

INDEX CARDS

Cemeteries--Choctaw
Churches--Choctaw Nation
Frazier, William
Permits--Choctaw
Farming--Choctaw Nation
Game--Choctaw Nation
Natural resources--Conservation
Wild horses--Choctaw Nation
Food--Choctaw
Bows and arrows--Choctaw
Household manufactures--Choctaw
Burial customs--Choctaw
Marriage--Choctaw.

INTERVIEW WITH SARAH NOAH AND
ROBERT NOAH, ATOKA, OKLAHOMA.

FIELD WORKER. . PETER W. COLE

April 12, 1937

My grandparents came from Mississippi when the Choctaws were migrated to this country before my time which I do not know. My father, William Frazier, was a part Choctaw, Chickasaw and of French descent. My mother was a full blood Choctaw. Her name was Louisa Frazier. My father was born in the year of 1869, and died on November 29, 1936, and is buried at Buffalo Creek, an Indian Cemetery. There is an Indian Methodist Church located at this place which is located about four miles east of Atoka Oklahoma. He was over sixty seven years of age at the time of his death.

During the territorial days, under the tribal laws, he was one of the Light Horseman whose duty was to see after the non-resident citizen to buy permit before establishing any business within the bounds of his district. In fulfilling his duty he at one time was shot in the jaw but soon recovered.

He became a member of the Southern Presbyterian Church in his young days and later joined the Methodist and then went to the Cumberland Presbyterian denomination of which he was a member at the time of his death.

My mother was Louisa Frazier. She was a relative of T. W. Hunter, present County Judge of Choctaw County, Hugo, Oklahoma, and Hon. Ben F. Dwight, ex-principal Chief of the Choctaws. She died on September 6, 1903 and was buried at an old Indian Church "anah Takalih, an abandoned Church. The cemetery is located about five miles south of Caddo, Oklahoma.

In my young days, I did not attend any school as after the death of my mother I was under the care of another family who did not live near any school, and what time I went to school, I went to a neighborhood school near Emmet Oklahoma in Johnston County.

My father and mother engaged mostly in farming and raised corn and garden vegetables. We had plenty of hogs, cattle and work horses. At canning times we would put up all different kinds of vegetables, and put up enough cured hog meat to tide us until the following spring.

HUNTING.

In those days wild games of several kind were plentiful, and one did not have to go any distance to kill deer or other game. Usually in the fall after all work is completed, several friends would take a trip out in the mountain for a big hunt.

3

They would take bedding, groceries, tents and other necessary equipment in a wagon and would take out for Kiamichi Mountain, and would be gone for two and three weeks at a time and of course on their return they would bring enough fresh meat for home consumption and none was ever sold or spoiled.

After the big hunt and each one had his kill, he would cut the intestine out, skin the hide of one of hind foot of deer to the first joint, and opposite forefoot likewise. Tie a knot and by this mean one could be carried to any place on his back. This was one way of carrying game that the hunter killed.

Each Indian hunter had followed this plan about killing game more than they can use, We had plenty of wild game all through the year, until the settlers came to this country and began to kill them out only for a sport to see who can kill the most game in one day. It became necessary that game should be protected. Later in the years after statehood the Legislature passed a law to prohibit this slaughter only at a certain season of the year.

Not only wild game and fish is being destroyed but there once roamed wild horses, hogs, turkeys and wild pigeon in this country but as the settlers were opening up this country and as the advancement increased, it crowded the game out until now it is almost extinct.

4

There were wild horses all over the country and when captured, and broke to work, some made good work horses and saddlers. The way they were captured was that a day would be set to build a pen. Everybody interested was invited to help work by cutting down young trees and bushes in a line about one half or one mile each way from the pen. The pen would be small but the wing each way would be broadened as it advances and usually be about one mile wide at the mouth.

The riders would ride in three or four in a bunch and stationed at certain distances apart and when the first bunch would head the horses toward where they are stationed, they would relieve the first bunch and continue the chase until corralled. This chase was merely a sport and fun for the young men.

INDIAN COOKING.

One of the most delicious dish that the Indians enjoy seeing on the table is dumpling. This preparation can be made several ways. It can be prepared or cooked from apples, dried and green peaches or blackberries. Corn beaten into fine meal through the process familiar to the Choctaws, cooked and sweetened to taste until done is then ready for serving. Hominy corn (tafilla) is corn beaten through process, husk cleaned as Pearl Hominy like we see in stores, boiled in water until done.

There are several ways that this preparation can be prepared. It can be cooked in sweet potatoes, sun dried stripped pumpkin, hickory nut beaten and kernels cleaned or beans. A backbone of pork cooked in hominy is a good dish and is called (tanchi lobona). -A Choctaw word.

The Indians of olden time were never loud on cakes but where it is to be served, flavor or eggs were never used. Brown sugar or syrup was usually used in this preparation. Pies of several kinds were known but were hardly ever made for the reason that most people did not care for any sweets.

Instead of canning green beans, I would string it and let it season until dry and put away in sack or box and kept in a dry place until ready for cooking. It will look as decayed or musty but a thorough washing before cooking will give a natural color.

