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Goldie Turner,  
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During President Grant's administration several Indian agencies were placed in the hands of the Society of Friends or Quakers, all agents appointed belonging to that society. "Little Osage Post" was established, along with two others on the reservation, to facilitate the distribution of rations and supplies. The Hominy Post was where the present town is located, and the southern bands consisting of the Big Chief, Black Dog, Claremore, and Wahtiankah bands were supplied. The post at Salt Creek was located near the present town of Fairfax, and was in charge of Jonathan Osborn. Here the Big Hills, Hard Robe, White Hair, and Tall Chief bands, living on Salt Creek and the Great Bend of the Arkansas River and some smaller streams, were supplied. Peter Hobson was in charge of the "Little Osage Post." It was the best known because it was the only used trail to Kansas at that time.

The mail was brought in by freighters from Coffeyville, Kansas, but later a mail route was established and mail

delivered once a week to the agency. Rations were issued to the Strike Axe, Nopahwalla, and Chetopah bands; the latter being the outstanding leader of the Little Osages, and Chief Councilor of the Nation. He was the grandson of the famous Chief Chetopah, Joseph Pawneenopahshe (Not-afraid-of-the-Pawnee) who was later elected as the first governor, was the leader in the west, and Big Chief, and Wahtiankah were the outstanding chiefs in the south, the latter being the orator of the Nation. The Santa Fe Railroad now parallels the old trail into Pawhuska from Caney, and automobiles now make the trip in an hour over a fine road that took a day to make with the mail, and that speed was made only by changing teams at the post. The Indians would come weekly for their supplies, usually mounted on their ponies, and when the water was high they would make boats of dried hides, swimming and carrying their supplies across the swollen stream. A blacksmith shop, a warehouse for the Government supplies, a dwelling for the sub-agent, and a trader's store included all the buildings at the Post.

### Buffalo Days.

The days of the early pioneer was not always filled with hardships and discouragement. There were many days of sunshine and real pleasure, days of adventure and romance with open spaces of prairie, forest and stream to explore, and the hills which surrounded the new agency were very beautiful. The Indian camps or villages were scattered over the reservation and the different bands enjoyed many visits from neighboring camps. Then followed days of feasting, horse racing, and games around the camp fires at night.

The first winters after their new agency was established were spent west of the Arkansas River in the buffalo country, and thousands of buffalo fell before the prowess of the mighty Osage hunters during the years of 1874-75. Lodges were filled with the green hides ready to be cured and camps were busy tanning and preparing the robes for market, for at this time the Osages depended on the hunt for their living. The finest and most pliable robes were those tanned on

the spot where the brains of the buffalo could be used in the process of tanning, but many hides were brought to the reservation after the hunt had ended and were there cured. Prices for tanned robes at this time ranged from three to ten dollars, but an exceptionally fine robe quilted with porcupine quills brought much more as did also the Cheyenne robes with hand painted designs. Some of the robes were valued for as much as fifty dollars even at this early date.

The hunt was governed by rules and regulations, each party having its leader, and the party was subject to his orders, and severe punishment was the result of disobedience. This was necessary in order that no one party would have the advantage over another, and it was not permitted for the killing to begin until orders were given by the leaders. Benj. K. Wetherill was employed by the Government as "Trail Agent" and was stationed at the Sewall-Huffaker store near Pond Creek on the old Chisholm Trail to keep a watch on the Osages and report monthly to the Agency.

The traders at this time freighted supplies from the agency to the distant camps on the plains of the

hunting ground, the wagons returning filled with robes. Indians of many tribes met on the common hunting ground, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, and other western tribes. By common consent aided by the Head Men of the various tribes good order and conduct usually prevailed. Large droves of cattle were being driven over the Chisholm Trail to the railroad head at Abilene, Kansas, for shipment, and frequently cattle were stolen by roving bands, each tribe blaming the other for the thefts. This finally led to serious trouble and the peaceably inclined tribes suffered along with the guilty.

#### Rations.

Rations were now being regularly issued to the seventeen bands of Osages. Leper's ox train, consisting of sixteen yoke of oxen to each wagon with trailer, was kept busy bringing in immense piles of sugar, bacon, coffee, and flour over the long trail to Coffeyville. Thousands of head of cattle grazed on the grass covered prairies. The beeves to be issued were corralled and quickly shot down with rifles. They were then divided, each band being allotted a certain number. The Chiefs

of each band then took charge and the most expert skimmers and butchers with no other implement <sup>than</sup> but their trusty butcher knives soon had the beeves cut up in small pieces and each family had his portion firmly lashed to his pack saddle.

Cards were issued each head of a family, showing the names and number in the family, and each member drew a ration of sugar, coffee, and bacon. The old commissary was filled with these supplies and each day, week in and week out, saw members of each band at the window receiving their weekly rations. This distribution kept many living at far distant camps on the trails going and coming a great part of the time. Orders were issued to deliver rations only to the heads of families presenting cards, and not to any one holding and presenting a card for another member.

