

MORLAN, JAMES F. INTERVIEW.

Form A-(S-149) 53235

BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Alene D. McDowell

This report made on (date) August 19 1937

1. Name James F. Morlan

2. Post Office Address Route 2, Canby, Kansas

3. Residence address (or location) 2 miles West of Copan, Oklahoma

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month February Day 21 Year 1883

5. Place of birth Stockton, Missouri

6. Name of Father Gus Morlan Place of birth Ireland

Other information about father Buried in Kansas City, Missouri

7. Name of mother Rebecca Moreland-Morlan Place of birth Iowa

Other information about mother Buried in Bartlesville, Oklahoma

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 12.

Alene D. McDowell
Interviewer
August 19, 1937.

Interview with James F. Morlan
Route 2, Caney, Kansas.

James F. Morlan was born February 21, 1883, at
Stockton, Missouri.

Father, Gus Morlan, was born in Ireland, and died
in Kansas City, Missouri, at the age of 72 years.

Mother, Rebecca Moreland-Morlan, was born in Iowa,
and died at the age of 62 years and is buried in the White
Rose Cemetery at Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

I made my home with my uncle and moved with him to
the Indian Territory in the early 90's, settling near
Critchfield. My uncle made the run into the Cherokee Strip
in 1893. I was 10 years old at that time and I thought my
pony was much better than my uncle's horse, so decided to
make the run with him. I was ahead of him for three or four
miles then he passed me, so I returned to the place where
we started from to await his return. We started from
the north border of the Strip, east of Kiowa, Kansas.

My uncle became confused and lost his directions and
staked another man's claim near Aline, in Alfalfa County,

and had been staked by a fellow named Jim Crow. He run a bluff and my uncle gave up and returned for me, and we returned to our home. There were two girls sitting in a wagon near us and when the signal was fired they hitched their team to a plow and began breaking ground.

In about 1899, when I was 16 years old, I came from Weklington, Kansas, to El Reno, Indian Territory, on a freight train. I was highjacked in the railroad yards at ElReno by some bums. After they had searched me, they made me take off my shoes to see if there was any money in them.

In 1901 my uncle homesteaded land $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles Southwest of Shawnee, in Pettawatomie County. I was then about 18 years old and I made the trip to my new home on the freight train. Our home was a two room sod house with a dirt floor and our out-buildings were also made of sod.

Our furniture was all home made. The chairs had split hickory bottems. We sawed 1 X 4's for bed rails.



3

Our table was home made and we cooked on a fireplace, and used kerosene lights.

Our farming implements were all home made. We had a wood beam plow, an "A" harrow and a walking cultivator. I can not give a clear description of the cultivator, but I know it was home made. We did not have work horses, but did our work with oxen. In the winter we grubbed Blackjack thicket and hauled wood with the oxen, and ⁱⁿ the summer we tilled the land. One of the oxen wore a bell at night when they were turned loose so they could be found the next morning. We also had a dozen hens which my aunt insisted on bringing to the new country with her.

The wild game in our vicinity consisted of turkey, quail, rabbit, squirrel, prairie chicken, raccoon and opossum. There were no deer in our immediate vicinity, but they were plentiful about twenty miles west of us.

We bought our supplies and received our mail at Tecumseh, located five miles Northwest of our home.

We were located among the Pettawatomie Indians and I have attended many of their celebrations, east

of Shawnee. My uncle furnished the concession stand for the Stomp Dances, and my cousin, John Melton, and I operated the stand and received one-half the profits. John ran the stand half the time and I the other half. When I was off duty. I celebrated with the Indians.

STOMP DANCE: The music was the ordinary Indian drum, made by stretching a hide over a hollow log or stump and was beaten with a mallet. The drum beater was paid \$1.00 per night and his chewing tobacco. The tobacco was cut in chews and placed on the ground, near the drum beater, and he would fish it out of the dust or grass and dust it off before he could chew it. There were four drum players.

If a man danced with an Indian girl, he fell in behind her. I was not aware of this custom, and well recall one time, when I danced behind an Indian girl, and when we finished the dance she said, "Me drink on you; you dance with me."

At 12 o'clock, midnight, the women entertained the men with a song and dance program for two hours, while the men sat on the ground and rested. The women

~~the~~
danced by/chant of their voices.

The Stomp Dance was carried on continuously, while part of them rested and slept, others danced. They slept in covered wagons and tepees.

Flossie Big Bear, a red haired Indian girl, helped us in the concession stand and I thought I was in love with her, but I came to my senses before I lost my head.

The Stomp Dances were held annually, in the fall of the year, and lasted from one to two weeks. The Stomp ground was about 100 feet across, with a big bonfire in the center. There would be a deep hole tramped around the stomp ground, sometimes eight or ten inches deep, where they danced. All tribes of Indians attended these dances. Each tribe celebrated with a stomp dance and they were so arranged that the other tribes could attend. One tribe would have a dance for a week or two, then another tribe would have one, etc.

FUNERALS: The ~~Pettawabentio~~ Indian burial ground was located west of my uncle's farm, and I have attended their funeral rites. Their burial was different from other tribal funerals I have witnessed.

