

SHEPHERD, THOMAS N.

INTERVIEW

#8350

345

Shepherd; Thomas N.

Form A-(S-14) **346**

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BIographical
JAMES EARL RAY
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Anna R. Barry

This report made on (date) August 17 1937

1. Name Thomas N. Shepherd

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.

3. Residence Address (or location) 117 South Grand Avenue

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month - May Day 16 Year 1854

5. Place of birth Peoria, Illinois.

6. Name of Father Thomas N. Shepherd Place of birth Nebraska

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Elizabeth Shepherd Place of birth Illinois

Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 4

Anna R. Barry
Interviewer
August 17, 1937

Interview with
Thomas N. Shepherd
117 South Grand Avenue
El Reno, Oklahoma.

I was born near Peoria, Illinois, on May 16, 1884, and was taken at the age of two years by my parents to Morris County, Kansas, where they located on a farm. Reared on a farm, I had very little schooling, as our closest school at that time was over four miles. It usually lasted three months during the Fall and Winter. In the periods of vacation, I worked in the fields, becoming familiar with the best methods of plowing, planting and harvesting.

My older brother, Lima Shepherd, had left Kansas for the opening of Oklahoma for settlement in 1889, and staked a claim one mile north and two miles east of Piedmont, in Canadian County. From this time, until the spring of 1891 my brother kept writing for me to come to Oklahoma.

On March 16, 1891, I left Winfield, Kansas, in a covered wagon with my uncle's family named Adams. They were coming to El Reno with the hope of filing on land. They

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were anxious to get where it was more seasonable and crops could be raised. We traveled the first day until we came to a creek with plenty of wood and water. He made camp and settled down for the night. From every direction came the howl of the wolf and coyote.

Sometime in the night, my uncle shook me severely and told me to get up, to go to a house not far away, and see where we might find a doctor, as his wife expected a visit from the stork that night. I got up, jumped on a saddle horse, rode up to this house, woke the people up and asked them where we might find a doctor. They told me a country doctor by the name of Kingsley lived about four miles from there.

Doctor Kingsley was fat and about sixty. He claimed to be the best doctor in that part of the country. He came riding to our camp in an old buggy. About two o'clock in the morning, he hopped from the wagon, grinning.

"A fine boy," he said heartily, "a fine boy. Before you folks know it he'll be helping you do the chores when you get on your new claim and asking for money to take the girls to the picture show." Then he glanced at his thick silver watch, "Got to be going, another call to make yet

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tonight. Better camp here for a couple of weeks and I'll drop around in a day or so to see how the family is getting along."

"Thanks Doc," Uncle Ed suddenly looked worried again, "Doc, you know things haven't been so good with me this year. I'm a little short of cash-when I get on a claim and make a crop."

"Forget it," the doctor said, slapping my uncle on the back. "When you make a crop is soon enough for me."

Uncle Ed looked relieved, "Gee, Doctor you don't know me."

"Must be hurrying on," Doctor Kingsley interrupted, "Take good care of the family." He pulled his cap down over his ears and bent his head to the cold wind, stepped into his buggy, and disappeared up the road. He camped here nearby three weeks. This doctor and my uncle became good friends.

We came on to El Reno. After I had rested a day or two, I started walking northeast one morning about ten o'clock bound for the little town of Piedmont. As I went to pass a little ravine in the late afternoon a voice rang out, "Welcome to Oklahoma," A large man stood in

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front of me. In his hands was a six-shooter. He said, "Just turn over your money and you can be on your way."

At this I turned my pockets. Out fell my money, a five dollar bill. How I hated to see that money go. In an instant this fellow jumped on his horse which was hidden in the bushes near-by, and was lost in a cloud of dust.

As I traveled on over the open prairie here and there stood a little frame shack, with smoke circling from a stove pipe on each little hut.

When I first came to Piedmont, the plows had just turned small patches of sod and the work of improvement had scarcely begun. My brother lived in a walled up tent until he built a little frame house twelve by fourteen feet. It had two windows and one door; boxes and blocks served as chairs.

I continued to live in Canadian County for several years, working at several different jobs, hauling lumber for people, fencing land, breaking sod, and herding cattle. Wages were very cheap, from seventy-five cents to one dollar per day for labor.

A short while after the Kiowa-Comanche Opening on

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August 6, 1901; I bought a claim which was located four miles northeast of Lawton. I paid \$300.00 for this claim. I was at Lawton during the period of registration which was held from July 10 to 26, 1901. It was estimated that nearly eighty-eight thousand people registered for claims at Lawton during this time. The capacity of the young city was tested to its limits in taking care of the huge crowds which came when the registration began. The streets were transformed into outdoor restaurants; every residence was turned into a hotel, and even porches were at a premium for sleeping purposes.

I improved my claim with a little frame house twelve by sixteen feet. In 1905, I sold my claim, having become dissatisfied with this country. I decided to move back to Canadian County, so I might be near my brother who was still living near Piedmont.

On April 6, 1904, I married Elizabeth Bancock who lived near the little town of Sugden. After selling my claim we moved to El Reno, which by this time had grown to be a fair sized city. In 1906, I bought two lots in

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El Reno, paying twenty dollars each for them, and built a little three room house.