"Snake Hide" once tried to deceive Uncle Peter Labeau, assistant commissary clerk, with unsuccessful results. Appearing at the window with his own card, he was supplied and left the window returning shortly in a different make-up, having ineffectually tried to disguise

himself. Uncle Peter was busily engaged in stirring up brown sugar in a barrel with a short crow-bar when Snake Hide presented the card of another member. It was explained he could not be served with rations on this card. He argued the case with Uncle Peter, finally grabbing hold of the crow-bar, and soon had our interpreter drawn half way out of the window. The support for the sash finally gave way, letting it drop and pinning him with his body outside but still clinging to the crow bar. By a vigorous effort we pulled him inside again but he had lost his crow bar, which Snake Hide now savagely thrust through the window, missing his object of assault but shattering the glass completely. Snake Hide was still persistent and gaining entrance to the building through an open door began filling his empty sacks with everything in sight; but Uncle Peter was likewise thoroughly aroused and the combined efforts of clerk and interpreter proved too much for the old warrior and he was forcibly ejected from the commissary. Snake Hide nursed his trouble for many weeks and his familiar face was missed from the window, until finally he appeared smiling and called for his regular rations.

### The Big Flood

The year of 1876 was a promising one for crops. Much had been accomplished since the Osages had been moved in. Building material for the agency buildings was abundant as stone quarries were close, and several large agency buildings had been built. A saw and grist mill had also been erected on the banks of Bird Creek. The agency farm took in all the bottom land to the east that is now covered by buildings, streets, and alleys, extending from Kihekah Avenue to Lynn Avenue on the east.

The land had been put in wheat and by the last of June wheat was in the shock. But a big rain came up and lasted a day and night. By nine o'clock on the 30th day of June, 1876 the water from Bird Creek had broken across the bend strong enough to float heavy logs and in a short time had spread out over the wheat field.

A young brother of John Soderstrom, the miller, was sleeping in the mill, when he awoke he found the building surrounded by water; as he was not able to swim everybody was greatly alarmed for his safety. No boat was at hand, but the agency carpenter, Moses Plomindon,

immediately set to work building one. The agency school had a wooden tank used for hauling water and this was launched in the stream by two of Big Chief's band, who were in camp near by, and an effort made to reach the mill, but their effort was a failure. A second attempt was made by two stalwart Indians, who launched a boat made out of an immense dry hide, entering the stream far above the mill and swimming with the flood; but this attempt also failed when the frail craft was swamped by the swirling water around a large oak tree and the two brave swimmers were forced to take to the tree. The water now reached very close to the second story. By this time young Soderstrom, badly frightened and disheartened by the failure of the rescuers to reach the mill, proved his resourcefulness by climbing to the roof inside the building and began cutting his way out with his pocket knife. A mounted messenger now arrived with the word that every one should hurry to his home to assist his family, as the water was now entering all the buildings. A wild scramble ensued and for a couple

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of hours each one busied himself in trying to save what he could from the flood. Merchants piled goods on their counters while the Indians broke camp and fled to the hills. After the water began to subside thought again turned to young Soderstrom at the mill. He had accomplished his purpose of whittling a hole large enough to crawl through to the roof. A skiff was quickly built and launched, and manned by volunteers. This time they were successful and rescued the young man from the mill, but the water never quite reached the second floor.

#### An Indian Auction

An interesting feature of Indian life took place at one of the Kaw camps in 1885.

A tent had been erected and all the effects of a deceased member of the band were deposited within it. At early dawn before the sun had risen, the Indians gathered around the tent. The auctioneer stepped out of the tent holding a blanket in his hands and began in a loud voice to invite bids on the blanket. "Four dollars," sang out an old man with a patch of yellow paint under

his right eye, who sat on the outer edge of the circle around the tent. "I will give you five," said one of the Indians sitting in the circle. "It is yours," said the auctioneer, and the bidder after depositing a due bill for the amount received the blanket.

The auctioneer now brought out a pair of beaded leggings and the bidding began. One thing was noticeable; the number bidding never exceeded two, the article invariably being sold to the second bidder. Moccasins, necklaces, fans of eagle feathers; in fact, the whole paraphernalia of a complete Indian outfit was thus brought out and sold.

Finally an Indian pipe of red stone, a very large and handsome one was brought out, and the bidding became livelier. "Five dollars," "Eight," sang out the trader who was the only pale face in the number and who already saw the pipe, in his mind's eye, hanging with his other Indian curiosities; but he was doomed to disappointment when a hungry looking member of the circle, who was evidently wanting his breakfast and was anxious to bring the ceremonies to a close, said, "My brother, that pipe

has been smoked in many councils. Our brother who lies buried on yonder hill thought much of the pipe. I am not willing it should fall into other hands. My brother, I will give a pony for the pipe." These remarks were received with a few short yells which denoted great satisfaction.

At this point an Indian with nothing but a breech clout came dashing into the circle holding in his hands a skillet filled with live coals. He was followed by another one bearing in his arms an armful of cedar twigs, which were deposited over the coals. These two were followed by the dead Indian's relatives, wife, sister, and children, mourning and wringing their hands.

The pile of cedar now began to pour forth a volume of smoke and one by one the members of the band rushed into the smoke, bending close to the coals turning round and round with many wild gestures and with outstretched blankets, while the smoke at times completely hid them from view. "Come on, my son," said

one of the party, taking a firm hold of the trader's arm, and reluctantly the pale face was drawn into the smoke where he performed to the evident satisfaction of the party, hastily withdrawing in a fit of coughing, and gasping for breath. He was met with many cries of "Good, my son; the ghosts will never trouble you." The performance ended when the auctioneer turned over all the receipts from the sale to the relatives. The members of the party now believed that the spirit of the deceased would not return to trouble them. The smoke had banished all fear.

As the sun appeared over the hills, the party disbanded, all disappearing to their tepees, and the auction was at an end.

This material was furnished by Mr. Chalmer Byers, Cleveland, Oklahoma.