

ELKINS, A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW 13749

325

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

ELKINS A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW

13749

Field Worker's name Grace Kelley

This report made on (date) April 27, 1938 1938

1. Name A. LeRoy Elkins

2. Post Office Address Henryetta, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 4th and Division

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 5, Year 1869

5. Place of birth Texas

6. Name of Father William Elkins Place of birth Tennessee

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

7. Name of Mother Sallie Cantrel Place of birth Tennessee

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

ELKINS, A. LEROY (REV) INTERVIEW.

13749

Field Worker, Grace Kelley,  
April 27, 1938.

Interview with A. LeRoy Elkins,  
Henryetta, Oklahoma.

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My first trip to the Indian Territory was to Lebanon, in the Chickasaw Nation, in 1894. I held a three weeks' meeting and my audience was composed of negroes, whites and Indians, all under the same arbor. I had come in a two-horse hack 250 or 300 miles and stayed in private homes, as there were no hotels where I wanted to preach. All preachers received poor pay but I did receive \$3.25 for holding that meeting; some times there would be no collection whatever.

My next meetings were held two miles north of Bennington in the Choctaw Nation which was missionary work under the Church of Christ. There were just a few families and they were Indians and white people, but they paid me \$11.00, or \$8.00 more than the larger gathering. The first preachers or missionaries weren't working for the money but to save souls..

ELKINS, A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW.

13749

-2-

## Mannville Church, 1895.

In 1895 I moved to Mannville which was the strongest church except the one at Ardmore that I knew about in the Indian Territory. They had a good church house that was paid for. This congregation were white people and a few Chickasaw Indians; as good as anyone now, both morally and spiritually.

## Nebo.

Nebo had as bad conditions as Mannville had good. There were three stores and a post office there then but after the highway came through to Ardmore they were moved a mile from the original site to the highway. It has now faded entirely out of existence.

One day I had a good crowd and there was a row standing about three or four feet in front of me when three groups of boys started shooting through the schoolhouse where we were holding the meeting. They had separated and were shooting from different directions; there was no use to dodge and if we moved we might walk right in

ELKINS, A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW.

13749

-3-

front of a bullet, so we just stood there and let the bullets fly. A bullet hit a bench, glanced off and hit a man in the foot but it only bruised his foot a little bit, didn't really injure it. That was the only person hit. It was as near a miracle as I ever expect to see, some of the bullets came through the walls and passed between me and that row of persons standing in front of me. I continued working there for five years despite the ones who didn't want me there.

#### Doctoring and Preaching.

From the first time I had seen the Indian Territory I was disgusted with the doctors here so I decided to study medicine. I studied under a good doctor until I felt that I knew as much as the other Indian Territory doctors, then I started doctoring before I had a diploma. I now have three. I started practicing in 1897 and continued for fourteen years, but I also continued preaching.

I was doctoring while I was at Nebo. I rode horseback to visit the sick who couldn't come to my home;

ELKINS, A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW.

13749

-4-

my major surgery cases were taken to the Fort Worth hospital for the operation unless it was an emergency case, then I operated in my own home. I had no trouble with infection for I was as careful about sanitation or cleanliness as possible, and I have always thought and said that germs came to an incision because infection is there, and not that the germs caused the infection. I believe that doctors scare people with the germ idea more than is necessary, yet I know there are numerous germs that I have seen through the microscopes.

I went to see a man with pneumonia who lived in the filthiest dugout I was ever in (Some of the dugouts were as clean as houses, the difference was the families).

I told my wife that if he lived filth couldn't kill anyone; he lived.

#### Smallpox Epidemics.

I doctored during two smallpox epidemics and two flu epidemics. The first smallpox was thought to be Cuban itch and the doctors didn't want to call it

ELKINS, A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW.

13749

-5-

smallpox. That was in 1899 and I hadn't ever seen smallpox, but as soon as I saw it I knew it. Smallpox is a cleanser of the system if no medicine is given. The only necessary treatment is isolation, sanitation and plenty of cold drinks to break the disease out, but no food. I had thirteen patients in my home at the same time and gave only one dose of medicine; I took the disease and had about a dozen pustules on my person. Dr. Looney gave calomel to his patients and lost them. I tried to tell him not to physic them but when he was stricken he took calomel and died.

