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

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Field Worker's name Jas. S. Buchanan

This report made on (date) May 26th 1931

1. Name John Smith (Cherokee)

2. Post Office Address Route 1, Gore, Oklahoma

3. residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month August Day 6 Year 1874

5. Place of birth Illinois District, Cherokee Nation

6. Name of Father Red Bird Smith Place of birth Arkansas

Other information about father Cherokee

7. Name of Mother Lucy Fields Place of birth Near Braggs

Other information about mother Cherokee

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 16

JOHN SMITH, (Cherokee) informant
Route 1, Gore, Oklahoma.

-Jas. S. Buchanan

Interview - May 26, 1937.

I was born August 6, 1874 in the Illinois District of the Cherokee Nation.

My father was Red Bird Smith, Cherokee, born in Arkansas in 1851 where his parents lived for several years after coming west, then moved into the Cherokee Nation after the birth of my father.

My mother was Lucy (Fields) Smith, Cherokee, of the Bird Clan, born near Braggs, Cherokee Nation.

I was reared in the Illinois District and attended the Cherokee public schools. At the age of twenty-seven I was married to Hattie Towie, a fullblood Cherokee, daughter of Ah-Yer-Day-Gee. Her mother died shortly after the birth of Hattie and she was reared by Jennie Bushyhead, a wealthy Cherokee Medicine woman and grew up under her teaching without any English education. She was a very beautiful and attractive girl about seventeen years of age when I first met her. Our courtship and marriage was according to the old Cherokee

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customs. When I was courting Hattie Towie, I learned that another Cherokee boy by the name of Joe Waters was also in love with her. I came to believe that she ~~was~~ also in love with Joe, so I ceased my attentions towards her.

Jennie Bushyhead, for the interest of her personal motives, encouraged our marriage and eventually we were married through the influence of witchcraft or evil people that did not have our best interest at heart, though it was against the better judgement of both, Hattie and ^{me} I. we could have made a success of our marriage had we been left alone and not overcome with the power of certain medicine men that were working in behalf of her other suiter. Conditions between us grew more and more intolerable until the final result was separation and divorce, she retaining possession of the one child that was born to us.

Later she was married to her other suiter, Joe Waters and about six years after her marriage

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she died. At her death I taken the child that was born to our union and cared for it, as it has been a cripple from birth.

In 1905 I was married to Lizzie bunch, Cherokee, the daughter of Chief Rabbit Bunch of the Cherokees. She died in 1908. No children born to that union.

In 1909 I was married to Susue Noisy, a fullblood Cherokee. After twelve years this marriage resulted in seperation with no children.

In 1926 I was married to my present wife, Annie Cochran, a fullblood Cherokee.

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THE CLANS OF THE CHEROKEES.

In the beginning there were seven sons of the Great Spirit, representing the seven Heavens. they were blessed and multiplied. Each of the seven sons created a clan, a Chief presiding over each clan, subordinate to the Medicine Man as spiritual advisor.

Thereafter, in marriage, no member of any clan was permitted to marry within his own clan, only to a member of another clan that the blood may be kept pure within the sight of the Great Spirit.

There was also a great Chief of the tribe which presided over the tribe subordinate to the Chief Medicine Man, governing the seven clans, Wolf, Bear, Lyon, Terrapin, Bird, Deer and Savannah.

KEE-TOO-WAH.

Note- The legend concerning the beginning of the sacred Kee-Too-Wah society holds the most prominent place of all legendary history of the Cherokees. I shall endeavor to relate it just as it was related to me by a fullblood Cherokee, Chief Medicine Man of the organization and one whom I number among my closest friends.

Back in the far distant past from some unknown

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source and cause there arose great strife among the people of the tribe. Chief Medicine Men of the seven clans were much troubled and seeing that all their efforts to overcome the trouble had failed, the Chief Medicine Man decided to go alone up into the mountain and fast for seven days and nights and seek council in silence from the Great Spirit as to a remedy to overcome their trouble. He slipped away from the village without anyone knowing of his intentions and went far into the hills alone. The first night of his fast, at a late hour he heard footsteps approaching in the darkness. He was perplexed, as none of his people had reason to frequent the place at that hour of the night. He called to the object he heard approaching and to his surprise he was answered in his own language and recognized the voice of the medicine Man of the second clan, which is the Bear. He came unto the Chief Medicine Man and made it known that he had also come into the hills to seek

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council with the Great Spirit. On the second night of the fast at the darkest hour the Medicine Man of the third clan appeared and joined them, and thereafter each night a Medicine Man of the consecutive clans appeared until the seventh night and the council of the seven clans were assembled and each with the same thought as the first, the Chief. It was revealed to that council by the Great Spirit for their people to form as one great body bound together for the protection of all and equality of rights and that body would survive and be known as Kee-Too-Wah.

