

# **Louis E. Allen (1867-1903)**

## **Dr. Pretty Eagle – Indian Medicine Man ?**

By Jerry Long



Louis E. Allen died in Owensboro, Daviess County, KY on 18 August 1903 and was laid to rest in Owensboro's Elmwood Cemetery. He went by the name of Dr. Pretty Eagle. He was a self-proclaimed Indian medicine name. Numerous articles about him appeared in many cities and states. The following are some newspaper accounts of his travels. They reveal that he was a classic film flam man, charlatan and con artist. His claims for the tonic that he hawked from town to town were outrageous and unsupported.

He was described as being charming, good looking, spoke eloquently, and appeared to be well educated. He had long hair like an Indian. He wore gold earrings, a green velvet breeches, and western cowboy attire. He carried two revolvers. He had frequent run ins with the law – he had been charged with carrying concealed weapons, practicing medicine without a license, non-payments of various accounts, and womanizing. He was allegedly a bigamist with multiple wives, his defense of this was it was the Indian custom and as such was not regulated by U.S. laws.

Dr. Pretty Eagle's exploits were chronicled in the newspapers of Illinois, Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. He went on the road as a traveling salesman during 1900-1901. He was first found practicing his profession in Bloomington, Illinois in December 1901. Subsequently he was found in Mansfield, Ohio in March 1902, where he had gone from Newark, Ohio; in April 1902 in Jeffersonville, Indiana; in May 1902 in Paducah, Kentucky; in August 1902 in Madisonville, Kentucky; in October 1902 in Morganfield, Kentucky; and in August 1903 he went from Hopkinsville, Kentucky to his final destination in Owensboro, Kentucky. Reports about his marriage to a white woman, Miss Etta Shreve(s), in Morganfield, Union County, KY on 1 October 1902 were published in a multitude of newspapers.

Was Dr. Pretty Eagle an Indian or was that just a ruse? Due to the inconsistencies between statements he made and those reported about him it is difficult to say what was true and what was not. In one account he was reported as saying that he was a member of the Mohawk tribe of New York and in another he said he was a Kickapoo half-breed of Oklahoma. It was reported that he was originally from Lawton, Indian Territory (Oklahoma), two miles from Ft. Sill, and another article states he was from Howard City, Kansas. Even his age and real name were contradictory – a 1902 article gave his age as 34 and when he died one year later his obituary gave his age as 60. Most accounts give his name as Louis E. Allen. However, in one of the first detailed accounts about him he reportedly said his real name was Harry Davenport.

The newspaper, News-Journal of Mansfield, Ohio of 11 March 1902, p.6 reported that he was Harry Davenport, age 34, who was originally from Lawton, Indiana Territory, two miles from Ft. Sill, now in Comanche County, Oklahoma; and was a half-breed of the Kickapoo tribe. His age and connection to Indian Territory is supported by his 1903 marriage license.

Union County, KY Marriage Book P, page 591:

**Male.**

1. Date of Marriage Oct 1st 1902  
 2. Name of Groom Lewis E Allen  
 3. Residence of Groom Indian Terr  
 4. Age of Groom 34 years  
 5. Number of Marriages of Groom First Second  
 6. Occupation M.D.  
 7. Birthplace of Groom Decata Terr  
 8. Name of Groom's Father R J Allen  
 9. Birthplace of Groom's Father Toledo O  
 10. Birthplace of Groom's Mother Rochester N.Y  
 11. Name of Groom's Mother Charlott E Smith

**Female.**

12. Name of Bride Etta Shreves  
 13. Residence of Bride Union Co Ky  
 14. Age of Bride 20 years  
 15. Number of Marriage of Bride First  
 16. Birthplace of Bride Crittendon Co Ky  
 17. Name of Bride's Father Geo E Shreves  
 18. Birthplace of Bride's Father West Co Tex  
 19. Birthplace of Bride's Mother Crittendon Co Ky  
 20. Name of Bride's Mother Ida Miller  
 21. Remarks

H. B.—At Nos. 8 and 10 state whether first, second, etc., marriages of each or either party.

To be married at Mrs Wm E Bowens residence  
 on the 1st day of Oct 1902

I CERTIFY that the above is correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

