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

**GREENLEY, ADELIA THOMPSON. INTERVIEW. 10553.**

Field Worker's name Nora L. Lorrin.

This report made on (date) April 22, 1938. 1938

Name Adelia Thompson Greenley.

Post Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.

Residence address (or location) 209 South Barker Avenue.

DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 1 Year 1858.

Place of birth Dubuque County, Iowa.

Name of Father Mathias Thompson. Place of birth England, 1824.

Other information about father Died in the United States 1897.

Name of Mother Ann Marie Gooding Thompson. Place of birth England, 1829.

Other information about mother Died in Iowa about 1865.

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and history 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 \_\_\_\_\_.

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Nora Lorrin,  
Investigator,  
Apr. 22, 1938.

Interview With Adelia Thompson Greenley,  
209 South Barker Avenue, El Reno.

I was born in Dubuque County, Iowa, February 1, 1858. My father, Mathias Thompson, was born in Lincolnshire, England, in 1824 and died at Farley, Iowa, in 1897. My mother, Ann Marie Gooding Thompson was born in England about 1829 and died in Iowa about 1865. My parents were married in England and came to the United States about 1848. They settled in Dubuque County, Iowa, and I grew up in that county.

Mr. George Greenley and I were married in 1886, and went to live on a farm located sixteen miles northwest of Dubuque, Iowa, living there for about three years and our only child, a son, was born to us while we were living on that farm.

We were far enough away from the Iowa bluffs to be in good farming country; most of the farm homes around that part of the country were good houses, they were small, however, and there were some country farm houses that were old.

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I saw the Mississippi River when it was on a rampage, there was a big hotel in Dubuque that was nine blocks from the river and the water came to the place where it stood. Part of the town was in low ground and, of course, it flooded and people who lived in that part of town had to move out until the water subsided. I went to Chicago one time on the train and the train went through water for miles. It was not deep but it was up over and covering the track.

We sold our farm near Dubuque, Iowa, and bought another one in Sac County, Iowa. Our nearest town was just a small hamlet adjoining our farm called Early, we lived on this farm for about ten years, or until we came to Oklahoma.

Oklahoma was made the subject of write-ups the nation over, in an effort to get people to leave their homes and come and help to settle up the new country. Some people think that Oklahoma was much over-rated, and some have a better opinion of it and think that it couldn't be over-rated. We read a lot about it as did most everyone else and we listened to conversations of people who came down to see the new country, people who were enthusiastic about it, and hearing so much praise of the country, we sold out and came.

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We came down on the train, in 1899, shipping our bedding and other household goods. We stopped first at Pond Creek, in the Cherokee Strip country, but did not like the prospect there at all, so only stayed there a day or two, then they left and came on down to El Reno.

We bought a home here but only lived in it a month or two, then bought the home we are living in now, at 209 South Barker Avenue. We have lived at that location ever since that time, the house was large and in the nicest part of town at that time. We later enlarged the building.

We started to keeping boarders after we had been in our new home about a year and kept it up until about twelve years ago, when we stopped that and decided just to keep roomers. We are getting up in years and feeding people is real work and takes the energy of a younger person.

Soon after we started taking in boarders Judge J. I. Phelps came to room and board at our place and stayed with us for two years, also J. L. Trevathan, lawyer, roomed at our boarding house for quite awhile. Al Jennings, the very notorious outlaw and bank robber, stayed one night at our place. It happened shortly after a bank had been robbed,

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and people thought that he had something to do with it, everyone was talking about it. He showed up one night and wanted a room and I let him have one and would not have known who he was but some of the roomers recognized him and told me. I didn't know what to do, so I did nothing. I was very much afraid of him, but he dressed and acted like anyone else and if he carried a gun it was not in evidence.

The town of El Reno has changed so much that it is hard to tell about it. When we came here it was not nearly as large as it is now; there was no paving and not many sidewalks, there were no sidewalks in front of our boarding house. Nearly all of the churches that are here now were here then but the buildings then were small, not the fine large structures that you see today. There were a good many saloons, and the churches were needed. Most of the houses over town were made of old planking and looked more like barns than homes, our own house was weatherboarded but many of the houses were not.

I used to see lots of Indians and boarded some of them, especially one Indian squaw who had married a white man named Biggerstaff. They roomed with me and I saw a lot of Mrs.

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Biggerstaff's full blood Indian relatives, I never got to know their names as I did not like Indians and did not associate with them closer than in my business I was compelled to.

We never kept any negroes, of course, and the only time the color line came up was when a religious woman, I have forgotten what denomination the woman represented, <sup>came</sup> here one time with a colored man in tow and wanted me to let him have a room. I didn't dare to do it; my roomers would have left if I had. We finally compromised by letting him sleep in the barn, the woman was some sort of an evangelist, and got the notion that there should be no color line.

We traded at the Allison's grocery store ever since I have been in El Reno, first with the elder Mr. Allison. The present owner, his son, was about "knee high" when I began trading there. I also traded at the Waldo's grocery store, and at Sands grocery, which is no longer here. The Sands grocery used to be located at 101 South Rock Island Avenue, the Canadian Co-operative store is there now.

My husband was a Civil War veteran and, of course, was much interested in the fort so we went out there occasionally

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just to look it over, but never got well acquainted with anyone living out there for I was kept too busy keeping my boarders fed and comfortable to do much going.

There was no gas at that time and I had to use coal and wood for fuel. Men would go out of town somewhere, get wood and cut it up into stove lengths and sell it on the streets, we have bought our wood that way lots of times, but I do not remember what was paid for it.

So far as the food proposition is concerned, much of it was the kind that you buy in sacks, such as rice, beans, and dried fruits, apples, prunes, peaches and pears. Of course, there was canned fruit and other canned stuff but not at all like it is now. Butter and eggs came from country housewives, we had no creamery butter, as we do now and sometimes we got good butter and sometimes not, depending on who made it and how clean and carefully it was prepared.

My husband still owns an old army gun that was carried during the Civil War; it has one hammer on the right side of the gun and is fired with cap. The steel ramrod is tied to the gun with some ancient binder twine.

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I rode in one of the first autos that ever came to El Reno. The Elks staged a fair and the auto was one of the attractions; you could ride it at 10¢ a ride.

My son was given a coon as a pet by one of the boarders and another boarder gave him a little prairie dog that they had gotten out near Anadarko, That prairie dog made one of the cutest pets I ever saw. One of its accomplishments was to play dead and it could do it most effectively.

I still keep a few roomers, but not so many as formerly.