

Fort Hays State University

## FHSU Scholars Repository

---

College of Education One-Room Schoolhouse  
Oral Histories

Archives Online

---

7-16-1987

### Educational Research : An Oral History of Jenny Albrecht

Doug Finch

*Fort Hays State University*

Allen Walter

*Fort Hays State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/ors>

#### Content Disclaimer

The primary source materials contained in the Fort Hays State University Special Collections and Archives have been placed there for research purposes, preservation of the historical record, and as reflections of a past belonging to all members of society. Because this material reflects the expressions of an ongoing culture, some items in the collections may be sensitive in nature and may not represent the attitudes, beliefs, or ideas of their creators, persons named in the collections, or the position of Fort Hays State University.

---

#### Recommended Citation

Finch, Doug and Walter, Allen, "Educational Research : An Oral History of Jenny Albrecht" (1987). *College of Education One-Room Schoolhouse Oral Histories*. 281.

<https://scholars.fhsu.edu/ors/281>

This Document is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives Online at FHSU Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in College of Education One-Room Schoolhouse Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of FHSU Scholars Repository.

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH  
AN ORAL HISTORY OF JENNY ALBRECHT

SUMMER SESSION  
July 16, 1987

PREPARED BY  
DOUG FINCH  
ALLEN WALTER

## CHAPTER TWO

An oral history with Jenny Albrecht of Natoma, Kansas, conducted by Doug Finch and Allen Walter on June 28, 1987.

D. Finch: We are here with Jenny Albrecht of Natoma, Kansas, and I appreciate you letting us come into your house and letting us do this oral history report. I need some personal information from you first. When is your birthday and where were you born?

J. Albrecht: June 30, 1897.

D. Finch: Where were you born?

J. Albrecht: On a farm, three and one half miles northwest of Fairport.

D. Finch: I see. I would also like to know your schools attended; grade school, high school, and your college.

J. Albrecht: I went to grade school on the farm right in the district, District 38 in Russell County, and I went to Russell High School for four years and graduated.

D. Finch: What year did you graduate?

J. Albrecht: 1916.

D. Finch: Did you go to college after that?

J. Albrecht: Well, I went to summer school for two summers and I had to teach school in order to do that.

D. Finch: So you started teaching in 1916 right out of High School.

J. Albrecht: Right.

D. Finch: OK, then how many years did you teach all together?

J. Albrecht: I taught seven years in the public schools and then I taught the rest of it, 16 years, in my private home.

D. Finch: What school did you teach your seven years at?

J. Albrecht: The one that is now part of Paradise was the Green School. Bellview, which is out northeast of town for two years. Then I was at the grade school for a year.

D. Finch: Grade school?

J. Albrecht: Yes, it was Grade School, District 39 in Ellis County.

D. Finch: One more question about you. Did you ever as a teacher win any kind of special awards?

J. Albrecht: Oh, I had some things at the county fair in Russell that took first; some pieces of crafts the children made.

D. Finch: Do you recall what year that was?

J. Albrecht: Oh, I believe it was in 1919 that I had some things at the Russell County fair.

D. Finch: Now we are going to get into some questions that I have for you over curriculum and the students. I would like for you to answer these the best you can. So, could you explain the basic idea of a one-room school house back in these times?

J. Albrecht: In a one-room school you went through all the grades if they were taught in that year or in coming years. If you were assigned 8th grade subjects, your first graders listened to it. This started on the first year.

D. Finch: In the school you served what area did it cover and what district is it now?

J. Albrecht: The three districts that I taught are now covered by the Natoma School District #399.

D. Finch: Do you remember when the school you first started teaching at was built?

J. Albrecht: The first school I taught at was a sod school house out there south of Burlington, Colorado.

D. Finch: You do not remember the town, but the school was made out of sod?

J. Albrecht: It was made out of sod and that was its last year.

D. Finch: Do you have any idea what the cost of that sod school was?

J. Albrecht: No, because the men plowed the sod with sod cutters and it was layed up by hand. I don't know what year, because the year I taught, I think it was it's last year.

D. Finch: Do you remember any of the school board members that were in the sod house you taught at? (Note: Jenny is 90 years old and had some trouble remembering which school we were talking about.)

