

HARRISON, BEN (MRS.)

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Nettie Cain,  
Interviewer.  
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An interview with Mrs. Ben Harrison,  
Holdenville, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Ben H. Harrison, white, of Holdenville, was born in Indian Territory. Her father, Charles Liegerat, was a Frenchman and was born in France. Her mother, Emma Stratton, English, was born in England.

They came to the Indian Territory in 1893. Mr. Liegerat made the run in the Cherokee Strip, riding a little saddle horse named "Tommy". He staked his claim and then let a woman and child have the horse. They were driving a mule and the mule had given out. He then let a man borrow the horse to finish his race. The horse lived to be thirty-eight years old.

Mr. Liegerat raised fine horses. He was a friend to the Indian and lived in May County, near Tonkawa. These Indians were known as the blanket Indians.

One time Mr. Liegerat was in Colorado during the gold rush. He had left his family in the Indian Territory. The family had never been used to the Indians. The mother saw a bunch of Indians coming. She quickly gathered her children

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into the house, fastened the doors and even covered all the windows except one. She pushed a tall wooden bedstead in front of that window, but failed to cover part of it. She looked up to see several Indians looking in this window. She just expected every member of her family to be scalped at once, but after quick thinking decided she would feed them. She made signs, finally making them understand. They were really starving, so day after day she fed them. Soon the red man looked upon them as their best friends. After Mr. Liegerat returned he would give them food and trade with them.

One old Indian known as Goodboy would always come and tell if any of the Indians failed to do their duty. He would walk about thirteen miles.

One time while Mr. Liegerat was away from home on business Mrs. Liegerat heard some one in another room. As he ran out of the room Mrs. Liegerat shot him through the foot. The next day the wife of this white man told that some horse thieves had shot her husband. The Indians heard of this incident. After that a big buck Indian would come and guard the family while Mr. Liegerat was away. When Mr.

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Liegerat returned he would give the indian flour and food for his pay.

Mrs. Harrison played with the small indian children and was always admired by all the old indians.

One time she met an indian man and his wife in a two seated hack, the squaw sitting in the back seat. The big chief asked why she was walking. She told him her mother made her walk and would not let her ride her horse. A few days later he came back leading an indian pony behind the hack. He told her it was for her - horse, saddle and bridle.

Mrs. Harrison would go to the stomp dances and dance with the indians. Some of her mother's relatives were visiting them and had never seen any indians or stomp dances.

That night Mrs. Harrison decided she would dress up and be one of the indian maidens. The indian girls painted and fixed her and then she went to where her mother and relatives were with the other indian girls. The mother had just been telling how nice the indian girls were. Her mother never recognized her and asked a girl named Leota who she was. Leota replied, "Oh, just one of our indian girls", and Mrs. Liegerat never learned who she was until months later.

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Mr. Liegerat died when Mrs. Harrison was twelve years old. Before he died the Indians came and offered their service and after his death they came and asked if they could see his body. After the white people had passed out then the Indians passed through and there was a string of Indian wagons about a mile long on the way to the cemetery.

Ben F. Harrison, husband of Mrs. Harrison, was a member of the first state legislature and chairman of committee for purchase of coal and asphalt lands. He was a great statesman. He helped to survey land for the allotment of the Indian lands and worked under the Dawes Commission.