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BLAIR, WILLIE (MRS.)

INTERVIEW.

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ETHNOGRAPHY FORM  
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
 Indian-Population Statistics

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Field Worker's name Grace KelleyThis report made on (date) April 22, 19281. Name Mrs. Willie Blair.2. Post Office Address Henryetta, Oklahoma, Box 4933. Residence address (or location) South of the Glass Plant.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month November Day 11 Year 18815. Place of birth Texas6. Name of Father W. M. Morey Place of birth Texas7. Name of Mother Caledonia Perryman Place of birth Indian TerritoryOther information about mother Sister to Legus Perryman,Chief of the Creek Nation.

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 16.

Grace Kelley  
Investigator  
April 22, 1938.

Interview with Mrs. Willie Blair,  
Henryetta, Oklahoma.

My grandfather Perryman took his family to Texas when his children were very small. I don't know the year nor the reason but it might have been because of the Civil War. I can't remember my grandparents.. Mother was reared in Texas and married there. I was a small girl when my parents moved to the Indian Territory.

They had two wagons with oxen. Mother drove one and Father drove the other with chairs, tubs and lanterns sticking out on all sides. We crossed Red River at Spanish Fort in Montague County Texas which was called Yellow Bank Crossing. This crossing was ferried when the water was up and forded when it was down.

#### Red River Flood.

Father was a white man and at that time had plenty of money. He secured a farm and some stock and by May had an extra good start toward making more money. Then in May a flood came and Red River went all over the farm. There was fourteen feet of water right around our house and two families were on top of the house from eleven o'clock one morning

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until half-past two o'clock the next afternoon. The water spread three miles in one direction and four miles in the other. Finally a boat came to our rescue and they were brave men in that boat or they would have left us to go on down the river with the stock, chickens and other things. There were no banks in those days so most of our money was washed away too. The only things we had left when the flood was over were the two spans of oxen that were found eight or nine miles down the river after the water receded. Nobody knows whether these oxen kept out of reach of the water or whether the water washed them down the river.

#### Move to Weogufkee

" Mother said that she was going to her people in the Creek Nation so they got a used wagon. I imagine they traded one yoke of oxen for it and started for the Creek Nation. The places we passed through were all small such as Ardmore, White Bead and we crossed the South Canadian River at Lexington. Mother was well acquainted with Governor John Brown of the Seminoles so we camped at Sasakwa for a month and then came on to a little place called Weogufkee on Shell Creek, close to where Hanna was later built.

### Accidentally Fed Belle Starr

When we were camped at Sasakwa some riders came to our camp just as we were getting ready to eat supper. There were three of them and they appeared to be part Indian. There was one woman who did all of the talking. She asked Mother for some coffee so Mother told them to sit down and eat their supper. They left their horses a little way from our camp to graze. After they had eaten the woman offered to pay Mother who just supposed they were settlers who had been to Eufaula on business and refused any pay. It was customary to feed travelers that way and then when you went traveling you would feel at home wherever you stopped.

About three hours after these people had left Father came home from where he had been helping to build some fences. He was having to work for others as much as possible to feed his family. He told us that Belle Starr and two of her men had gotten the Seminole payroll. That was one time that Mother regretted having fed strangers.

### Robbery of the Seminole Payment.

The Seminole payment was brought to Eufaula on the train. From there it was brought on through to Sasakwa on the stage

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which was usually a covered wagon with two teams to the wagon. Several Lighthorsemen rode on each side of the wagon and guarded the money. They had delivered the money to Governor Brown and left before the riders came to our camp.

Belle Starr picked up an Indian child and rode off with it. While the Indian men were hunting the child the two men went in and took the money. Belle put the child down without harming it for she had no more use for it.

Caledonia Perryman Morey  
Indian Doctor or Midwife

Mother had learned about herbs and medicines from the older Indians but she doctored mostly among the whites. She was known as an Indian doctor or midwife. Sometimes she would receive \$10.00 for a week's work as housekeeper and doctor. Sometimes she would receive pigs, a shoat, or a sow. As I grew older I often got irritated at her for working so much for nothing. She did more work for sympathy than for money, especially after Father got on his feet and was making money. She went to anyone who was suffering and made many burial robes for the dead.

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## Kept Children; Paid in Stock.

When we first came to Weogufkee Mother sewed for people, did house work and helped to provide for the family. When Jim Hill's wife died she left three little children. Mother took them and nursed the smallest one. After three years Mr. Hill remarried and came for his children. He paid Mother in cattle and that was the way we got a start in stock.

## Large Farm

We had what was called a large farm but would be called a truck patch now for there were only ten or fifteen acres of land. We had a great deal of stock but didn't ship any, just kept it for our own use, that is the stock which was not stolen. There was all kind of wild game and we were happy.