J. Albrecht: Well, there was one family that used to live just southwest of Fairport, and that was A. W. Milford. Another one who lived there was Green, and let's see, I can't think of the other one, but there was one more.

D. Finch: OK, that's fine. How many children attended the school?

J. Albrecht: Sixteen.

D. Finch: Did this number fluctuate much from one year to another or did it stay the same?

J. Albrecht: It just depended. If there was work, people would move in and out according to their jobs.

D. Finch: How did the school that you taught differ from other schools in the area? Was there a significant difference or were they all the same?

J. Albrecht: This was a sod school and it had the one desk for two children. So that was different than if Ellis County because they got new desks for that school.

D. Finch: What problems did that sod school have?

J. Albrecht: Oh, we carried water.

D. Finch: Anything else?

J. Albrecht: Well, out here at Bellview we took a bucket, and we took turns at getting our hands washed. We would pump and then take turns at getting our hands washed and wiped all on their own.

D. Finch: Also, I would like to know who hired and fired the teachers at that time?

J. Albrecht: The school board. There were three members. They are the ones that decided and you had to sign a contract.

D. Finch: Did you have any meeting with the school board or did they pretty well leave you alone?

J. Albrecht: They left me alone unless I wanted something. I had to tell them when we were out of kindling for firewood out here at Bellview. I had to tell them to get me some cobs, and old Mr. Finnesy said, "Well sure get her some cobs. With that good lookin' teacher, I sure don't want her to start a fire without kindling".

D. Finch: How did you get your supplies and texts for the classroom?

J. Albrecht: They had to get their own. They had to know before school started or else the first day of school. If I didn't have the books, they'd have to go get some.

D. Finch: So the kids are responsible for all their own books.

J. Albrecht: Yes, their parents furnished the books.

D. Finch: How much money did it take to buy the supplies for the students back then?

J. Albrecht: I'd say one of the Big Chief Tablets was about 25 cents. I just don't remember.

D. Finch: What kind of activities did you have for the kids?

J. Albrecht: We played baseball, air base, and any outdoor games that could be played. And if they couldn't be played outdoors we played indoor games.

D. Finch: You played a lot of indoor games?

J. Albrecht: Whatever we could get managed in the room we had.

D. Finch: Was the school used for any other community activities?

J. Albrecht: Out there in Colorado they used it for their community meetings. They had a club, they called

it (pause) I can't remember now what it was called. Anyway, I have a copy of the home newspapers that we made.

D. Finch: What kind of contributions did the community have to the school? Did they do anything to really support you like Parent/Teacher conferences and things of that nature?

J. Albrecht: Not then.

D. Finch: They didn't have them back then?

J. Albrecht: They probably went to the superintendent by the name of Jenny Tressel.

D. Finch: You had a woman superintendent?

J. Albrecht: Yes, thats all I know.

D. Finch: Where did the school get the money to function everyday?

J. Albrecht: We got them from the taxes that were paid into the county treasury by the residents of the county.

D. Finch: Do you remember how much it cost to educate a student per year?

J. Albrecht: No, I don't know. I don't have any record of that. I just know I started out at \$50 a month. Then I got \$60 a month one year.

D. Finch: So when you started you were paid \$50. What was your ending salary?

J. Albrecht: \$120 a month.

D. Finch: \$120 a month. What year was that?

J. Albrecht: 1921.

D. Finch: How was your salary determined?

J. Albrecht: By what the school board thought their taxes could afford.

D. Finch: So they went on how much income they had so they could pay you.

J. Albrecht: Right.

D. Finch: Did you have any voice in the salary? Did you demand more money or did they set the amount and say, "Here, you have to take that much."?

J. Albrecht: Well, they gave a price you could go by and you could take it or leave it. You had to take it or you didn't live.

D. Finch: How often did you get a paycheck?

J. Albrecht: Every month.

D. Finch: Once a month, I see. We will get into some questions about the children. How did most of the children get to school?

J. Albrecht: They walked. It was out northeast of town and two beginners and myself rode a horse and buggy. I lived at their house and took them to school. That was the two Newton boys.

