 1857, at Fort Gibson, Cherokee Nation. My father was Paul M. Andre, full-blood French, and my mother was Mary Scott Andre, Cherokee and Scotch-English descent, who was born in the old Cherokee Nation in Alabama and came to the Indian Territory with her parents in the early emigration of the "old settlers" and settled on Bayou Manard about five miles from Fort Gibson where they established and improved a claim, built a large double log house, two stories, and it was there they reared their family and lived until the Civil War when my grandparents were driven out and their home taken by Federal soldiers, who also robbed them of all their cattle and horses.

My parents were married in the early '50's and three children, including myself, a brother and a sister, both older than I, were born to them before the War. I was four years old when the War broke out. Father would not join the Union army because he did not believe in freeing

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the Negroes and making them citizens of the United States, but thought they should be deported to their native country; neither would he join the Confederate army and fight the Union. Therefore he made preparations to move the family south to avoid the serious conditions in the Cherokee Nation brought on by the war. He had all our household effects loaded in a wagon and was ready to leave Fort Gibson with the family when he was arrested by Federal soldiers, all our possessions were unloaded from the wagon and destroyed, even the feather beds were ripped open and the feathers scattered to the winds and the team and wagon confiscated; then father, mother and we three children were loaded in an army wagon with others that were being taken north to Fort Scott, Kansas. After a certain length of time father was given his liberty, but was obliged to remain in Fort Scott. He immediately engaged in the saddle and harness business, as that was his trade and at which he was an expert. He continued in business there until the close of the war when he closed out his business there and returned with the family to Fort Gibson in 1865.

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I remember the return trip to the Cherokee Nation very distinctly. The trip was made in a covered wagon, one of a wagon train of war refugees returning to the Indian Territory. I remember that during the entire time we were in Kansas we never enjoyed the privilege of eating what was called in those days salt rising corn bread, that we children had always been accustomed to in the Cherokee Nation, and on the return trip to the Indian Territory we passed a place where we scented the familiar aroma of salt rising corn bread. Father stopped the wagon, went to the house and found the lady of the house with a fresh baking of the bread, and he purchased part of the bread from her and brought it out to the wagon, and to this day I remember just how that bread tasted. I am sure I never tasted anything in my life so good or that I relished as much as I did that bread.

On our return to Fort Gibson father obtained possession of one of the old log barrack buildings, as there were many of them vacant and unused after the war and most all of the soldiers had been removed from there. In that old building he reestablished his saddle and harness business in which

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he was engaged in pre-war days in Fort Gibson. We lived for a short time in another of the log barrack houses near the river. Later father bought a place on the hill southeast of the old town of Fort Gibson. At that time it was a farm, the house on which now stands about two blocks southeast of the Citizens Bank, or the main corner of Fort Gibson. This place in later years was purchased by F. H. Nash and is now known as the Florence Nash place. After Father sold that place, he bought another place down in the old town near the river so our home would be more convenient to his business. The family resided at that place until after my father's death which occurred in 1869.

When we returned to Fort Gibson we found the town so infested with rats that the condition was beyond description. After the army was removed from there at the close of the war, the rats seemed to take possession of all the buildings. Little babies could not be left alone on a bed or in their crib without being attacked by the rats, and when there would be a death in the town it was necessary to keep a close vigilance to protect the place from the herds of rodents. In many cases, adults were attacked while asleep in their beds.

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My first days in school were while we were in Kansas. After returning to the Cherokee Nation I attended the Cherokee public schools at Fort Gibson; later, the Cherokee Female Seminary at Park Hill. I was the first girl to enroll in the Park Hill Seminary after it was reconditioned and opened after the war. Mrs. Eblin was the first principal of the Park Hill Seminary when it was reopened, but did not make a success of it and held the position only a short time, when she was succeeded by Mrs. Jane Thompson, always known to the students as "Aunt Jane." Two of the teachers I remember were cousins by the name of Noise, who came there from the state of Maine. At that time all the teachers for the higher grade schools, or the greater majority of them, were brought here from the eastern states.

