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Field Worker
May 26, 1937

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Interview with Mandy Starr.
Avery, Oklahoma.
Three-fourths Sac and Fox.

I was born soon after my parents moved to Oklahoma from Kansas (1871). They told me of the cholera epidemic which killed several hundred of their number before they left Kansas, and also of their trip to Oklahoma.

Several hundred of the tribe had gone off on a hunting trip. They fared well until they made camp on their way home. There it seemed that a great destroyer was walking through the camp, touching this one and that so that they were suddenly struck with a severe cramp and died in a short time. The Indians were bewildered and terrified. They didn't know what caused this nor know how to prevent it. A person would get a severe cramp, retire from the rest of the group thinking it to be "the call of nature", and never come back. Upon investigation he would be found dead with evidences of great pain and struggle accompanying it. Scores upon scores died. Finally the rest returned to the village where they were quarantined until no one else died from it. While in quarantine the members of the hunting party were fed by the braves of the camp, and curiously

enough, very few died after reaching camp. In all, around three hundred of the party survived.

Soon after this epidemic the tribe decided to move to Oklahoma. The government sent wagons to transport the ones who went. They were huge, old-fashioned schooner wagons.

Some of the Indians stayed in Kansas but a great majority of them moved. As each family packed ^{and} was loaded onto the wagons, they set out. Farewells were made, often tearful, because they knew that they would never see each other again.

The caravan was headed by government troupes, and the wagons strung out for four or five miles behind. They grouped themselves into units, about twenty wagons to a unit.

It was early spring when they left, and early fall when they arrived on the Sac and Fox reservation in Oklahoma. Late one evening, the wagons pulled in at the agency grounds.

The government had notified the agent that they were coming, so everything was prepared for a big

reception. It was a very happy time, for many were greeting old friends and relatives who had moved here earlier. After they had camped here for two or three weeks they were given allotments. My parents' allotment was where I live now, six and a half miles north of Stroud.

The Indians, however, did not live on their allotments at that time. They camped wherever they wished, near a river or spring. Often they were eight to fifteen miles apart, allowing for the greatest possible freedom.

In those days everyone knew the Indian name of all his neighbors and even his mere acquaintances, and also where they lived. This was due to the fact that much more stress was laid on knowing such things.

There were several villages of Indians also, several hundred in one village. You see, then the Indians were much more numerous than they are now. Plague, epidemics, and other things have destroyed more than half of our tribe.

There were a few white people in the reservation, some of them farmers. They would peddle their products to the Indians in their neighborhood.

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One time several wagonloads of apples were brought into the territory and sold to the Indians. They went like hotcakes, because we had never eaten any before. The men took anything for them, whenever there was no money. Some even sold their horses in order to buy apples. I do not know how far they had to bring those apples, but when they struck Sac and Fox territory, it was well worth their time and effort.

The country was rough, not only the territory but the people in it. Law meant nothing to an Indian if he decided to do something. There were several United States marshals and deputies, and some deputies hired by the agent, but they were quite inadequate in dealing with the law problem.

The Indians and their squaws frequented the saloons, and many a merry party came away from there, singing, yelling war whoops, and so on. Men on horseback who had had one drink too many would ride down the trail "shooting it up", and woe betide anyone who got in his way.

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Then the cars came. Al Grimm, the trader, owned the first one I saw. It had a motor on the side and a chain. There were solid tires on the wheels. Its clattering down the road scared the horses half out of their senses.

There have been many changes in the last forty years. First, the white men began moving into the territory, and the Indians were ordered to move onto their own allotments and stay there. Then the run brought in many more white men, limiting the Indian still more in his freedom. White ways and white education weaned the young people away from their old Indian customs and ways. It has been good to see some of the changes, very sad to see others. I myself wish to carry on the Indian traits and characteristics, but the young people are forgetting.

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