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

EARNES, JOHN (MRS.)

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Field Worker's name Ophelia D. Vestal,

This report made on (date) January 20, 1938

1. Name Mrs. John Barnes,

2. Post Office Address Cache, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Post Office Box 383.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 18 Year 1863

5. Place of birth Texas

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about mother _____

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 10.

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Ophelia D. Vestal,
Investigator,
January 20, 1938.

Interview with Mrs. John Barnes,
Post Office Box 383,
Cache, Oklahoma.

My first experience with the Comanches was on the first day of December 1902. We came to Oklahoma from Texas, arriving in Lawton at 7:30 P.M. There were no bus or taxies in those days to meet the trains. It was a very cold night with a hard north wind. In this strange town where we knew no one and the weather was so cold, we just stayed in the depot. The lights would be on for a few minutes, then we would be in darkness. As my husband was already here and was to meet me and the four children, all I had to do was to wait until he came in for us. All night long these lights were very bad.

Someone came into the depot once; it was very dark and of course we did not know who it might be. The person walked around, then lay down on the floor and kept propping his knees up and soon his knees would fall down; he would snore, and when the lights came on we could see that

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someone was wrapped in a white sheet. It was well that I could not see the color of this person, for it was an Indian man with his hair in braids. I had never seen any Indians before. The Indians wore long hair braided and all wore white sheets around their waists.

The Indian women wore dresses made with straight sleeves not sewed up at all and of two pieces, one on each side, sometimes the dress would be longer in front, sometimes longer in the back. One would never see an Indian baby out of his cradle board. This was something made of skins of animals, about two feet in length, made of round shape getting smaller at one end. The Indian baby is placed on this cradle board, laced in tightly, which makes the baby think he is being held close in his mother's arms. Then the cradle board is strapped on the Indian woman's back and she can go about doing her work.

The Indian women were known to do all the work. They made beautiful arbors but the men are taking more interest in the living affairs now-a-days. It was a common thing to see from one to ten dogs following behind an Indian's buggy or hack.

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Little Indian boys were trained at an earlier age than girls. Both are taught to swim early and at about six years of age the boys are put on horses without saddles and with only a bridle made of dried skin and made to learn to ride real fast. The boys are taught mostly by their mothers to make bows and arrows.

Once in 1907 my husband and I went fishing west of Cache. Here we met some of our Indian friends. We were laughing and talking not noticing the children much when a little Indian boy fell into the deep water. I was sure he would drown but soon he came up swimming to the bank. He was about four or five years old and was wearing only a little long shirt such as little boys were in the earlier days. Now this boy is married, has a family and a nice home near here .

I want to say this much for the person just spoken of in the above paragraph. Years ago there were many cases of typhoid fever in our neighborhood. Two of my children had it. When my little girl had fever and was so sick this Indian man came to our house. He thought

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it was so bad and wanted us to feed the child as she said she was so hungry. When this Indian man went home in the evening, he went by town and bought things for the little girl. Next morning he came back riding an old mule with a barbed wire for a bridle bringing popcorn, candy, peanuts, fruits, cookies and crackers. He came in, pouring all these things out on her bed saying, "Now help yourself, Betty, you can have something to eat." Most all Indians are free heart-ed, and this man had never forgotten what I did for his family when they were in need of someone to help with their sick.

The Indians' principal food is beef. Not one of them would eat pork. Many times the older Indians came in to see me while they were in town. It was pretty hard for me to get acquainted with Indians but when I did make friends and learn to talk with them, they would come to my house and eat with us. Once quite a few Indians were eating at our house and I passed a dish to them, grunting, meaning it was hog meat. From that day every time I see Tamvanah, or widow, she will grunt like a hog and laugh. I have two nieces who

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married Comanche Indians, one Clinton Red Elk, and one Buster Work-a-wam. One of my nephews married Florida Nida.

The first days of September were always sad for the Indian mothers. We could see the white men taking their children to school. They had to leave off their shawls and dress as white children dressed even though they were in Indian schools. Just as soon as some Indian children had a chance they ran away from school, going home. They were lonesome but would be returned to the school. But when school was out they came home very happy to get into their Indian clothes.