WITNESS my hand, this 1st day of Oct 1902

Louis E. Allen

Attest:

**Marriage Certificate.**

This is to Certify, That on the First day of October  
1902 the RITES OF MATRIMONY were legally solemnized by me between  
Mr Lewis Allen and Miss Etta Shreves  
 at Mrs Bowens Residence the County of Union in the presence of  
Chief Prarie Boy  
Mrs Mattie Darnell Rev. G. H. Gray  
 SIGNED: Rev G. H. Gray  
Baptist Minister

The marriage license recorded the following about Lewis E. Allen: age – 34; residence – Indian Territory; number of marriage – second; occupation – M.D.; birthplace – ? Decota Territory?; father – R. J. Allen (born Toledo, Ohio); mother – Charlott E. Smith (born Rochester, NY); married 1 October 1902 to Miss Etta Shreve.

Louis Allen is listed with his parents in the 1900 federal census of Howard, Elk County, Kansas (p.35A, household #195-198). It recorded that Louis was born in November 1867 in Wisconsin; he was single and he was working as a tailor. His father, Rodrick Allen was born in Ohio in April 1837; and his mother, Charlotte was born in New York in May 1836. His father was a real estate dealer.

Louis Allen's family appear in the 1870, 1880 & 1890 censuses of Richland County, Wisconsin. Louis in 1870 was reported to be 2 years old and in 1880 his age was listed as 13; both censuses report he was a native of Wisconsin. The family about 1891 moved from Wisconsin to Oklahoma and during 1895-1900 moved to Howard, Elk County, Kansas. Louis E. Allen's parents, Roderick J. Allen (April 1837 – 9 December 1908) and Charlotte Smith (18 May 1835 – 30 April 1905), are buried in the Grace Lawn Cemetery in Howard, Elk County, Kansas; they were married 5 September 1866 Iowa County, WI.

The marriage license of Louis E. Allen, the 1870, 1880 & 1900 censuses and records on his parents seem to make it unlikely that Louis E. Allen, aka Dr. Pretty Eagle, was an Indian. After the era of open conflict with native Americans it became popular to identify with and romanticize Indians. Having worked in a history-genealogy library I can testify that many claim Indian ancestry even though totally unsubstantiated.

One thing can be said with certainty about Dr. Pretty Eagle – he was of a questionable character.

Etta Shreve, wife of Louis E. Allen, was born c1882 in Crittenden County, KY. She was the daughter of John Benjamin Shreve & Ida Miller. Louis E. Allen & Etta Shreve had one child, John Louis Allen, who was born 23 September 1903 Morganfield, Union County, KY and died 26 June 1967 Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas.



**Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 12 August 1903, p.5,  
13 August 1905, p.2, 16 August 1903, p.2 & 17 August 1903, p.3:**

Chief Pretty Eagle



A well known Indian medicine man who was in our city a year ago last May, at the time of the Red Hen's great council. Pretty Eagle is one of the best educated Indian medicine men in botanical studies in the U.S.A., and is a graduate from Yale College, Conn. Pretty Eagle offers \$100 for any case of stomach trouble, liver trouble, kidney and bladder trouble, female disease, constipation, indigestion, dyspepsia, heart trouble, nervous prostration and rheumatism in any stage that he fails to cure. Come see him. He has an office at the Haynes Hotel. Consultation, examination and advice free. Office hours: 9 to 12; 1 to 6:30. Haynes Hotel, Frederica street.



**Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 19 August 1903, p.1:**

MEDICINE MAN  
ANSWERS THE CALL OF THE GREAT SPIRIT.

Dr. Louis Pretty Eagle, the Indian Herb Dealer,  
Gone to His Happy Hunting Ground.

Dr. Louis E. Allen, netter known as Dr. Pretty Eagle, died of heart failure at 10:30 o'clock Tuesday morning at the Hines hotel, on Frederica street, where he had been stopping with his wife for the past week. Dr. Pretty Eagle came here a week ago from Hopkinsville and has been selling herb medicine on the streets. He wore a suit of green velvet and attracted no little attention on the street. He had been in apparently good health until Sunday night, when he was taken violently ill. Dr. B. P. Howard was summoned, but in mediately after seeing the man he stated that he could live only a few hours. He lingered until 10:30 o'clock Monday morning, when he died in great agony.