6

Their hearse was two poles, about 12 feet in length, which drug on the ground, behind, and a horse was hooked to the front of the conveyance. A man rode on each side of the horse and whipped it to make it run. The dead Indian was tied to the poles and taken to the burial ground at top speed. On their arrival at the cemetery the first custom practiced was to kill the favorite dog belonging to the dead Indian. The poles were then lowered and the Indian put in a grave, three or four feet deep, on a blanket. The grave was dug in an oblong shape, as near as I can describe it. The dog, tomahawk, blankets and all the trinkets belonging to the Indian were buried with him. The horse was then run off to catch the spirit, and was never owned by any one again. They were very superstitious about owning a dead man's horse.

HORSE RACING: Horse racing was a great sport among all tribes of Indians. Their races were run on a straight track, and they bet all their possessions on these races. I traded a yearling steer for a race pony. My cousin and I saw an Indian steal my pony, we jumped on our horses and pursued him. When my cousin was near enough he jumped on the Indian's pony and the pony fell, pinning John's leg under

7

it, giving the Indian a chance to make an escape. We returned with the pony, but the Indian was long gone.

INDIAN COSTUMES: The Indian men were chaps made of hides, ~~and~~ bright colored blankets, and buckskin moccasins, and the women wore knee length dresses made of deer skin and beaded, and deer skin moccasins.

Their rations were issued from the Government Commissary at Shawnee. They were given Navajo blankets for their horses, and I well remember the ones I traded for. My cousin and I wanted one of these blankets for our ponies and did not have the money to buy one. We stole chickens from my aunt and traded them to the Indians for a Navajo blanket. My aunt missed the chickens and became suspicious. She ask^{ed} where we had gotten our blankets and we informed her we had worked for them, but she did not believe us and we received a terrible whipping. Anyway we kept the blankets.

Their allotments were 160 acres each, but they did not cultivate or improve their land. It was usually rented or leased to the white man, and the Indians banded together in one camp and lived in tepees. I have

seen the tepees so thick it was difficult to go through the camp. Like all other Indian tribes the squaws did all the work. They carried their papooses on their backs while securing fire wood.

I attended the Pheasant View School. This school house was a sod building with dirt floors. Our seats were long benches with a space marked off for a seat, and another space marked for our books. Our teacher was Tom Robison. He had finished the seventh grade and taught us as far as he had gone. He married my cousin, Goldie Eldridge, who was one of his fifth grade pupils. The old Chishelm Trail was located three or four miles southwest of our place, and we crossed it on our road to school.

Our only newspaper lasted but a short time. A man came to Tecumseh and established a printing office but soon went broke, because the women spread all the news before the paper went to press.

My uncle raised a few sheep and my aunt weve the wool for our suits. She carded, spun and weve the cloth, dyed it dark blue or brown, with dye made from

bark, and made our suits by hand.

There were no ferry boats in our immediate vicinity. I made a trip from Shawnee to Missouri and remember crossing on a ferry, west of Fort Gibson, where the Verdigris River flows into the Arkansas River.

My cousin, John Melton, and I used to play for dances in the Cheyenne Country, north of Elk City, Indian Territory. We loaded our five octave organ into the wagon and ~~took~~ it to the dance with us. He played the violin and I played the accompaniment on the organ. We played all night and received \$2.00 and our supper and breakfast. I also played the cello.

We played for a platform dance, at a six day picnic and charged 10 cents a set. We made \$22.00 that week. We bought a cow with the money, then traded the cow for a saddle.

My uncle operated three dance halls and I received a good education in dance hall operation. The first dance I attended in Bartlesville was held in the North Johnstone Park. Jake Bartles was giving one of his noted Fourth of July picnics and that night they celebrated with a big

10

dance. There was a high platform where the dance was held, and I called for the dance.

My cousin and I started from Great Bend, Kansas to Byron, Indian Territory, on a freight train, to cut kafircorn. While going upgrade at Hazelton, Kansas, we jumped off the train. He landed in a mud hole, and I in a patch of sandburs. We walked into Hazelton where we borrowed a pair of tweezers from the depot agent and John spent one-half hour pulling sandburs out of me.

I was about 14 years old when I saw an automobile for the first time. It was a buggy type, with high buggy wheels and belonged to Dr. Straton at Tecumseh. I also saw my first picture show at Tecumseh.

My most exciting experience was my first ride on an elevator. John Melton and I made a trip to Kansas City, Missouri, sight seeing. We decided it would be thrilling to ride on an elevator, this being our first opportunity. We located a building with an elevator, and rode to the top floor. It was very exciting going up, but when we started down I had

11

a queer³ feeling in the pit of my stomach. The next I knew I was sitting on the floor of the elevator and when we reached the bottom floor I was too weak to stand, so scooted out of the elevator on my hands.

When the oil business began to open up in the Indian Territory, the oil towns were then like they are now, wild and wooly. I was in a small oil town one day when Tar Face Jim, an outlaw and bootlegger, came in with a pack of horses loaded with whiskey. He was selling the whiskey from a dry goods box when the marshal ask him if he had a license to sell in the town. Jim pointed to his six shoters and said, "Here is my license." The marshal backed off and cleared out.

The first gas well I ever saw was a "wild cat" well, and it was piped up so the light could be seen in town. The pipe fell, hit a wagon and demolished it. I lit a cigarette by the fire of this same well.