

WILLIAM COLLINS, SR. (STORIES ON SUN DANCE; 101 RANCH; RACE HORSE; GYPSIES, WAR DANCE; GAMES; PIPE DANCE; GHOST DANCE)

I am William Collins, Sr., a member of the Ponca tribe of Indians of Oklahoma. I am now 72 years of age. I was born July 17, 1897, on this reservation. I attended Ponca Training School in 1903. I was six years old. This school was practically run on reformatory rules. Rules were very strict. Boys played on their side and the girls on their side. We were not permitted to talk our own Ponca language. If we talked our language we were punished by taking our playing privileges for three days. The older boys were punished by being strapped or locked in a dark cellar or dungeon. When they were taken to do wood splitting or chopping they were chained to a fifty pound ball of steel. We were punished for all petty offenses like going on the girls side to get a ball, not sweeping clean, or mopping with a dirty mop. Offenses were committed everywhere. Large boys were punished for their petty offenses in their way too. Medical treatment was not much, as we had the old army doctors. Our whole school at one time was operated on for trachoma and ulcers and even some who did not need this operation. Smallpox hit the school as no vaccine was available and children died like flies. Some children were stolen by their folks and these survived. Well, so much for our schooling as we could not go higher than the fourth grade or be fifteen before we could go to Chilocco, Haskell, or Carlisle Indian Schools. Our food was not much. We had food that was practically U.S. Army rejects, such as hard-tacks, prunes, beans, dried peaches, dried apples, oatmeal and crackers. They always had bugs in them. We never did know a good fried meat or bacon and eggs. We all had clipped heads, narrow-waisted shirts and short uniform caps. Well, so much for our schooling.

Now the Poncas were brought to the area around the northeastern part of the state of Oklahoma, in 1879 in twenty days or stops. They suffered untold hardship. One of our main chiefs died there in the Quapaw area with many old people on account of the weather and bad water which had minerals in it. So they looked for another place for better water and other facilities until they came to the present Ponca reservation. They first built