In this same fast the message to the council from the Great Spirit said "The trail of your people will lead toward the setting sun, they will be driven to the edge of the plains and there the common class of people will discover the remedy, and then with the proper precaution their trail will turn east. At that time the clans will be forgotten and they will grow weaker and wiser. They will rebel against ancient customs. The eastern trail will lead to peace and liberty for many generations to come. Then it shall

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come to pass that your people will be oppressed and the tribe will be wiped from the earth, which will be the end of the trail, and the next day thereafter shall come the end of time of all people".

On the eighth day, or the day following this revelation to them in their council with the great Spirit, the seven Medicine Men returned to the vilage and informed their people of the messgggo they had received. It was then the sacred Kee-Too-Wah was created, and has been handed down through the council of the Cherokees through the many centuries unknown to man.

The sacred ritualism of the original Kee-Too-Wah is performed only with the sacred cermonial fire. When the council of the Kee-Too-Wah is to go in session, the fire keepers start the fire at the council grounds before the sun appears in the east. This fire must not be started with a match, but through the old custom.

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See-Quah-Nee-Da (Pig Red Bird) was my grandfather. He came from Georgia to Arkansas about 1840 where he resided until about 1852 when he moved to the Illinois District, Cherokee Nation. He was a blacksmith, and from his profession came the family name of "Smith", hence the name Red Bird Smith. He was a tribal Medicine Man and a leader in the Kee-Too-Wah society the greater part of his life. His death occurred in 1874. During his leadership of the Kee-Too-Wah the council sessions were always held according to the ancient ritualistic customs and held continuous session for seven days nights. During my grandfather's leadership of Kee-Too-Wah the council saw the sign and decreed that the descendants of See-Quah-Nee-Da would inherit the leadership of Kee-Too-Wah. As a boy, my father was taught by the Kee-Too-Wah council as to its sacred ritualistic customs and qualified himself for such leadership, and this council teaching was his only schooling and the Medicine Men his only teachers. In the removal of the Cherokees from

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Georgia, the Kee-Too-Wah fire went out. (The organization was inactive with the exception of the official council) . In the early 90's my father, with the council re-established the fire of the Kee-Too-Wah with the seven clans and returned it to the Cherokees-by-blood. During that period of time, people who were not qualified and to farward selfish motives built up an organization which was supposed to be the Kee-Too-Wah society, controled by some missionaries and designing politicians which was in violation of the sacred principles of Kee-Too-Wah; as it is a religious organization and to be a member and uphold its principles, ..it... .. is prohibitive as to activity in any other faith, and not a political organization.

In 1906, my father in the council of Medicine Men, appointed seven men who were qualified to act on the council and fast for seven days and nights according to the original ritualistic customs, seeking revelations through council with the Great Spirit as to the re-establishment of the Kee-Too-Wah

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society. At the council of the Medicine Men the following men were named: Red Bird Smith, John Smith, Joshia Glass, Creek Sam, Charlie Sam, Martin Bowlin and Will Elk.

When we met and organized as the new official council, my father was appointed as chief, or spokesman to preside over the council. During my father's time as Chief of the council, Will Elk was the medicine Man of the Kee-Tee-Wah.

It was the duty of the Chief Medicine Man to examine the members of the new council and ascertain as to which member was to receive the revelation from the Great Spirit in the council of the fast.

When his decision was made, I was the one he designated and appointed.

In August 1906 we met in council at the old council ground on the mountain at Buffalotown ten miles east of Gore, at the Red Bird Smith school house. We went into the forest on the mountain and sit down in sacred council, my father opening the ceremonies with prayer, asking council of the Great Spirit.

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At that time the Cherokees were being oppressed from all sides, their confidence betrayed by the people in which they had placed their greatest trust and my father, as other old members of the council were seriously depressed. Their only hopes to survive was through the Power That Lives Behind the Sun.