D. Finch: What was the average age the child began school?

J. Albrecht: Well, it was 5 and 6.

D. Finch: What grade levels did you teach when you were teaching back and forth?

J. Albrecht: I taught beginners through what they called 8 and 9.

D. Finch: Grades 8 and 9. So you had all of them in this one school?

J. Albrecht: If there were children for all of them, yes. Some of them only had 5 or 6 of the grades.

D. Finch: What happened if you didn't have any students eligible for the 5th grade? What did you do with the kids?

J. Albrecht: Well, if they were ready for 4th grade they went from 3rd to 4th and had their classes together.

D. Finch: What type of occupation did most of the students take up after they got out of school?

J. Albrecht: That, I didn't keep track of because I

went on. I had to go to other places, too.

D. Finch: Ok. How many years did most of the students stay in school?

J. Albrecht: I don't know that either because, like I say, unless they finished the year that I taught at that school, I didn't know what they did afterwards because I went on someplace else.

D. Finch: What were some of your major discipline problems you had while you were teaching?

J. Albrecht: I can't think of any particular ones. There were some freedoms that were allowed to give. If one needed help from another student that was allowable.

D. Finch: So you had tutors to help each other.

J. Albrecht: Well, if they asked to. To help themselves was alright. I had some that were slow learning and maybe had to have a little extra help.

D. Finch: But you didn't have problems as far as kids getting in fights....

J. Albrecht: No.

D. Finch: Or disrupting your class or being late or anything like that?

J. Albrecht: We had them on the playground at recess and I went out with them and at noon I was out there with them too.

D. Finch: Ok. What was the overall appearance of the students?

J. Albrecht: What do you mean? The way they were dressed?

D. Finch: Yes, the way they were dressed.

J. Albrecht: Well, they had their overalls and shirts and the girls had dresses. In one school out north of here, I shouldn't say this, but I asked that the girls be allowed to wear some bloomers to school. Because when one girl got up on a swing, we had a rope swing, when she'd get up on there, and not with the proper underclothes, it was a little embarrassing.

D. Finch: Yes, I can imagine that. On this next question, please try to describe a typical day that you had at school. What did you do when you got there in the mornings until the end?

J. Albrecht: I would build a fire and see if the room was warm before the children got there.

D. Finch: What time did you go in?

J. Albrecht: Between 8 and 9:30.

D. Finch: What did you do after that? Did you have math then English, or how did you go about your teaching day?

J. Albrecht: It usually started out with reading. Then we would wind up with no telling what.

D. Finch: Did it fluctuate from day to day?

J. Albrecht: Sometimes we had a spelling bee and sometimes we had a math contest.

D. Finch: What time did school get out?

J. Albrecht: About 3:15-3:30. Sometimes 4:00.

D. Finch: Were you in charge of any extracurricular activities or did your day end at 3:30?

J. Albrecht: Well, my day ended there but I had to take care of grading problems afterwards.

D. Finch: How were you expected to conduct yourself when you were teaching? What were some of the rules they had for teachers?

J. Albrecht: Oh, I didn't hear anybody say anything. It seemed like I must have suited them.

D. Finch: So there weren't any set rules?

J. Albrecht: I didn't have jeans or stuff like that to wear. I had a suit and hat.

D. Finch: What kind of evaluation system was used for you? I mean, how did your school board members evaluate.

J. Albrecht: They didn't. They just pretty well accepted the fact that you were doing a good job.

D. Finch: One more question on this---How much schooling did you have to be able to teach these kids?

J. Albrecht: I had normal training in the Russell High School. I went through all the grade school subjects in the third and fourth year in high school.

D. Finch: Did you have to take any test?

J. Albrecht: I took the state examination.

D. Finch: You took the state examination?

J. Albrecht: Normal training.

D. Finch: Normal training--then you were able to teach.

J. Albrecht: Yes.

D. Finch: I am going to jump around again so I'll ask you.....

J. Albrecht: (Laugh.)

D. Finch: What types of subjects were studied, the main core subjects?

J. Albrecht. Reading, let's see, we had reading, writing, arithmetic.

D. Finch: Did the subjects change much during the school year?

J. Albrecht. No, no we had the same course all year.

D. Finch: The same classes all year?

J. Albrecht: We got a state book with a state course of study that you could follow by the lessons or otherwise. If you make it through that course of study you did pretty well. Sometimes it covered several chapters to make a grade.

D. Finch: What type of teaching methods did you use?

J. Albrecht: Well, we studied charters.

D. Finch: Charters?

J. Albrecht: That's what we studied and took examinations on that. When I went to Colorado to teach

I had to take examinations and they had that for one of their subjects and I got a 100 on it, so, I guess I passed.

