

COUCH, ALBERT COLUMBUS

INTERVIEW

#8848

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**COUCH, ALBERT COLUMBUS INTERVIEW**  
**BIOGRAPHY FORM** 8848  
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Mildred B. McFarland

This report made on (date) October 12 1937

1. Name Albert Columbus Couch

2. Post Office Address Luther, Okla.

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 19 Year 1875

5. Place of birth Wichita, Kansas.

6. Name of Father W. L. Couch Place of birth N. Carolina

Other information about father Born 1850

7. Name of Mother Cynthia E. Gordon Place of birth N. Carolina

Other information about mother Born 1847

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Mildred B. McFarland  
Interviewer  
October 12, 1937

Interview with  
Albert Columbus Couch  
Luther, Oklahoma.

I lived with my mother, two brothers and a sister in Wichita, Kansas, until about twelve years of age. My father, Captain W. L. Couch, was away a greater part of the time. He was regarded as a very active character and guardian of the Western half of Kansas at that time. In 1880, he became fully identified with Captain David L. Payne's Oklahoma Colony.

After the death, in 1884, of Captain Payne, my father was elected president of the organization for the opening of the Indian Country to civilization. He spent much time in 1880 in Washington, D. C. He was the most prominent in conducting the lobby before Congress, which eventually resulted in the bill for the opening of the original Oklahoma Territory. In 1889, he assisted thousands to locate homes in the opening of Oklahoma.

He filed his claim on the quarter section where

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the old Court House now stands in Oklahoma City. He erected one of the first cabins in that neighborhood. His claim was contested by J. C. Adams, and on April 22, 1890, just one year later, <sup>Adams</sup> shot my father over the dispute. <sup>Father</sup> died a short time later. My father, one brother and myself were putting up a fence, when Mr. Adams came across the field, and without warning, deliberately opened fire. I was an eye witness to <sup>my father's</sup> death. I was thirteen years of age and if I live to be one hundred thirteen, that scene will always stand out vividly in my memory.

I remained in Oklahoma City with my widowed mother, brothers and sister. As my father was associated with the Sante Fe Railroad Company, the family had a free pass. He had contracted to lay all the switches for the company before the run.

As Guthrie was the Capital City at that time, I went there quite a lot, trying to find work. I finally succeeded. I became one of the first pages in the first territorial legislative assembly at Guthrie. It met in an upstairs store room. There was a bill up to move the

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Capital from Guthrie to Oklahoma City. It passed the House at three o'clock. Of course the citizens were very much opposed to its removal and were very angry. It still had to pass in the Senate. It met directly downstairs, but one had to go down to the street before entering the Senate Chamber.

The angry mob was milling around the door, threatening to tear to pieces the person who carried the bill down stairs. Of course they wouldn't suspect a small boy of having it, so Dan Peery called to me, and placing it in my inside coat pocket, buttoned it up tight and told me to take it down. Not being afraid of anything, down I went.

Dan Peery followed behind, hoping to shield me from harm. The crowd spied him and started after him. "Get him, he is the man with the Bill," they cried, and started to grab him just as he burst in the Senate door. I ran behind him and we ran out the back door. We passed the door of a butcher shop and Mr. Peery darted in and shut himself up in the ice box.

I kept on running and the crowd followed, thinking

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I, too, was running after him. Of course they lost his trail and I finally got back to the Senate with the bill. The governor finally vetoed it however.

My father always wanted to see the Capitol Building located on the site called Round Grove in Oklahoma City. It is now called "Stiles Park." I have a picture of him with a few other men, sitting on a bench at that place, discussing the beauty of the place for the Capitol.

He was elected Oklahoma City's first mayor in 1889.

At the age of twenty I was appointed Indian Agent for the Kickapoo Tribe. One day I had to make the trip from Oklahoma City on horseback to pay off the allotments to the Indians. When I had finished my business with them, the Chief insisted I eat with them. They had a stew cooking in a large black kettle, Indian fashion, out of doors. It smelled delicious. It contained large pieces of meat, corn and potatoes. After the meal was finished and I was ready to leave, I happened to glance up in a tree. There hung the

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heads of two dogs. I asked about them and the chief pointed to the big kettle in which the stew had been cooked. I knew then I had eaten my first piece of dog-meat.

I graduated from high school in Oklahoma City. At the age of twenty three, in 1900, I took a trip to Cape Nome, Alaska, with a party of gold prospectors. Our ship became ice bound for three weeks in the Behring Strait, and I missed the gold rush. The other part of our party struck a rich vein of gold.

In 1901, I married Inez G. Fall. We built our home in Luther, Okla. It is located on the claim filed by Al Blizzard, who made the run on the Kickapoo reservation.

We have lived in Luther for the past thirty-six years. In 1912, I was elected County Commissioner. In 1924, I was nominated for County Sheriff on the republican ticket, but was defeated. I was chairman of the Luther Chamber of Commerce, a director of the school board and am at the present time president of the same. I was mayor of Luther from 1924

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until the beginning of 1937, when I resigned. I am Vice President and director of the First National Bank of Luther and own a large hardware store at the present time.

I am sixty-one years of age and still enjoy and am active in public activities.