I attended the Park Hill Seminary three years; then attended high school at Fort Smith two years.

After leaving school at Fort Smith I came to Muskogee in 1875 and went into the ladies apparel and millinery business with Mrs. Cathrine Rinn as a partner. Our place of business was in Mrs. Rinn's home which was located on

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what is now the northwest corner of Main Street and Okmulgee Avenue and set back from the street a short distance, facing east. We conducted this business for a period of about two years and were very successful. I then severed my relation with the business and was married in 1877 to Frank E. Reid, who established the Reid Ranch about two miles south and southeast of Muskogee in the late 70's. When he first established the ranch he was employed as bookkeeper for the Atkins Mercantile store in Muskogee, later taken over by Captain Severs, and Mr. Reid worked for Mr. Severs for a while, then resigned and devoted his entire time to his ranch and cattle business.

We lived on the ranch six years and my two oldest children were born during that time. In 1881 I bought a combination residence and store building from my half-sister, Alice Carter Evans, the wife of Rube E. Evans. The property was located on Main street about one hundred feet south of Okmulgee Avenue, facing west. ~~At~~ that place I reestablished myself in the ladies' apparel and millinery business and within a short time built up a statewide business, in fact it was the largest business of its kind in the Territory

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at that time. I continued to prosper and enlarge my business until my place was destroyed by fire in 1889 when the entire business district of Muskogee was wiped out with the exception of Captain Levers store.

My youngest son, Ernest, was born one week before the store was destroyed by fire, and having our home destroyed, the children and I were taken to the home of my sister, Mrs. Evans, at Brushy Mountain, later coming back to Muskogee and living here a short time until Mr. Reid bought a store at Catoosa, where we lived and conducted a mercantile business until 1891, when he sold out the business there and returned to Muskogee. He lived on his ranch for a period of about two years, then moved back into Muskogee, living here for some time.

Later I established a ladies' apparel and millinery business at Tahlequah, due to the fact that the business opportunities looked good to me and at the same time I could place my children in the Cherokee educational institutions at that place.

In 1898 Mr. Reid and I separated and I continued my business and kept the children in school.

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In 1901 I was married to Henry G. Wood, merchant and stockman of Tahlequah. About three years after our marriage Mr. Wood sold out his business at Tahlequah and bought the Rube Evans place at Brushy Mountain where we made our home until we sold the property when the allotments were made.

Mr. Wood's death occurred suddenly at Erass in 1916 while there looking after some of his property.

Very distinctly do I remember when the steamboats were operating on the Arkansas and Grand Rivers to Fort Gibson. Until 1871 when the MK&T Railroad was built to Gibson Station, the steamboats were the only means of transportation in this country other than the stage coaches. The coming of a steamboat was our greatest thrill and when a boat would whistle for Fort Gibson, after entering Grand River from the Arkansas, the entire population of the town would turn-out and meet the boat at the landing. It was by one of these boats that the cholera epidemic was brought into Fort Gibson and spread with such disastrous results in 1867. The disease proved most disastrous with the Negroes. The commander at the fort segregated the Negroes and colonized

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them on Fourteen Mile Creek about four miles from Fort Gibson where a great number of them died from the disease. However, many of them survived the epidemic and improved the land assigned them and remained there for years.

Before the coming of the railroads, the stage coach was our only means of transportation other than the steam boats. I remember when we would go to Fort Smith we would take the stage at Fort Gibson and come to Muskogee crossing the Arkansas River on the Kevin's Ferry just below the mouth of Grand River on what was known as the Muskogee-Fort Gibson-Tahlequah route. At Muskogee we would board the stage en route to Fort Smith via McClain and Lebbers Falls, where a stop for dinner was made and where we crossed the Arkansas River by ferry, on through Sallisaw to Fort Smith where another crossing of the Arkansas was made by ferry.

Eight children were born to the Reid marriage, three boys and five girls. All were enrolled as Cherokees and received their allotments. All living at the time of this writing except "Bud" Reid who was murdered in 1931 at Brushy Mountain Spring. No children were born to the Wood marriage.