D. Finch: When you taught then, how did you present the material to your students? Did they do a lot of reading out loud or work together?

J. Albrecht: We had an out loud reading class. Each took a turn at reading. There was only one way to teach the power reading and that was to bring them up to the front and let them read.

D. Finch: Did you have any teaching aids or anything of that nature, like your globe and things like that?

J. Albrecht: We had a yard stick, globe, and a piece of chalk.

D. Finch: That was it? Did you have any maps?

J. Albrecht: Some of them had maps and others didn't.

D. Finch: Did you have any special education classes like they have today--for the slower learner or the faster learner.

J. Albrecht: No, I took care of them right there.

D. Finch: What kind of test were given for promotional purposes to see if they go on?

J. Albrecht: The state sent out questions for the superintendent to give you to give to the children. You took the test for whatever classes you needed. You took your questions and if there were enough of them you would give them out, otherwise you would have to write them on the board and read them off or they read them off and they would write the answers on their paper.

D. Finch: Did the school you taught at have a library?

J. Albrecht: A part of one.

D. Finch: How big was it?

J. Albrecht: I think one had, I forget now, I have some of the books, 45-50 books. Some of them were rather old as far as modern reading was concerned.

D. Finch: What kind of text book did you use and where

did they come from?

J. Albrecht: The state sent the requirements and we had to buy our own books, and the parents furnished their own books.

D. Finch: Did they send the books to the school and the parents bought them?

J. Albrecht: Well, they would come to school and I told them what they were required to get.

D. Finch: Did your school have any graduation exercises?

J. Albrecht: No. We went to Hays in Ellis County, to the graduation exercises. That's where they got their 8th grade examinations taken care of.

D. Finch: What was the atmosphere of the education program? In the sod house did you have problems with leaks? How was it overall?

J. Albrecht: We had these little kerosene lamps that you hang up on a hanger. We didn't have anything at night so it wasn't any problem.

D. Finch: Did you have any other problems besides that?

J. Albrecht: We carried our own fuel and started our own fires.

D. Finch: Did you have any special rules for your kids that they had to abide by?

J. Albrecht: They had to be on time when we took up class in the morning.

D. Finch: That was about it?

J. Albrecht: That is all you could have. If not, you didn't send them home to dinner.

D. Finch: What type of music program was there?

J. Albrecht: I had my own tune blower (?) that I would set the tune for and one side didn't have anything so I would use the tune blower and taught them songs.

D. Finch: What about any kind of physical education for the kids or was that done during recess?

J. Albrecht: That was mainly during recess unless it was a stormy day, then we'd go to the room and each isle would take turns and march around the room with a book on their head.

D. Finch: Was this for balance and things like that?

J. Albrecht: For balance. Some couldn't do it because it's awful hard to get a book to balance.

D. Finch: That leaves me with this one---do you have anything to add to this presentation that you remember, anything that happened back then that you would like to share?

J. Albrecht: Oh, we would have races of the children and other kinds of games. Here, up north, we had a deal where they got all those schools in that district and the Lutherans came over and we had a regular township day. We had games, spelling bees, and let's see, what else was there, and they had a type of math test.

D. Finch: Did you have spelling bees against other schools?

J. Albrecht: That was the only one we had.

D. Finch: Just the township thing?

J. Albrecht: Yes, out here for that one. I didn't stay around long enough to get involved in too many things. I sent some things to the fair board and they sent me some prizes.

D. Finch: Do you have anything else?

J. Albrecht: Well, I shouldn't tell this but another girl and I ran in a horse race at the county fair in Burlington, Colorado. We got the prizes so we stayed for that evening and went to a show and didn't get home until after 11:00 that night.

D. Finch: So you stayed out and had a good time that night?

J. Albrecht: We went home by moonlight.

D. Finch: Well, that covers the questions I wanted to ask you and I appreciate it.

J. Albrecht: I don't know when Gary Kaster is getting up his book for the centennial out there in Burlington, but there will be a couple pictures in it.

D. Finch: Pictures of the school you taught in?

J. Albrecht: Yes.

D. Finch: Well, maybe we will get to see those pictures.

J. Albrecht: (Laugh)