In 1910 there was a time when we didn't have much to do. Many Indians would come to our house and we would sit on the floor telling jokes. The Indians seem to be quite serious, but when they are in large groups they joke and have lots of fun. Among this circle of Indian friends each one in turn would tell a joke. One said, "Once when they were at church, the preacher ask Mr. Paddiaku if he didn't want to go to Heaven." He replied,

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"Yes but I want to go home now", thinking he meant to ask where he wanted to go just then.

Coy-eye lived on Blue Beaver Creek. His wife and two daughters died leaving him alone. Once he was robbed and tied and left for dead. Someone found him. He is now in the Indian hospital near Lawton. He must be nearly one hundred years old. He never drank or gambled.

She-wickey was my best friend, her husband was Black Wolf. They lived near Cache in 1907 and '08. The drums beat for days until it rained. I believe it was 1906, '07, '08, '09, and 1910 the drums never did stop beating at night or day. The Indians always believe in drum beats. They would beat drums in making medicine for someone who was sick and the sick person would be taken out of the house and placed in a tepee. I have had some sick Indians tell me that the beat of the drum would ease the pain and was good music to them. Then there was the drum beat for wars.

All Indian houses had tepees near them. As I mentioned before the women built arbors which were made of poles and willow brush. Here the Indians lived through the summer.

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Their houses were clean and they were pretty clean with their cooking. The Indian women would cut beef in small pieces and dry it, then they would take a knot off a Post Oak tree which was called a bole. The dried beef was pounded until it resembled corn silks. This was called "Tiho". Another way the beef was prepared was to cut the fat into small pieces, mix it thoroughly with sugar and a little flour, and fry it for a short while. Lots of Indians ate kidneys raw, but when cooked they wanted them cooked well done. Most of their bread was bought bread and they used crackers as bread some. Later they made bread from wheat flour called grease bread which tasted pretty good. Steak was cut in small squares, fried and gravy was made in with this meat. Indians are fond of fruit, cookies and candy.

Before the payments from the Government to the Indians stopped, they would go to the Indian agency and the Red Store and camp for weeks. I have seen hundreds and hundreds of Indians with camps just as close together as could be, making a little white town. I don't know of any charge

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against Indians for mistreating white people. Once "Dummie", Quannah Parker's body guard, whose real name was George Washington but whom everyone called "Dummie" because he was deaf and dumb, was in a store at Cache when a white girl tried to make fun of some Indians. Dummie saw her. He reproved her by signs indicating that when he died he would go to Heaven by pointing to himself and to the sky, then he pointed to the stove meaning she would burn. Really "Dummie" was a good man. He passed away several years ago.

At Post Oak Mission I have attended many sad funerals. When one Indian cries they all cry; then there is a quietness, then the crying is repeated. They want to bury their blankets, clothes and their most precious belongings in their graves. The Post Oak Mission Cemetery was very small until 1907, but now it is a large cemetery. On each Decoration Day the Indians always decorate the graves very beautifully.

I have noticed that there are no separations nor divorces among the older Indians and I've been told the marriage vows are exchanged only by trading cattle or ponies by the boy to the girl's father.

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I think Mrs. Birdsong is a daughter of the Chief Quannah Parker; she is one of the most out-standing Comanche women. She is very smart in every way, helping both her Indian and white friends. White Parker, one of Quannah's sons is now a minister.

There is a little church located west of Cache with sixty members. When one goes to this church one can hear a pin drop. This church was once a place where men went to gamble. I am so glad of this change.

Kutsy was one of my dear Indian friends. She would come to see me in 1907 and would stay all night; she was very old then. I never could get Kutsy to sleep on a bed; she would take her blanket and sheet, roll them around and around her, then lie down on the floor and she would get up in the morning feeling well. Another great friend is Young-eye. She is a sister of Pete Coffey's mother. I shall never forget her. She is very old and sick now and is bedfast. That brings to mind that not many of the old Indians are living now who were here when I came thirty-five years ago.

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The Indians are all good to their children. They live close to each other camping in large groups. One never hears of ill-feelings among Indians.