

ROSS, MAUDE.

INTERVIEW

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

ROSS, MAUDE (MRS.) - INTERVIEW.

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Field Worker's name Alene D. McDowell

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

1. Name Mrs. Maude Ross

2. Post Office Address Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 206 Chickasaw.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 4 Year 1875

5. Place of birth Fort Gibson, Indian Territory.

6. Name of Father R. M. Walker Place of birth Indian Territory

7. Name of Mother Josephine Rider-Walker Place of birth Indian Territory

Other information about mother Cherokee extraction. Buried at

Vinita. Father, Cherokee extraction. Buried at Fort Gibson.

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 9

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McDowell, Alene D.- Investigator.
Indian Pioneer History-S-149.
April 22, 1938.

Interview with Mrs. Maude Ross
206 Chickasaw, Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

I was born October 4, 1875, at Fort Gibson, Indian Territory.

My parents were both of Cherokee extraction and I am registered as one-sixteenth. I attended the Cherokee Female Seminary at Tahlequah, and I am now historian of the Indian Women's Club in Bartlesville. I was reared by my uncle who was a wealthy farmer and stock raiser. Our home was a comfortable four room house located four miles east of Fort Gibson.

INDIAN RELIGION : There is no Indian Bible written by an Indian, just as there was no Pentateuch written by Moses, no Tripitika by Buddha, no Dialogues by Socrates, no Gospel written by Christ.

The culture and civilization of the White man are essentially material, his measure of success is "How much property have I acquired for myself?" The culture of the Red man is fundamentally spiritual; his measure of success is "How much have I rendered to my people?" His mode of

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life, his thoughts, his every act are given spiritual significance, with complete realization of the spirit world.

Garrick Mallory, the leading Smithsonian authority of his day, says, "The North American Indian habitually lived in and by religion to a degree comparable with that of the old Israelites theocracy." This was sometimes ignored and sometimes denied in terms by many of the early missionaries and explorers. Religion was the real life of the tribes, permeating all their activities and institutions. The Indians believed apparently in one Great God; the idea of one Great Oversoul is very widely spread among the Indians. Some superficial observers maintain the Indians are ^{sun}worshippers. To this Dr. Eastman, a very cultured Sioux replies, "The Indian no more worshipped the sun than the Christian adores the cross."

The Indian creed is one Great Oversoul, the great Spirit, the Creator and Ruler of all things, who is eternal, invisible, omnipotent, unportrayable. To Him we are responsible; in and through Him all beings live, and move, to Him all worship and allegiance are due, from Him all good things come. Him we must approach with reverence, His favors may be won by prayer, by sacrifice, and kindly

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life, knowledge of Him, by discipline by fasting and by lonely vigil, and with that knowledge will come His guidance. He is impersonal, yet at times inspiring or entering personally into animals, birds, clouds, rain, mountains, men or things. (This thought in its essence is almost what modern science has attained to - the conception of Nature and God in one.)

The soul of man is immortal. Whence it came into this world or whither it goes when it departs, we do not know, and have no means of ascertaining. The chief end of man is attainment of manhood which is the just development of every part of power that goes to make a man, and the fullest reasonable enjoyment of the same. He must achieve manhood in Body Way, the Knowledge Way, the Spirit Way and the Tribal Way. The Indian having attained to high manhood, he must consecrate that manhood to the service of his people, that is above all be a good provider for his family, a brave protector, a kind and helpful neighbor, and ever ready to defend his family, his camp or his tribe from foreign foe. When his time comes to die, he remembers that he is going to the next world and does not approach it with fear and trembling, repenting and weeping over such things as he

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has left undone or such things as he should not have done. He rests assured that he has done his best with the gifts that were his. He sings his death song and goes out like a hero going home. What the next life contains for him, he does not know, and has no means of knowing, and no words to express it if he had a gleam of light. But of this he is assured, his condition there will be governed by his record and his behavior here. If he has been a good father, a kind neighbor, a brave defender of his homeland, he need have no concern for his future well being.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
AS THE INDIANS HAVE THEM.

1. There is but one Great Spirit, though that Spirit may be manifested in even inanimate objects; it pervades all things.
2. This commandment forbids portraiture of the Great Spirit. No Indian ever tried to depict the one Great Spirit. They portray his messenger, the Thunder Bird, or his symbol, the Bird Serpent, but never the Great Spirit.
3. Thou shalt not swear falsely in the name of the Great Spirit. In all Indian Tribes, this is considered a sin worthy of death.

4. The seventh day of rest was unknown to the Indian, and yet during the year, at intervals dictated by weather, and agreement with other duties, the Indian had many sabbaths devoted to rest from toil and worship of the Great Spirit. (About 52 and 20 holidays.)

5. Reverence for one's parents was effectually taught in all Indian Tribes. The love of parents for children and the responsive love of the children for the parents were perfectly demonstrated in all great tribes.

6. Killing a member of one's tribe, if deliberate, a capital offence; if by accident, it could be compensated by adequate damages. Killing an enemy in time of war was another.

7. Adultery was of various degree, and could be punished in measure corresponding with the circumstances.

8. Theft was unknown in an Indian camp.

9. An Indian bearing false witness was supposed to come under denunciation of the third, that is swearing falsely in God's name, since God was present everywhere.

10. Thou shalt not covet. The Indian considered coveting the same as stealing, only coveting was subjective, stealing was objective. Both were abhorrent to the

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Indian of the ancient way.

John James, after living 60 years among the Choctaw Indians of Texas, writes: "I claim for the North American Indian the purest religion, and the loftiest conceptions of the Great Creator, of any non-Christian religion that has ever been known to this old world.

"The North American Indian had no priests, no idols, no sacrifices, but went direct to the Great Spirit and worshipped Him who was invisible and seeing Him by faith adored Him who seeketh such to worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Tom Newcomb, an old scout of the Miles campaign, who lived with the Sioux said, "I tell you I never saw more kindness or real Christianity anywhere. The poor, the aged, the widows and the orphans were always looked after first. Whenever we moved camp, someone took care that the widows' lodges were moved first and set up first. After every hunt, a good sized chunk of meat was dropped at each door where it was most needed. I was treated like a brother, and I tell you I have never seen any community of church people that were really truly Christians as that band of Indians."

Bishop Henry Benjamin Whipple of Minnesota sums up the wild Indians after intimate knowledge during a lifetime

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of association: "The North American Indian is the noblest type of heathen man on the earth. He recognizes a Great Spirit, he believes in immortality, he has a quick intellect: he is a clear thinker; he is brave and fearless, and until betrayed, he is true to his plighted faith; he has a passionate love for his children and counts it a joy to die for his people.

"The evidence is beyond challenge that the Red man, before the White man came had achieved a knowledge of the Creator of the universe and was worshipping Him in a religion of spirituality, kindness and truth. In short they knew and worshipped God Almighty, and by their lives evidenced the truth and purity of their worship."

In this paper I have taken most of my reference from "The Gospel of the Red Man" by Earnest Thompson Seton. In compiling his records of Indian thought and culture, he was assisted by a committee of men and women whose lives have been given to such studies. Some were Indians, some White folk. The Indians were: Chief Standing Bear (Sioux), Walking Eagle, (Ojibway), Dr. Charles Eastman (Sioux), Ataloo (Chickasaw), J. J. Mathews (Osage), Os-ke-non-ton.