Pretty Eagle said he came originally from Howard City, Kan., and for the past two or three years has been selling herb medicine, for which he made great claims, on the streets of various towns in Southern Indiana and Illinois and Western Kentucky. While at Morganfield about ten months ago he met Miss Etta Shreve. a pretty white girl, and soon after was married to her. Her father, John Shreve, is a well known man in Morganfield. After the marriage, which was solemnized according to the laws of the state, the Indian medicine man had another marriage ceremony performed which he claimed to be customary among his race. He sent for Chief Prairie Dog, who figured largely in the trial of Prof. Hayes, of Henderson, when he was charged and tried for burning the Hotel Henderson several months ago went through what. he claimed to be a real Indian wedding. The wedding attracted much attention at the time, and from that time on he was regarded by many as a huge fake. However, his bride was true to him, going from town to town with him.

Soon after the wedding Pretty Eagle turned up in trouble in an Illinois town and since that time his troubles have been endless. He has had more or less trouble with officials in almost every town he visited and his power of drawing crowds and selling his invaluable medicine has decreased steadily. It has been his custom to visit towns whenever there was a crowd on hand, such as county fairs or other attractions. He came here to remain during the Chautauqua, but has met with very poor success.

Pretty Eagle claims to have been educated at the Indian school at Carlisle, Pa. and that he is a member of the famous Mohawk tribe of New York, He was sixty years old, while his wife

does not look to be more than half that. She will soon become a mother and says she intends to return to her father at Morganfield.

The body was removed to James Gillison's undertaking establishment in the afternoon. The funeral will take place from the undertaking office at 10 o'clock this morning and the interment will be in Elmwood cemetery. Rev. E. Pendleton Jones will conduct the funeral services. Mr. John Shreve, the father of the dead man's wife, arrived in the city last night from Morganfield and will take her home with him after the funeral.

[Note: the Owensboro Inquirer, of 21 August 1903, p.2 also reported: "He had lived in Indian territory for a number of years, although a member of the Mohawk tribe, of New York. He was a partner of Running Wolf, in the manufacture and sale of medicine. He was married about a year ago to Miss Etta Shreve, a daughter of John B. Shreve, of Union county. The marriage created a sensation at the time. She will become a mother in a short time. After the burial of her husband Mrs. Pretty Eagle will go back to her father."]



**Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 19 August 1903, p.5:**

**CHIEF PRETTY EAGLE BURIED.**

Given a Lonely Grave In Elmwood Cemetery This Morning.

With only his sorrowing wife and her father to follow him to the grave, Chief Pretty Eagle was laid away this morning and the last rites performed over a body which had led a checkered life for many years. The wife and father left for Morganfield this morning.



**Twice-A-Week Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 12 March 1903, p.5:**

**DR. PRETTY EAGLE**

Goes Up Against the Police Court and Lands in Jail.

Marion, Ky., March 12 – Dr. Louis Pretty Eagle, the Indian doctor, was arrested charged with carrying concealed deadly weapons. He was arraigned before Judge Kevil in the police court. The defendant claimed that he was a detective and had a right to carry arms. However he failed to convince the jury and was fined \$25 and given ten days in jail. The jury recommended that the case be referred to the city council. Dr. Pretty Eagle is serving his jail sentence.



**Paducah Sun, Paducah, KY, 6 October 1902, p.3:**

**DR. PRETTY EAGLE**

Indian Medicine Man Marries a Union County Girl.

Two Ceremonies Were Performed – The Groom Was Formerly in Paducah.

LEFT HERE A FEW MONTHS AGO

Dr Louis Pretty Eagle, the Indian medicine man who hid a brief but eventful career in Paducah last spring was one of the principals in a romantic marriage a few days ago at Morganfield, Union county.