The first night of the council the sky was perfectly clear, no wind and the forest seemed to be in harmony with the occasion. Only the call of the whippoorwill and the occasional hoot of an owl broke the dead silence of the night. About mid-night we observed dim flashes of lightning in the far west, gradually growing more vivid, coming closer and the lightning grew continuous and we could hear the thunder and a continuous roar which had all the appearance of a dangerous storm. Under any other circumstances I would have had fear of it. No member of the council moved or arose from their sitting position on the ground when the storm struck. Its duration was brief, and from the continuous lightning, I could see the trees twisting and bending as though they would be

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tern from the earth, but when the storm had passed, none of the trees were damaged, not even a limb was broken and only a few scattering drops of rain fell.

Not a member of the council had moved, sitting there in silence. I was sitting on the north side of the circle, looking northeast, I saw a vision of two little boys, naked, one chasing the other in play and in their scuffle, they fell off a ledge of rock about a foot high into some leaves, they got up from their fall, ran down the hill looking back in my direction, laughing and disappeared in the darkness. The clouds drifted away and the stars shown out in the Heavens clear as cristials. My father said a vision of one naked child appeared before him and said "I am the thunder", then disappeared.

The council on the seventh night taken place on a high ~~mountain~~ about one half mile northwest of the council fire. We built another fire and my father opened the council with a prayer, asking council of the Great Spirit. In the early part of

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the night, my father and Creek Sam were sitting on my left and were discussing the old traditions of their forefathers when it appeared as though a big white sheet fell over me. I arose and walked the trail that wound its way around under the bluff upon which we were holding council, there I observed a small aged man with gray beard and spoke to me in Cherokee as he pointed to a table in the cave and said "go eat". The table was served by small "spirit" women, serving our native food such as wild meat, beans, bean bread, hominy, sweet potatoes with ~~kr-no-hey-ner~~ (which is a soup made from corn) to drink. I seated myself at the table and ate, but during the time I could hear every word that was being said at the council on the bluff above me. when I arose from the table and returned to the council circle I saw a pair of tigers, a male and a female standing near, looking at us and slowly wiggling their tails. Standing east of us, they seperated, the male going north and the female south

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until they disappeared. I then saw a multitude of people of all nationalities in a great state of excitement caused by these animals. Then the Medicine Man appeared in a white robe, seeking the trail of the tigers, many of the people asked the question, "why is he not excited and has no fear of the tigers?" I then heard a voice say "He knows something why the tigers can not harm him". Then there was a message came from the south that the tiger that went south had been captured and safely caged. The messenger then went on north to take the message to the male tiger. When it received ^{he} it went into a rage and began to roar and returned to the south and disappeared. From the top of a hickory tree that stood by the bluff, the limbs of which extended over the ledge where we were holding council, I heard a voice speak, saying "As you people are here, this is all that is necessary for you all to do, there is nothing but what you all can see."

At this point I came from under the spiritual spell and told the other members of the council of

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my vision. They said that was what they came there for. Their mission was finished, the council was concluded.

These councils, according to ancient ritualistic customs, are conducted in a fast, without food or drink. On the seventh, or last night of this council we violated that tradition by taking to the council ground a gallon bucket of water, as our thirst on the previous night became most intolerable. Just before the council was concluded, one of our party picked up the bucket to take a drink and to his surprise, the bucket was empty and they had a laugh about the water leaking out of the bucket. I examined the bucket but could find no leak, cast it aside and thought no more of it. When the council session was concluded, to our amazement, we found the bucket full of water. No one seemed to be thirsty, the water was poured out and we went our way home.

My father died November 8, 1918. He served as Chief of the Kee-Too-Wah until his death, at which time my brother, Sam Smith succeeded him as Chief

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with myself as his assistant.. In 1902 I was made interpreter for the Kee-Too-Wah and yet hold that position as well as assistant Chief, Medicine Man and one of the Council of Seven.

This is the original Kee-Too-Wah Society and is not and has never until this time been chartered under the state or national laws. We have in our possession the old peace pipe, the last one made in June 1864 by James McDaniel from stone that was brought from Tennessee, also the original constitution of the Kee-Too-Wah Society that was re-written by the Kee-Too-Wah Society after the Cherokees came west. Any other organization or body functioning or claiming representation under the name of the Kee-Too-Wah Society are factitious and impostors.