Didn't believe in Vaccinations.

I have never given a vaccination or other inoculation against diseases; they have broken more people's health than they have done good. The Government gave healthy young men all the "shots" that could be found; that is why we have so many wrecked World War Veterans today.

When I lived at Davis, the third town from Ardmore, I found some smallpox and told the Health Officer about

ELKINS, A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW.

13749

-6-

it, as that was required of all doctors. He said that he would have to go to the school and vaccinate all of the children. I said, "All of the children except mine. I'd rather they had the smallpox." He tried to argue with me but I told him that if he was going to vaccinate all the rest of the children anyway it would hurt nothing if mine did take the disease for the others would be protected against it, but if nobody else took the disease how could mine be exposed? He said he had never seen anyone like me but he didn't vaccinate my children and they didn't take the disease either.

When I was at Fort Sill during the World War they wanted to vaccinate me and my family. My wife and I had the smallpox in 1899 but our daughter hadn't had it at all. When they asked me if we had had it I said, "Yes," and they didn't doubt me as I was there as a Chaplain. I felt that a person shouldn't be compelled to go against their belief in things of that kind.

ELKINS, A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW. 13749

-7-

#### My Education.

My mother died when I was a boy and when I was sixteen years old I was always complaining about not being able to go to school. My father was a farmer and kept me at home to help on the farm. He said that if I didn't like the way he was taking care of me, maybe I would like to get out and take care of myself. So I left home.

I'd work part of the year and go to school the other part, and when I was twenty years old I started to teaching school. I'd teach and save my money until I could go back to school again. I've been in college three times since I've been married, besides the studying that I've done at home and by lamplight.

In June, 1900, I received my Medical Diploma from the Metropolitan Medical College, now the Chicago Physicians' and Surgeons' School, and as there was no registration law in the Indian Territory I registered in Texas. Since that time I received the Surgical and Osteopathic diplomas. I studied

ELKINS, A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW.

13749

-8-

Psychology and Hypnotism at college and all I could find about the mind, especially the mind over the body.

#### Osteopathy.

I used Osteopathy all the time with my medical doctoring. I've had people brought to me with rheumatism who were so that they couldn't walk and in seven to eighteen days they could walk by my giving them the treatments; I couldn't have done that with medicines. I also taught classes the art of Osteopathy .

#### Psychology.

A good physician must use psychology on his patients. One time I went to see Mrs. Maxwell of Coalgate. I was their family physician and they were one of my best paying families. She was a large fat woman. It was in the summertime and she was tossing from one side of the bed to the other. There wasn't much fever and no pain; all that I could find the matter with her was nerves or a neurotic disorder.

ELKINS, A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW.

13749

-9-

I gave her a sedative but it did no good that I could see. She told me that she had had quite a few spells like this one before and that the only thing that would do any good was morphine. She just kept telling me that, you might say begging for the morphine. I gave her another sedative with the same effect and told her that morphine was for pain but as she had no pain, nerves required just the opposite medicine, as morphine would make them worse after it had worn off.

Finally, I took a white tablet from my case and sat holding it as I talked, so that she could see it for a while. Then I asked the daughter for a glass of water so that I could give the morphine to her mother; as soon as she took it she went to sleep. I sat there an hour until she awakened, as I wanted to watch the effect of my psychological experiment.

When she awakened she seemed very pleased with herself and said, "See, Doctor? I told you that the only thing that would help me was morphine." I

-10-

could have kept my mouth shut and she would never have known the difference but I didn't want her to think I had done something that I hadn't, so I told her that I had no morphine in my case and had told her so when I first came out to see her. That I had given her a harmless little tablet but not a bit of morphine as I knew she didn't need it. Well, to say that she got angry would be to put it very mildly. She told me just what she thought of me and I was never called to her house again. I did right by using psychology on her but I shouldn't have told her about it if I had wanted to keep a good paying patient.