His other name is Louis Allan and he married Miss Etta Shreves, of Union county, by a double ceremony one being performed by the Rev. C. H. Gregston, of Morganfield, and the other by the Indian chief Prairie Dog of South Dakota, now stopping at Morganfield.

Dr. Pretty Eagle formed the acquaintance of Miss Shreves and they were married in one week from the time of their introduction. Mr. Gregston called the couple out under a spreading cedar tree at the residence of Mrs. Mary E. Bowen, at Teer Hill, two miles south of Morganfield, and spoke the words which made them husband and wife. After this ceremony the party formed a circle and the couple was married by the Indian code, Chief Prairie Dog speaking the ceremony in the Indian tongue. When the vows were taken Pretty Eagle and Prairie Dog danced a marriage powwow, each giving his blessing to the bride. Prayer was then said and the strange rites were ended.

Dr Pretty Eagle had some trouble here over a board bill, and just before he left had an announcement in some of the papers that he was to be married here one Sunday to a white woman. It seems from recent developments, however, that the wedding here missed connections.



**The Bee, Earlington, KY, 28 August 1902, p.2:**

Dr. Pretty Eagle Fined.

Dr. Louis Pretty Eagle was assessed a fine of \$50 at Madisonville Monday for practicing medicine without registering in the county clerks office.



**Paducah Sun, Paducah, KY, 18 June 1902, p.8:**

TRUNK RELEASED

DR. PRETTY EAGLE PROBABLY READY TO GET PRETTY SCARCE

The trunk of Louis Pretty Eagle the Indian herb doctor which had been attached for a printing bill was yesterday released. Dr Pretty Eagle has not fared well here and during the few short weeks he was here was in police court the constables court and also mixed up in an alleged wedding that didn't take place.



**Courier-Journal, Louisville, KY, 14 June 1902, p.1:**

DR. PRETTY EAGLE TO TAKE A LIFE PARTNER.

Invites the Bed Men To Attend His Marriage  
At Paducah Monday-Evening. Paducah. June 13.

Paducah, Ky., June 13 [Special.] – The marriage of Dr. Lewis Pretty Eagle, an Indian doctor, who has been here a few weeks, and Mrs. Nora Wall, of Brookport. Ill., to take place Monday evening at Labelle Park, was announced to-day. The bridegroom extends a special invitation to members of the Red Men's Lodge. He says that wedding presents from his brethren will be appreciated.



**News Democrat, Paducah, KY, 2 June 1902, p48:**

To People Who Suffer!

Call and see the Great Indian Wizard if you suffer with stomach, Kidney or Liver trouble, Rheumatism, Catarrh or blood troubles. He will guarantee to purify the worst impure blood or to cure any of the above diseases, or cancer, goitre or ovary troubles, or he wants no pay. Call at New Richmond Hotel, corner First and Broadway.

DR. LOUIS PRETTY EAGLE  
Office Hours, 9 to 12 and 1 to 5:30.



**Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 20 May 1902, p.8:**

A band of eight full-blooded Indians passed through the city yesterday en route to Fordsville. They represent Pretty Eagle, an Indian, who says he owns 2,600 acres of ground in Indian Territory, where he raises nothing but herbs that they are now trying to sell.



**Courier-Journal. Louisville, KY, 2 April 1902, p.7:**

Jeffersonville: Dr. Lou Pretty Eagle, of Lawton, Okla., is in Jeffersonville. He is the "Indian herb doctor" who has created of a sensation in Ohio because of his alleged fascination for women.



**News-Journal, Mansfield, Ohio, 11 March 1902, p.6:**

Bad Medicine Man Is Dr. Pretty Eagle

In Jail at Washington Court House for Improper

## Association with Mansfield Woman

Pretty Eagle, the Indian "doctor," not unknown to notoriety in this city, is having his troubles. The following dispatch in Tuesday's Enquirer comes from Washington C. H., under date of March 10:

"Pretty Eagle," the half-breed from Indian Territory, is confined in the station house here. He came Saturday night from Newark, Ohio, where he had some trouble with the police about a story in circulation that he had enticed two girls from Mansfield, Ohio, for improper purposes. There accompanied him to this city on Saturday night a married woman from Mansfield and Landlord Thorpe says they remained at the Midland Hotel as husband and wife Saturday and last night. The woman is Mrs. Mame Hall, of Mansfield, and she and her husband are said to have separated several weeks ago.