It was a rare case where my parents ever used raw salt as we called it. In seasoning after meal is cooked and if need more salt, we would take a small amount of salt, dampened until formed into dry dough, set in bread pan and let it be placed in hot stove until cooked dry and brown. It was thought that if used raw was harmful.

-6

Dyes.

Little is known among the Choctaws of present age as to its use and how dyes are made is about a lost art, but I will give a simple one that may be of interest. You can take any amount of a bark of red oak and elm trees, a certain kind of wild weeds and boiled to certain degree. This preparation was used to dye wool and cotton cloth.

We read so much in our history about how the Indian made their bow and arrows, so I shall not go in detail to repeat it but to color or paint an arrowhead, we would go to the creeks where we can find a certain kind of rock bed where it can be found. This is now rare but when found it is brittle chalk-like shape. There are several colors of this kind and this was used in painting or drawing tents, or arrowheads. When a deer or buffalo is killed, they would save the backbone until dry. In fitting arrowheads, I have seen them use the sinews of this sundried backbone, soak in warm water for sometime and string fine as silk will ravel off which makes a good strong cord for fastening or tying on arrowheads.

HOW LAUNDRY SOAP WAS MADE.

Little was known in the old days of any household use, and if anything of value was found or known it was told to all of the people in the community.

I make my own home use soap by boiling a certain amount of marrow bones, grease or fat in clear liquid of ashes as a substitute for lye. To make this preparation, I would get a tub full of good clean ashes, (Tub to be full of nail holes for this purpose) and another tub or kettle be placed underneath it. Sprinkle the ashes with cold water until damp or like mud, and dig a funnel shape hole in the center of the ashes and let this be filled with water. Let this set until all the liquid run through a small hole and let it run into the tub or kettle. After this run off, you will have a liquid of lye, or if grease cannot be had, we burn rich pine to get the remains after the distillation to save the oil or rosin.

All ingredients are mixed in a kettle and set on a slow burning fire and this is stirred constantly for four or five hours. It has been known for it to take a whole day. After it has cooked enough, continuously stirring, the fire is moved away from the kettle which gives it to cool down gradually, while this is taking place get a long stick about four feet long and burn one end black or color stick of any color desired and stir until soap is cooled off and hardened. This gives the different color of the so called "Home Made Soap".

CHOCTAW CRIES.

In the olden times, when one of the members dies, usually they were buried in the vacant lot somewhere near the house or, if living near some church, the burial would take place there. The bereaved mother or wife as the case may be would go to the grave every morning before breakfast to cry. I have seen mourners that after her return from the grave, she would not take meal at the table with the rest of the family, instead she would remain in her room by herself where no one of the family was permitted to see or to talk to her. Meals would be brought to her. This would continue for two or three weeks at a time.

In about six months or a year after the death of the member of the family the surviving family and relatives would set a date to have a memorial service for the deceased, either at the family residence where the grave is or at some church.

Everything of eats would be furnished for the festival, such as barbecued or roast beef, venison or hogs and all different kinds of dish known would be prepared.

The ceremony usually took place at eleven o'clock and was conducted by some minister of the church on the day the time was set. Usually the deacon of the church rang the bell slowly and alternately and softly until the mourners would all

enter the church in pairs and occupy the front seat which was reserved for the occasion. After service the congregation would march to the grave where all mourners would cry for the last time and be dismissed. Then would come the feast as everything was ready and table set by the time the ceremony is over.

If the memorial service took place on week days then every body would leave for home immediately after the feast. It was nothing uncommon for the cooks, waiters and helpers at this gathering to divide in proportion the left over of the feast, as fresh meat, tafula, pashofa, tanchi lobona, paluska hawashko, (sour bread) baana (shuckbread) etc, at the request of one of the bereaved family. This would end the cry in the one family.

WEDDING.

Where a wedding was to take place in the settlement, it was customary that the father of the groom visits the parents of the girl to get their permission. The father would then break the news to the girl, and if she accepted the proposal, the parents of the bride were notified of her acceptance. Or if she rejected of course everything was off.

After their engagement, friends and relatives of both parties began to prepare for the feast. The date was set by the relatives of the bridegroom at a certain place. Men friends and relatives would take their bows and arrows for a big hunt, women beat corn and make preparation for the feast, while others would be busy making dresses for the bride.

Time arrives, The bride with bridesmaid were ushered in certain room, while friends and relatives remain outside. The men visitors were not allowed to enter the room where the bride and her maids were, and the same way with the groom.

Now for the wedding. If the groom had any sisters or cousins, friends of the bride would take her out of the room secretly and let her run away, at the same time sisters or cousins of the groom would be notified to chase her and overtake and bring her back. Fun begins, The race is on; the race would continue until the bride is brought back or there was no dinner to be served. After she is brought back the ceremony took place as of present time. A white sheet is stretched over the couple after the ceremony, to permit friends and acquaintances to give whatever gifts they may have to give. Now comes the dinner.

Long tables are prepared with cooking of every thing
edible spread and everything that was cooked is served to all.
and everybody, Thus ends the wedding.