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Thomas F. Meagher, Supervisor  
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"THE PIONEER WOMAN"

Interview with Mrs. T. C. Hughes  
1626 S. Baltimore, Tulsa.

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The use of "The" instead of "A" Pioneer Woman seems especially fitting in the interesting life story of Mrs. Tyree Clinton Hughes, with English lords and ladies as a cultural background, Boston environment for a birthplace, Kansas plains and prairies for a training school- and Oklahoma for a home during her years of maturity. Mrs. Hughes certainly typifies the spirit of "The Pioneer Woman".

The present Mrs. Hughes as Harriet Maude Pease was born in Boston Mass., 1865, the daughter of Captain John C. and Harriet Pease. The father and mother had come to America at the time of their marriage (1860). John Pease was a captain in the English army with a service record in Africa, India and Asia. He fought in the battle of Lucknow, at Singapore, and in the Crimean War. His regiment went to the aid of "The Six Hundred" in the "Charge of the Light Brigade". His brother, Colonel Guthbert Pease was color bearer in that engagement. His son, Perry Pease is now (1937) deputy premier of Australia; also Minister of Lands and M.P. He toured U. S. for four months recently on a mission for his country to study parks, water-

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ways, roadways, and forestry. He was a Tulsa guest of his cousin, Mrs T. C. Hughes, during Jan. 1937.

In 1870 the family began its western trek, part of the way by train, and then across ferries at St. Louis and Kansas, by covered wagon, to the "Land". That was the thought of Captain Pease; a landed estate such as he knew in England, but plenty of land for each of his five sons and two daughters. He had bought one thousand acres near Columbus, Kansas, but found the tactics of the Joy men so rough, he sold at a sacrifice and set out for Independence. On this journey the Hughes' family escaped death at the hands of the Bender gang by almost a miracle. Mr. Hughes had gone on to Independence to prepare for the coming of his family. They were people of means; had their covered wagons comfortably equipped, string of blooded horses, jewels and heirlooms from England.

On the route from Columbus to Independence the Bender family, consisting of the father, mother, daughter Kate and son had set up a tavern. It was a large two-story house, with ample out-buildings, wagon and cattle yards, thus it became a natural stopping place for travelers on their way west. Bender himself met the Hughes' wagon at the crossroad in order to make sure of his prey. It happened that he first approached the wagon in which

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their powerful bird dog lay with its young puppies. As he lifted the cover the dog sprang at his throat and only interference of the family saved his life. The next morning a government wagon team; fourteen wagons with fourteen oxen to each wagon met them and escorted them to Independence. These "Freighters" as they were called were loaded at Westport with supplies to be taken to San Francisco, for those were still the days of the "Forty-niners".

Soon after their settlement near Independence the Bender story "broke". A German woman who had been a guest at the tavern slipped away to tell the tale. Disappearance of travelers had been climaxed by the report that Dr. York and his two little girls had gone to the Bender tavern and had not been seen again. Investigation started; not only were the bodies of Dr. York and daughters found, but a reported number of over four hundred bodies (most of them skeletons). Dr. York and children seemed to have been buried alive, even bread and butter found in the children's hands, according to Mrs. Hughes. The Benders disappeared, whether secretly killed, or fugitives. "What happened

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to the Benders"? has remained a mystery.

Captain Pease took up 1100 acres, forty miles west of Independence and realized some of his dreams of "broad-lands", only in this case it was a cattle ranch. There the mother's influence in training her daughters kept alive the English cultural background. Mrs. Hughes recalls that her mother, though a pioneer woman living on a Kansas prairie, wore clothing in keeping with "her ladyship"; in winter, silk tippet (called in this country, silk warped henrietta); in summer, mulls, and always a little lovely bonnet banked with flowers and tied under the chin. Long morning gowns (or dressing gowns as they were called in those days) with Watteau pleats, visiting dresses with trains, trimmed with milliner folds and bows; basques and bustles. These clothes were cut and made in Boston and matched up with gloves, hats and shoes.

Mrs Hughes wishes to stress a point of interest about "The Pioneer Woman" from her own experience. That is, that "The Pioneer-Woman" did not herself wear the garb commonly used in the illustrations, paintings and sculpture but that adversity, hardship

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and environment forced her to become that type. In her own case she grew up, as did her associates, with woman still on the pedestal, dainty in appearance and protected from hardship. Then came the panic (1893) fathers, husbands crushed, often broken in spirit, and the women of the new generation of pioneers took some of the burden, their shoulders became broader, their bodies became hardier, and their dress accordingly became practical with simple convenient lines. Having gone through this transition herself and having seen it in the lives of hundreds of women with whom she has been associated, Mrs. Hughes feels that this evolution of "The Pioneer Woman" is of historical significance.

Mrs Hughes' life story after her marriage to Tyree C. Hughes is given in the article "Tyree C. Hughes, The Father of Spavinaw".

Since Mrs. Hughes' residence in Tulsa (1906) she has been prominent in Democrat ranks and civic affairs. She inspired and aided the organization of the Tulsa County Women's Jeffersonian Society in 1930. She has been president for six years and has recently been made life president of this organization. It has a roster of 900 members. For the past two and one-half years she served directly under the supervision of the Women's Division of the Democratic

National Committee, Washington, D.C. as the organizer of the reporter plan for Tulsa County. She has at present sixteen reporters in her set-up.

The story of Mrs. Hughes would not be complete without describing her most prized historical possession, a sword, with its hand carved scabbard. Her father, Captain John Pease, carried it through the historic engagements at Lucknow, Singapore and in the Crimean War. His name and rank are cut on it. A document of interest in her possession is a small book, "The Rifleman's Handbook", written by her father Capt. John Pease, in 1862 and dedicated to Lord William Lambert Lincoln who was a guest in his home in N. S. at the time. A receipt from the Boston Public Library dated 1862 acknowledges a gift of the book from the author.

Were Mrs. Hughes living in England today she would now be the Lady Harriet. Her mother's father and mother were Sir Thomas Willoughby and Lady Staywell. Her father's father was Sir John Cuthbert Pease of Darlington, England. Should Mrs. Hughes wish she could decorate her hall with two coats of arms, one belonging to her father's family, the other to her mother's. The Willoughby coat of arms has the cross swords and the ducal cup with the stag head, the Pease family has a representation of two graduated blocks of white marble, on top of which is a pure white dove, fastened to its mouth and twining gracefully around the stones is a white (pease) vine.