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BUMBERRY, ANNIE YOUNG

INTERVIEW

#12049

138

Investigator, Nannie Lee Burns,
November 4, 1937.

Interview with Annie Eumberry,
Seneca, Missouri.

My mother was Elizabeth Young, daughter of Moses Spicer, a Seneca Indian. She first married James Starr, also a Seneca and after his death married my father, James Tomahawk, who was also a Seneca. The dates of their births I do not know but my parents were born here in the Seneca Nation.

I, Annie Young Eumberry, was born July 4th, 1878, near the Stomp Ground on the Elk River at the home of my parents there.

My Parents.

When the Civil War came, our people not being a part of it, but living so near the state line of Missouri were often raided and our stock was killed or stolen and the longer the war went on the worse it got and not realizing that it would last so long our people, including my grandparents, took their families in wagons and went to Leavenworth, Kansas. They did not take any of their stock nor much from their houses which were mostly of log with fireplaces.

The Senecas were used to leaving their houses in earlier days when the tribe would go on hunts, so they just left every-

thing as it was, knowing that the stock could live for some time on grass. My father, at sixteen, joined the calvary and served through the war.

After the war, when the Senecas returned some of their homes were burned, bandits lived in some of them, their fields were overgrown with grass, weeds and trees, their fences destroyed and their stock had gone wild.

The Senecas.

The Senecas came directly to the Indian Country from Ohio about the year of 1860. Before that time the Senecas had been driven from their homes around the Great Lakes and had been living on lands that had belonged to the Wyandottes in Ohio. When they were leaving Ohio the Senecas promised the Wyandottes that if ever the Wyandotte tribe was without a home and if the Senecas had a home they would share it with them.

Later, the Senecas made this promise good after the Wyandottes were moved to Kansas where Kansas City now is. Their lands there were wanted by the white settlers and most of them became dissatisfied there so they remembered the promise of the Senecas and some of them came to our people

-3-

to talk it over. Later, the Wyandottes were allowed to come to this country and we arranged that they should have a strip across the northern part of our home here.

Many Cayugas had already joined the Wyandottes and they came on here with them. There were not many Cayugas left and there was not so many of us so we were united and admitted them to our country. We all came to this country under the same agency which was then near Seneca, Missouri, and which was then called the Neosho Agency.

Customs.

The way of worship and living of the Wyandotte and Cayuga Tribes were like ours. Both tribes observed the Green Corn Feast and the dances. I do not mean that these festivals were just the same but they were so much alike that the Wyandottes and Cayugas have joined us in our dances and for many years we have held our dances with the Wyandottes and since they have always spoken the Seneca language, all of our observances are still conducted in the Seneca tongue.

We older people still can speak the Seneca language but most of our children do not and can not speak it but most of them can understand it.

-4-

I have a son and a daughter and when they were small they both could talk the Seneca language but they were sent to school when they were small to the Mission and to the Government Schools and now neither can talk it. So it is with the others.

Not long ago, our Agent told us that we should return to our former ways and customs and I asked him how he expected us to do it when the white men had for so many years been educating us out of our former ways and customs until now the old ways and customs were forgotten or only partly remembered by the very old people and I told him that the younger folks would not consent to go back to the old way of living.

Take religion and worship for instance; for over a hundred years the missionaries have been coming among us and trying to convert us to their way and have succeeded. In this county the Friends came among us before I was born. The Government set aside land for us for church, school and cemetery* purposes and this land was supposed to belong to our tribe. Our first white church was at Council Hollow and our cemetery was there. Somehow the Friends have been given a deed to the

-5-

property and now we are told that it is theirs and now they are building a new parsonage there. Our Council house and property was sold to a white man and destroyed.

The only property which the Seneca Tribe has left is the east half of the forty acres located at the Basset Springs near Turkey Ford on the Elk River. Here we have our Long House or a cemetery and here we hold our tribal councils, our feasts, etc.

Even our Mission School at Wyandotte has been taken and the children that you find there in school are mostly from other tribes and the restriction have been tightened until one of our children cannot attend school there unless he or she is half Indian or more than half.

Medicine Men.

We used to have Medicine Men belonging to our tribe who made the rounds of the homes each Spring and Fall. You could hear him coming by the sound of the sleigh bells fastened around his ankles.

Then, too, our medicine was made from the herbs and barks of the trees and plants, which was nature's medicine prepared by the older people who were taught what herbs

-6-

and barks to gather and how to prepare them. We have none of those people left today.

Games.

Today we still play Indian football, seldom have a cornstalk shooting and we have a peach seed game during the Green Corn Feast.

Horse-racing as it used to be at the Stomp Ground is done away with; instead, we have come to enjoy other games and music, such as base ball and the music of the violin at the dances.

Burial.

Our people used to dig a trench the length and width of the body, make a framework of boards and line this with skins and blankets and place the dead body in it but this was discouraged and then we began to use coffins but they were made without nails and notches were cut to allow the spirit to escape and our sacred tobacco was placed in the coffin but today even this is being discarded and only in very few instances of the burial the older people is this observed. And only occasionally do they observe the Ghost Supper, which

-7-

used to be held nine days after the death in which a supper is prepared for the departed.

Feasts.

We still observe our Spring Thanksgiving and give thanks for the seed season and pray for rain for our growing crops.

At strawberry time we have a feast and a dance and give thanks for the strawberry.

The Blackberry Feast is celebrated in the same way.

Our main observance is the Green Corn Feast, which is held in the time of the full moon in August. This feast is our way of giving thanks for the grains, vegetables, fruits and things that we have raised. Then we bring our families and camp and give several days to this observance. During this time we have, besides our thanksgiving, various other things, including the naming of the babies, the peach seed game, other games, friendship dances and we used to have Adoption Dances before they were forbidden but now we cannot adopt our friends into our tribe but we do still continue to register our children into our tribe though we do not have any land to give them as we used to have.

BUMBERRY, ANNIE YOUNG. INTERVIEW.

12049

-8-

School Days and Marriage.

When I was seven years old, I was sent to the Wyandotte Mission School where I remained through my school days. Mr. Hall was the superintendent and Miss Clara Allen was my first teacher.

In the month of October, 1910, I married Peter Bumberry, who had come to this country from Canada. He was of Cayuga and French descent and at that time was fifty-three years old.

We lived on my place on Elk River for many years.

We had two children and have sent both of them to school, starting them to Wyandotte. My daughter graduated from Haskell and later studied in Kansas City and still later took nurses' training in Tulsa.

My son, after finishing school, joined the army and is now serving his fourth year.

After my husband's death I moved into the small house that you passed coming from the highway, to be near my grandmother and at her death she willed me this place and so I moved here into her home. The place referred to is a story and a half, five room house.

LUMBEY, ANNIE YOUNG. INTERVIEW.

12049

-9-

I do not know how long I can stay here as I am told that the water from the Grand River dam will come up to the top of the doors.