

INDEX CARDS

Houses--Cherokee Nation  
Lighting  
Claremore  
Mercantile establishments--Cherokee Nation  
Border towns--Coffeyville, Kansas  
Coffeyville, Kansas  
Osages  
Food--Osage  
Schools--Cherokee Nation  
Burial customs--Osage  
Paint--Osage  
Medicine--Cherokee  
Horse races--Osage reservation  
Drunkenness--Osage  
Family life--Creek  
Character traits--Creek  
Social gatherings--Cherokee Nation  
Family life--Cherokee  
Games--Cherokee Nation  
Collections

Aleene D. McDowell.  
Field Worker,  
April 27, 1937.

274

Interview with Mrs. Mollie Gross  
201 N. Seminole., Bartlesville, Oklahoma.  
Born-July 5, 1875. Toledo, Ohio.  
Father-John Bleakley.  
Mother-Sarah Martha McGath.

Mrs. Mollie Gross was born at Toledo, Ohio, July 5, 1875 and removed with her parents to the Indian Territory when she was about one year old.

John Bleakley, born at New Orleans, Louisiana. He removed to Ohio with his parents when he was 14 years of age. His father was a farmer. Mr. Bleakley passed away at the age of 52 years and is buried in the Walker Cemetery at Welch, Oklahoma.

Sarah Martha McGath - Bleakley, born at Toledo, Ohio, living there until her removal with her husband to Indian Territory in 1876. She passed away at the age of 75 years and is buried in the Sunshine Cemetery near Skiatook, Oklahoma.

When my parents came to the Indian Territory, they settled on the Johnycake place between Claremore and Verdigris in Coowescoowee District. Our home was a log house of one long room and had dirt floors. The logs were daubed up with mud and there were no windows. In the summer we would knock the chinking out of the logs for the

windows to give us light and air and in the winter the windows were daubed up with mud again.

We used grease lights. These lights were deep pie tins in which tightly plaited strings were put to hold the grease. Melted lard or bacon grease was used for this purpose. At times we were forced to use these lights for weeks, when our kerosene was exhausted. We also used flint rock to build a fire when we had no matches.

There was a little trading post at Claremore but once a year my parents made a trip to Coffeyville, Kansas, for supplies and clothing. At this time they would buy enough coffee, sugar, salt, etc., to last for a year. We raised most of our living and the cotton and wool for our clothing. Our coffee was green and we would parch and grind it, using a hand coffee mill. I was raised among the Indians and when we saw white people, we children thought they were sick because they were pale.

When the Osages came to our place on hunting trips, they always pitched their wigwams in our yard and my sister and I would sit where we could watch them.

They would take off their blankets and roll their bread on them, put it in a pan and bake it on the camp fire and when it was ready we helped eat it, until my mother knew about it. There was an Osage family camped in our yards when peaches were ripe and they traded my mother for peaches to make a cobbler enough material to make my sister and me a dress. This material was bright pink with big blue roses in it. After the Indians would leave our place, my father always cut the grass and sprayed all around the place where they camped and my mother always bathed us children and shampooed our hair to keep us from getting body and head lice. I have seen the Osages pick lice from their heads and eat them.

I acquired my early education in a rural school near Verdigris, now in Rogers County. We then moved to Cabin Creek near Welch in Craig County. These schoolhouses were frame buildings and we burned coal for fuel. We lived a long distance from school and rode horseback. One of my teachers was Miss Rattlesnake who had a sister who married an Indian named Mushpot. I visited my aunt in Osage County and there was a hill near them where an Osage Indian Chief was buried. He was buried sitting in a chair with his

blanket on and dirt had been piled high over him to cover the chair also. His favorite pony and dog had been buried with him also. On top of the ground was placed a wreath of flowers. This had happened many years ago and the dirt had washed away and settled until there was nothing left except the chair and his bones.

The Osage Indians would paint their faces and bodies, sometimes red and sometimes black. One color signified peace and the other war but I do not remember which color was for peace.

Mrs. Chambers, a Cherokee woman, was the medicine woman near us and she gathered herbs and roots for medicines. She could cure consumption if it was not too far advanced. One time I was critically ill with cholera morbus and they sent for her and she gave <sup>me</sup> some of her home remedy and in a short while I was cured.

We have attended horse races given by the Perriers at their place on Caney Creek in Osage County. The Indians were all crazy drunk but the races were carried on about the same as they are now.

My husband and a Mr. Miller went to the Creek Nation to buy a place and was to close the deal the next morning

when the man where they were visiting came home and told them of an Indian family who lived near him, who had a baby less than a year old and the father lost his temper and put the baby in the fire and roasted it. My husband decided he did not want to raise his children in such a heathenish place, so returned home.

The Indians were great to celebrate and they always had big Christmas dinners and invited all their friends for this occasion. They always gave presents to the children. We would go for miles to these dinners and my father would take us in a covered wagon with a bed of hay in the bottom for us children to ride on. The table was set about eleven o'clock and they began eating and they ate and drank all afternoon. They had everything to eat- chicken, turkey, roast pig, beef and all the trimmings.

The wild game was plentiful, also the wild animals and snakes. Deer would go in large droves and wild turkey in flocks, so we always had plenty of wild meat. My father has built a fire at night to keep the panthers away from the house, for they would not come near a fire. If they did not see a light, they would sometimes climb a tree and

jump down on the top of a house with such force they would go through the roof.

I was married in 1899 to John Gross at Chepoka, Kansas, at the Methodist parsonage. We are the parents of four children, two girls and two boys. They are all married except Marie with whom I make my home.

I have two cane-bottomed chairs made by my husband's father in about 1845. They are in good condition and are in use all the time.