## Relatives and Allotments.

Thomas Perryman was my uncle and the Superintendent of the Bifaula School. Legus C. Perryman was my uncle and Chief of the Creeks at one time. He was at Tulsa. Willie V. Harris was the aunt that I was named after and she lived in Texas until after allotment. All of my relatives were allotted except Aunt Willie's family who were "gypped" out of their rights though they were enrolled. Mother's allotment was seven and a half miles south of

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Henryetta and that is where I lived most of my life until I was married.

#### Indian Church Meetings.

Reverend Westley Smith was the Indian minister who held church at Weogufkee and he had Sunday School at his home, in Proctor. Mother was a Sunday School teacher and singing teacher. The Prayer meetings were held in the homes. We were Missionary Baptists and had a frame church building.

#### Indian Medicines.

Mother used red root to purify the blood; May apples were made into pills and used for a purgative; blue grass that has little blooms on it was used to run fever down; mouse ears which grows in swampy places was also used for fever; sour dock roots were used for a nerve tonic. The seeds were used for diarrhoea; broom weed was boiled down and a half cupful at bedtime would kill a cold; meal tea made from cornmeal was used for a lingering misery during childbirth and would bring the right pains on right away; sarsaparilla bark, horehound, mullein and honey mixed was used for a lingering cough and cured the most stubborn ones.

## Indian Schooling

My first schooling was at the little log house called Hutchachuppa. It is east of the Bun Ryal School about four miles and still standing. Carrie Harper was my first teacher and George Riley Hall was the second. We had split log benches with sticks stuck in the bottoms for legs.

W. M. Blankenship was my best teacher even if he could whip hard. He was impartial with the boys and girls. If you didn't want a whipping you had to get the lessons as he would have no shirking. The spelling was done orally and if we didn't divide the words into syllables, and give the definitions we went to the foot of the class.

## 1902 Wetumka Boarding School.

My last schooling was at the Wetumka Boarding School. Mr. Atchinson was the Superintendent, and Music teacher, Mr. Goodman the Principal, Mrs. Bridges the Second grade teacher and Annabelle Wright was another teacher. Mr. Oscar Ogletree was the cook and Charlie March looked after the farm and orchard.

Every Monday morning our work duties were changed. The boys did the outside chores and the girls did the dishes, took care of the dormitories, waited on the tables and the ones who were

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old enough washed and ironed their clothing.

Everyone had to use the English language and some of the children had never heard it until they came to the school. I got called down quite a few times because I talked to my helpmate in Creek. I finally explained that she was a Full Blood who couldn't understand a word I was saying if I didn't say it in Creek and that I wasn't trying to break the rule. I was given permission to say the necessary things in Creek if I would help her to understand some of the English too. It was quite a handicap and yet a just rule. Those children would never have learned English if they had been allowed to use their own language.

Everything was done to enlighten the children in the ways of the white man. Besides being taught the English language and how to work we were taught books and music.

#### Violinists

Jimmsie Brown, a Seminole Indian, had the smallest German violin that I ever saw and played at Fiddle dances. The Indians played the violin but they had no musical instrument of their own except the drum. The violins were brought into the Indian

Territory by some white person. Taylor Taylor who lives down by Bun Ryal was and is a good violinist and also played at our dances.

#### Fiddle Dances.

I've been told by white men, who should know, that the Indians' fiddle dance was the old time reel. One Indian man usually Taylor Taylor, would play a violin or fiddle, another would sit astride a chair and beat the back of the chair with two sticks in the same manner as beating a drum. The men were lined up facing a line of women. The woman opposite him was a man's partner. Some jigged while standing in one place while the head man danced, that is he would swing his partner, then go to the next girl and swing her until he came to the end of the line. Someone in the line would yell "Swing your partner" or "Promenade" and then every man would swing his own partner or they would all march around the room in a circle. Like the square dance it was a lively dance and one where everyone enjoyed himself if he didn't happen to be too jealous.

#### Ball Game

In May, about the time that school is out the Creek Indians would have a big feast, ball game and speaking. In September

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they had another entertainment about like the one they had in May. Their Christmas and New Year are the same as the white person's because they learned about Christmas and New Year from the white person.

When the Indians played ball the men of each town stripped to their breech clouts and were painted with war paint. They played with two sticks each and had a goal like a football goal. Somebody made a speech in the center, everybody yelled, the man threw the ball up in the air and they started playing and fighting. They were a bad looking outfit when it was over. Some had their eyes almost beaten out, skin knocked off and bleeding, but they had played their own game among themselves and it was nobody's business. Now when they go to fighting the white law officers go in and stop them. I believe the white people should let them alone for they never kill anyone and they never bother the football games just because someone gets hurt.