"Pretty Eagle" spent about two weeks selling medicine in Mansfield and went from house to house treating patients. It was in this way that, he became acquainted with the woman and she became infatuated with the fellow. He says he met her at Mt. Vernon and they came on here together.

## BROTHER RESCUED HER

The woman is 23 years old and "Pretty Eagle" is 34. . He has prominent Indian features, wears gold earrings and is of medium size. The woman is a blonde of medium size and good looking. Officer H. V. Loder, of Mansfield, her brother, came her today in response to a telephone message sent to the Chief of Police of that city last night and he and his sister returned to Mansfield this evening. The woman cried bitterly when the officer appeared. The police promptly locked the Indian up and the woman was kept in the hotel until she and her brother left for home. It was reported that "Pretty Eagle" had worked his hypnotic influence on the woman to cause her to leave her home for him, but this Eagle denies and he says she went with him of her own free will. The scene when the woman and her brother met was very affecting.

"Pretty Eagle" told the Enquirer correspondent this evening that he was not afraid of any serious results coming from the present scrape and said that when he was arrested he had no objections to make. As Mrs. Hall and her friends did not want to be dragged into trial on any sensational case the charge of immoral behavior was placed against "Pretty Eagle."

## COLLEGE ATHLETE.

"I am a graduate of Carlisle college and for six years prior to 1897 I was a member of the Carlisle Indian foot ball team and also belonged to the Carlisle base ball team for several years," said "Pretty Eagle."

"I claim this woman was my wife according to the Indian custom, as with the Indians we marry by common consent and I am a ward of the government and am governed by Indian customs, drawing \$60 annuity from the government every three months. Within the past six years I have been married in this way I fully fifty white women. According to the Indian custom when a woman does any thing that her husband does not regard as being right, he has a right to let her go and get another wife. If a woman's husband abuses her she has a right to look elsewhere for protection and if she is willing to live with a man for protection, food, clothing, etc., he has a perfect right, according to our custom, to take the part of a husband to her, as I did in this case and this woman is my wife, just as I introduced her as such and the law has no right to touch me.



MAY HUNT BUNDY

"If I am fined I shall apply for relief to the United States district attorney at Cincinnati and I will take the matter up with the Indian commissioner at Washington and I will get all my money back. I do not deny that I was with this woman. I got acquainted with her on December 28 last, and from the first she formed an attachment for me. I do not feel that I have done harm and can look any man in the face. I am the chief medicine man of the Kickapoo tribe of Indians, being a half-breed Kickapoo. My real name is Harry Davenport and my home is Lawton, Indian Territory, on the Wichita Mountains, two miles from Ft. Sill. I am a clairvoyant and sell Indian medicine. I am going from here to Cincinnati. This is the second time I have been arrested."

In reference to the story about enticing two young girls from Mansfield to Newark for immoral purposes, for which he was arrested, "Pretty Eagle" said that the girls followed him and that he had not induced them to come. They were brought to his office, he said, by a young man of Mansfield and told him they wanted to be actresses, of them being 15 and the other 16 years old. He declared that the Hall woman loved him and that she would join him again in a short time, as she knew his route. Upon his large trunk in brass tack heads was his name, "Dr. Pretty Eagle," and this trunk was unpacked by Chief Smith, the woman and her brother and all that belonged to "Pretty Eagle" was taken out, and her belongings were put back into the trunk and she took trunk and all back with her to Mansfield tonight. Mrs. Hall belongs to a good family and much sympathy was expressed for her brother, who came to get his sister from the Indian.



**The Paxton Record, Paxton, IL, 24 October 1901, p.6:**

Dr. Pretty Eagle, a half breed Indian, a graduate of the Carlisle school in Pennsylvania, is in Bloomington and will probably locate there. He prefers to retain his Indian name, although he says he also has the American cognomen, Allen. He is an intelligent and apparently well educated gentleman.