#### Hypnotism

One of my ways of earning money was as a hypnotist, as I had studied that while in college. I would ask someone from the audience to be my subject. Sometimes I'd have a whole row on the stage at one time. One fellow started up toward the stage; he said that he had given permission to several different hypnotists but they hadn't been able to put him to sleep.

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ELKINS, A. LEROY. (REV.) INTERVIEW. 13749

-11-

He said that he was absolutely willing if I thought I could do it. He came up on the stage with a whole row of other folk and he was the first to succumb. I put him on a bicycle and had him ride it. I didn't often have accidents but he fell off of the bicycle and bruised his cheek a little bit. I picked him up, put him back on the bicycle and had him finish the ride, then woke him up. About the first thing he said was, "I knew that you couldn't put me to sleep, nobody ever has so far." One of his neighbors who had come to the show with him asked him how he bruised his cheek. He felt of the place and didn't know how it happened, and the neighbor told him that he fell off the bicycle and hurt it.

The strongest minded people were the easiest to hypnotize. Fickle minded persons gave me the most trouble for you have to have their consent and they can change their mind faster than you can do the work. This is an act that I did quite often as it thrilled

ELKINS, A. LEROY. (REV.) INTERVIEW. 13749

-12-

folk but I'll describe one certain time. I had a young lady on the stage, put her to sleep and asked a lady for a hatpin; they all had hatpins in those days. Then I pulled the skin out from her wrist and stuck the pin entirely through that flesh and had the audience pass by and see that there was no trick to it. I'd tell them to examine it closely but not to hurt her as she was helpless. Her father came up and looked at it and said he could awaken her. I told him to go ahead and try if he wanted to, but not to abuse her. He called to her, shook her and slapped her face a couple of times but she didn't awaken. He said that she was an obedient daughter and if she had heard his voice she would have answered and that there was no trick to the act. I pulled the pin from her wrist, rubbed the little round dots where it had passed through and told him that she would never know that they were there if someone didn't tell her about them. Then I awakened her.

I've seen but never did this act but it caused no harm, just made little round dots where the needle went

ELKENS, A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW.

13749

-13-

through. The hypnotizer took a needle and thread and sewed the subject's mouth shut. It caused no pain, nor blood to flow, nor infection afterward. Modern doctors would say that infection was certain as the needle and thread hadn't been sterilized.

#### Teaching School and Preaching.

Professor S. A. Maroney and I started the Maroney Private Academy about 1895. There were no public schools in the Indian Territory for the white children. We had about seventy-five or one hundred pupils when we started, for that was just a village and I kept a few boarding pupils in my home. Everyone came by the month and paid by the month, \$2.00 to \$4.00, owing to the grade they were in. We had the primary, intermediate, high school and what would be called Junior College now. There were no regular grades as children are now graded, though.

We weren't really making expenses so two years later, when I received a request to come to Earl and take over the school there, the superintendent had died,

ELKINS, A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW.

13749

-14-

we turned the school over to the city and abandoned it. Professor S. A. Maroney lives at Stillwater.

When I held a protracted meeting at Daugherty, they needed me in the school so I moved there and lived there several years, teaching school on week days, preaching on Sundays and holding evangelistic meetings in the summertime.

#### Debating Against Socialism.

All this time I held many debates against Socialism and Evolution in different parts of the country, at least a hundred of these. I felt that these debates did as much good as when I was preaching because these two beliefs are contrary to the teachings of the Bible and I had larger crowds than when preaching. All classes came to these debates that wouldn't go to Church.

#### Earning a Living.

I made more money with my doctoring in the early days than any other way. I received very little compensation for my preaching until 1905, but all my wages since that time have come from the ministry. Before

ELKINS, A. LEROY (REV.) INTERVIEW.

13749

-15-

that time my wife and children helped by farming.

Church of Christ Orphan's Home.

The Orphan's Home was started in Texas in 1918 but we could receive no help from the town where it was located so we started looking for a town that would help build a permanent home. We finally decided to move to Tipton for they gave eighty acres of fine land and the opportunity to build a real home. It is now one of the best and has from 230 to 240 children in training all the time. I preached every night and took up a collection to run this orphan's home and feel that it is one of my chief accomplishments.