#### Fishing

We always camped the night before we wanted to fish. The men drove posts into the river where they wanted to

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poison the fish. Then they gathered the Devil's shoestring and got it ready to use. The next morning the men got out into the water and pounded the Devil's shoestring on these posts letting the juice fall down into the water. The fish for a certain distance from the posts would become drunk and could be caught with the hands, some were shot with the bow and arrows while the white people used a pitch fork but we, our family, were the same as Full Bloods and the women caught the fish the same as the men.

#### More fun

Our principal pastime was the ball game. When we girls played it at home or at the meetings we didn't use the double goal post. We used one post with a horses head on top of the pole and a ring cut just below the head. The men caught and threw the ball with two sticks but we caught and threw it by hand. When the head was hit it counted four points, the ring was two points. You had to look out for if you got hit it was your hard luck but it was all in fun and was a lively game.

Father Deputy U. S. Marshal.

Father carried a badge and a gun for many years. He worked with a mulatto negro named Grant Johnson who was a

United States Marshal. Johnson took his prisoners to Fort Smith and Muskogee. Father was continually working with the law officers because he wasn't afraid of the Full Bloods for he knew them and could talk their language. If he wanted one he didn't have to kill nor he killed trying to get the wanted one. Father was never satisfied here in the Indian Territory though but wanted to go back to Texas to his own people.

#### Crazy Snake Uprising 1901.

All there was to the 1901 uprising was that Chitto Harjo and some others did not want to accept the rule of the white people, the allotment nor the laws nor the churches though some of them had accepted the churches. They wanted to be free with their own land, homes and wild game without interference from white people. They were not committing any crime by meeting out there at their Hickory Ground town but were holding Council, trying to talk the different things over and see what they could do about it. As usual there was nothing they could do. We took the Muskogee Phoenix, the Eufaula Journal and the Fort Smith paper. They gave all about that uprising from both sides of the question.

## Whipping at Hickory Ground Town

The Indians punished the law violators in their own way which seemed brutal to the white people. Once three of their men had stolen a hog and hogs were plentiful so they were being whipped for stealing. I was working for Dr. O'Dunhoe, watching his stock for him as he always wanted a fresh team when he came in. Likowski had a post office at Sonora and the doctor's wife and I rode right through the Ground when going to the post office. They had camps, shacks and arbors and we didn't pass between them but through the ground.

These men were being whipped and we didn't want to see it all at close range but watched it from a distance.

It wasn't Chitto Harjo's nor any Full Blood's way to steal for they had stricter laws and punishments for stealing than white people have.

Some of the white people got scared and had the Government send soldiers in to Henry Town where they camped. They captured several of the Indians and sent them to Fort Leavenworth. John Lewis was one of the Indians sent away and I was told that they sent Chitto Harjo and while he was in prison they cut his hair, though I don't know if that was true for

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I didn't see him after he came back.

#### How the Ladies rode.

I always rode a sidesaddle and most of the women of that time did but the doctor's wife said she could never learn to stay on one even when it wasn't on a horse. She would ride a man's saddle with her leg over the horn and sitting in the saddle sideways. People would laugh at her but she was jolly and didn't mind. You would get very tired riding that way on a long ride but it was all right for a short one. An ordinary ride was twenty-five or thirty miles.

#### Snake Uprising in 1908

In 1908 I had married J. B. Upchurch and had three small children and was living in Henryetta. Father had remarried as Mother died in 1902 but he and my brothers were living south of town.

When I heard about the fight there were all kinds of terrible stories. I supposed everyone out there was killed including my relatives. Nobody would go out there with me for they were afraid. I hitched the wagon, took my little children and went out there. When I got there the fight was

all over and the prisoners had been marched into Henryetta. I had gone the road that went past where Dewar is east of Henryetta then south. They had come by where the old reservoir is; that road came west and north into Henryetta.

No Indians had been hurt because nobody had anything against them. Certainly my people didn't have for we were reared among them and were friends and relatives. Several whites were hurt but Mr. Tim Fowler was the only one who was hurt seriously. Later the Odom boy was killed but not during that fight; that battle was not as bad as some liked to brag about.

We were against Statehood.

I had a wonderful mother and she had lived in Texas after it had become a state. She knew that the taxes there were terrible and said that everyone who voted for Statehood was voting against his own freedom. All Indians would regret it for they would be taxed to death and the whole life and country of the Indian would be different; not better but much worse than before Statehood and she was right too.

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## Pennant to Officers.

A blue pennant was given to each of the white men who went to the Hickory Ground and killed, captured and ran off the negroes gathered out there. Father received a pennant, it was dated March 25, 1909 and I still have it. I believe that was about a year after the battle.

When they were talking about building a school the different men got into an argument about who would lose the land where the school would be built. My brother said he would put a stop to the row by giving his land. The Bun Ryal school is on the A. W. Morey allotment; I don't know why they didn't name it the Morey school instead of the Bun Ryal school.