

REASONOVER, FLORENCE V.

INTERVIEW

12888

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BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

#12888

REASONOVER, FLORENCE V. INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Alexis D. McDowell

This report made on (date) January 12, 1938

- 1. Name Mrs. Florence V. Reasonover
- 2. Post Office Address 118 S. Virginia, Bartlesville, Oklahoma
- 3. Residence address (or location) 118 S. Virginia, Bartlesville
- 4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 8 Year 1892
- 5. Place of birth Greenville, Bond County, Illinois

- 6. Name of Father Charles A. Willeford Place of birth Illinois  
Other information about father now living in California
- 7. Name of Mother Sarah H. Hockett Place of birth Iowa  
Other information about mother Now living in California

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 6

Alene . Mc cwell  
Research Field Worker  
Indian-Tioneer History, 8-149  
January 12, 1948

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Interview with  
Mrs. Florence V. Reasonover  
118 S. Virginia  
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

Mrs. Florence V. Reasonover was born June 8,  
1892, near Greenville, Bond County, Illinois.

Father - Charles . . . . . born in  
Bond County, Illinois, . . . . . He made  
his home in Illinois until 1896 when he removed  
to the Indian Territory. He is now living on a  
orchard fruit ranch in the Imperial Valley, near  
Saltonstead, California.

Mother - Sarah . . . . . born  
June 16, 1878 in . . . . . She moved  
to Illinois with her parents when she was quite  
young, living in that state until after her marriage.  
She is now living at . . . . . California.

I came from Illinois to the Indian Territory  
with my parents in 1896, when I was four years old.  
My father, with another man and his son, made the  
trip with three covered wagons. They crossed the  
Mississippi River at St. Louis, Illinois, drove  
across the state of Missouri, into . . . . .  
into the Indian Territory, where he settled on a

homestead in Dewey County, located about 60 miles west of Kingfisher. When he was settled he sent for the family and we came to Kingfisher on the train where he met us and we completed our journey in a wagon.

My father left Illinois in the spring of 1896 and was several weeks on the road for the mode of transportation was slow.

When we arrived at our new home my mother was very discouraged for there were no improvements on the place. It was warm weather and we lived in a tent until my father could build us a home. By the time cold weather arrived he had completed a dug out for living quarters and we were quite comfortable. That winter he built a two room frame house. We lived in the dug out in the winter and the house in the summer for three years.

Our neighbors were few for there were only three white families in our vicinity. There was a drilled well on our place and the three families hauled water from this well.

Our furniture was mostly made of boxes. We had

boxes nailed together for a cabinet, boxes for chairs, a home made table and our beds were built in one corner of the house. My father bought the first dresser in the community, which was quite a novelty.

One day my mother opened the box where the flour was kept and a snake was coiled in the flour. It did not frighten her for snakes were numerous and we often found them in or near the house. She shot the snake and the incident was forgotten. We often found centipedes under the mattress of our beds.

Our principal foods were salt meat, coffee, meal, flour and dried fruits. Wild game was plenteous and there was no closed season on game, so our fresh meat was mostly deer, quail, turkey and prairie chicken. I saw eleven deer jump over our corral fence one morning.

We received our mail at Dewey, in Kingfisher County, a little settlement about one and one-half miles east of our home where there was a post office in the country store and a school house. Mr. Doud ran the store and post office.

The first school I attended was in a log school

house on my father's claim. We had long benches for seats. There was an enrollment of 21 pupils, eight Negroes and 13 Whites and our teacher was M. r. Strickland. I have a picture of this school.

The girls wore gingham and percale dresses made mother-Hubbard style, ankle length and long sleeves. The boys wore home made trousers and shirts.

We were surrounded by Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians and when we first came here my mother and we children were afraid of them. They were considered civilized at that time but when they wore their war paint they looked hideous. They traveled over the country swapping for puppies to use for food.

When we settled in Dewey County in 1896, Kingfisher had one store and a depot. My father freighted from Kingfisher to the Indian cantonment five miles south of our home. It took three days to make the trip of about 65 miles. There was a school for the Arapaho Indians at the cantonment and the Indians also drew their payments there. If the Indians were friendly with the Whites they

proved their friendship by presenting them with a gift. When my father returned from one of his freighting trips the Indians gave him a dress for my sister and me. These dresses were made of bright colored material and were made with a tight fitting waist and full gathered skirt.

We visited one of the Indian tepee villages and they were very friendly with us. There was a fire in the center of the tepee and we all sat in a circle around the fire on the ground. They tried in their crude way to entertain us. We often attended their celebrations and war dances. At one of their celebrations they had a buffalo skull placed on a pole and they all danced around it and worshiped it. I do not know the significance of this custom but they were very serious. They had fresh beef strung on wires around the camp to dry.

While we lived in the Cheyenne country the Indians scalped a white man, then skinned him alive. He ran about 100 yards then fell dead. This is the only hideous crime I remember the

Indians committing while we lived there.

A Baptist missionary organized a Sunday school in our ~~community~~ and my mother was superintendent. We had Sunday school each Sunday but only had preaching when the missionary visited us.

In 1899 we removed to Woodward County and settled near Sharon. My father bought a school section of 1200 acres of land where he operated a small ranch. He usually worked about six cowboys and at round up time about 12. When we were older my sister and I herded cattle also.

When I was about 8 years old I was herding cattle one day near a deep gorge or canyon when a bob cat trailed me and suddenly appeared. It trotted up within a few feet of where I was sitting on my pony and sat with its tongue out looking at me. I was too young to realize the danger I was in and was not frightened, however I stayed on my pony. It finally trotted away as suddenly as it had appeared.

Our only entertainment was the country dances and literary. I have a ballad book of cowboy songs



that was used at these entertainments.

My father brought home a little bull dog that we kept around the house for protection. One exceptionally hot day a couple of the steers had wandered away from the herd and were grazing near the house. They seemed restless and my mother tried to drive them away from the house. One of these Texas long horns attacked her and would have killed her if the little bull dog had not interfered. She got into the house somehow before she collapsed from fright.

There was a salt spring near our home and the boys would boil the water until it was evaporated, then haul the salt to the cattle-lick by the wagon loads.

We lived in a cattle country and there was very little farming carried on in our vicinity. We raised a garden and some small grain.

There was a ferry over the Arkansas River near Sallisaw and I believe there was a toll bridge there at one time.

We forded the North Canadian River at Fort Supply, Northwest of our home, in Woodward County

and the South Canadian River in Dewey County but I do not remember the exact location of this ford.

I spent my childhood in the Indian Territory when it was a vast area of undeveloped land used as a cattle range by the white man and as a reservation for the Indians where they could hunt and live a carefree life. We did not dream at that time that we were helping develop the land and make a home for our future generations in what is now the state of Oklahoma.