

REED, ALBERT

INTERVIEW

#10018

8

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

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10016.

Field Worker's name Anna R. Barry.

This report made on (date) February 16, 1938. 1938

1. Name Albert Reed.

2. Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma

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

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 26 Year 1852.

5. Place of birth Ozark, Arkansas. Franklin County.

6. Name of Father James Reed. Place of birth Kentucky.

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Edith Ross Reed. Place of birth Joplin, Missouri.

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 7.

REED, ALBERT.

INTERVIEW.

10016.

Anna R. Barry,  
Journalist,  
Feb. 16, 1938.

An Interview With Albert Reed,  
El Reno, Oklahoma.

Albert Reed was born in Franklin County, Arkansas, July 26, 1852, the son of James Reed and Edith (Ross) Reed. His father was a native of Kentucky and his mother of Joplin, Missouri. In their early life they moved to Arkansas, where Mrs. James Reed died during the Civil War. During the last three years of the Civil War, Albert's father, James Reed, served as a Union soldier; and had just been at home for a few days when he was killed by bushwhackers. After his mother's death, Albert Reed then just a lad ten years of age had no one to care for him, as his father was in the army, and he did not learn of his wife's death until a month after she was buried. Albert became very hungry and followed the soldiers so that he could obtain food. Finally he was taken to Chicago by a missionary and placed in an orphan's home, and here he stayed until he was twenty-one years of age.

REED, ALBERT.

INTERVIEW.

10016.

-2-

On September 25, 1882, Albert Reed was married to Alice Rogers and in 1886 this couple moved to western Kansas, locating on a farm near Hutchinson and continued to live in Kansas until just a week before the Opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho country in 1892. It was on April 12, 1892, that Mr. and Mrs. Albert Reed and their two small children climbed into their covered wagon, loaded with a few farming necessities, a breaking plow, shovels, an ax, hoes, and a coop of chickens tied on behind the wagon. Mr. Reed had set up a cookstove in the rear of the wagon, so that his wife might cook along the way as they traveled and they also fixed boards across the wagon and over these boards they placed a pair of bed springs and a mattress which made a very comfortable bed for their children to sleep on as they slowly traveled along.

As they traveled along other wagons joined them and by the time they reached Watonga in Blaine County, eleven wagons made up their company, which landed near the last of April, 1892. After they realized that they had arrived too late for the Opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho

REED, ALBERT.

INTERVIEW.

10016.

-3-

country on April 19, 1892, they all felt discouraged and several of these men debated whether to turn back or to remain a while on the prairie and see if they might scatter out and each one find a claim. Mr. Reed and his family went to the home of a brother-in-law, which was located nine miles south, one and one-half mile west of Watonga. To his surprise he found that a claim joining Mr. Reed's brother-in-law's claim on the west had not been staked. The Reed family quickly made camp at this claim and at once set to work making a half dugout, meanwhile living in their wagon until this little hut was completed. This took about three days of hard work spent in hauling the logs, poles, brush and grass needed for the roof and front of the dugout. It was bad enough for men to live in a dugout but it was far more trying on the women. After Mr. Reed had everything prepared about this little dugout with its home-made table, bed and everything ready to go to housekeeping and he asked his wife how she liked it, and she did no doubt what a good many others of her sex did, burst into tears. To Mrs. Reed it was living like a prairie dog to live in that kind of hole in

REED, ALBERT.

INTERVIEW.

10016.

-4-

the ground but she consented to do so after her husband had faithfully promised that they would have a little frame house built in less than six months time.

Mr. Reed cut and sawed wood and hauled it to El Reno for \$1.75 a load and sometimes he would be away from home three and four days at a time on one of these trips. They met many hardships and if a man could get as much as \$5.00 ahead he thought he was doing well.

Several men in Watonga combined banking with their merchandise business. Usually a vault and safe were installed in one corner of the store, pickles and cheese were sold, kerosene drawn, and money borrowed or deposited all under the same roof. As time went on, merchants and farm implement dealers pressed the farmers to mortgage their land to buy horses, implements, and other improvements. This led to much unwise buying and mortgaging and in the end many settlers were driven from their farms by foreclosures.

Many times a farmer bought a full line of farm implements and did not get them paid for before they had to be replaced. The mortgage game was not entirely a one-sided affair, for some people mortgaged their farms for all

REED, ALBERT.

INTERVIEW.

10016.

-5-

they could get, sometimes more than the farms were actually worth, and left the country, considering the place well sold. It was impossible to mortgage a claim until the homesteader "got his papers" and as a result cases were frequent when every horse, cow, hog, and chicken on the place was mortgaged. When the homestead was patented, usually the owner "plastered" a mortgage on it for from \$300.00 to \$500.00 and tried to pay out.

Mr. Reed hauled water in barrels which took up much of his time. A barrel was placed on a sled and to keep the water from slopping out, the top hoop was taken off, a cloth placed over the barrel, and the hoop driven back on again. Generally two neighbors helped one another to put down a well. The equipment needed was a rope, a log windlass, and two iron-bound buckets. In some parts of the country, layers of rock made blasting necessary. One of the great dangers of well digging was from damp. There were two kinds of damp, black damp and fire damp. Damp was simply a gas heavier than air which gathered in the bottom of the well and overcame the digger. In some parts of the country it was impossible to drive a well.

REED, ALBERT.

INTERVIEW.

10016.

-6-

One company patented a scheme and charged the settler a royalty for using it. The price was \$10.00 for each well. The principle was that of driving a sharp-pointed pipe into the ground and adding more lengths of pipe as it was driven. When the point struck sand which was filled with water a pump was placed on the top of the pipe.

Of all the frontier amusements dancing held first place in the towns, and every new building that went up was the signal for a dance by way of dedication. These dedications were usually accompanied by the little brown jug. Dances were held on every holiday; when a new bridge was built; when a couple were married and on any other occasion on which an excuse for a dance could be found. The dances were held in homes, barns, stores, restaurants, hotel dining rooms and even on platforms on the open prairie at picnics. Mr. Reed played the fiddle for many of these dances. He would begin playing with four good strings and would often end with only two or three. With his instrument he ground out such tunes as "Fisher's Hornpipe", "Devils Dream", "Arkansas Traveler" and "Golden



REED, ALBERT.

INTERVIEW.

10016.

-7-

Slippers". He usually made \$3.00 each night when playing at these dances.

Mr. Reed and his family lived on their homestead fourteen years, then sold it and moved to El Reno. In 1911, Mrs. Reed passed away and is buried in Beckham County. Mr. and Mrs. Reed are the parents of two sons, both living in California. Mr. Reed is proud of the fact that he is considered one of the pioneers of Oklahoma.