

HUMPHREY, CATHERINE.

INTERVIEW.

5665.

Goldie Turner,
Field Worker.
May 10, 1937.

An Interview With Catherine Humphrey,
405 Forest Street, Pawnee, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Humphrey was born in Quincy, Illinois, in 1849, and she came to Pawnee in 1894. We left Paris, Texas, in the spring of 1892 in a covered wagon for Indian Territory. It took us two days to reach the Red River. We ferried across the Red River and then camped there three days to rest our horses. Two more days travel brought us to Atoka, where a kind farmer allowed us to camp. We stayed there two days and then went on to Muskogee, arriving there April 18, 1892.

Our supplies were running short and we had to depend on killing wild game. Rabbits were plentiful and with an occasional coon, we were able to live. We soon left Muskogee and went North. We spent a few days in Skiatook, then went on to Bartlesville which we reached April 23rd, and we lived in Bartlesville until the strip was to be opened.

The spring of the opening, we went in a covered wagon to Stillwater where we lived until coming to Pawnee. We

HUMPHREY, CATHERINE.

INTERVIEW.

5665.

-2-

moved on our claim, two miles north of Pawnee April 5, 1894. We lived under a wagon sheet until fall of that year when we built a small stone house, using mud for mortar to hold the stones together. Our first crop consisted of castor beans, cane, cow peas and a little cotton. We brought our own sorghum mill with us and not only made our own cane into molasses but our neighbors' cane as well. We would get half of the sorghum for making it. At that time sorghum molasses was one of the staple foods of the pioneers for cane could be easily raised and made into molasses at practically no cost.

My husband dug many of the early day Indian graves, for the cemetery was only a mile south of us. The Indian cemetery was established before we came here. The cemetery for the white people joins the Indian cemetery on the west. It was established soon after the opening. This is the "Highland" or Pawnee Cemetery.

We often attended the Indian funerals. They would have no special ceremony at the graves but all would sit around the grave, moaning and chanting, sometimes all night and until the grave was filled in. All the clothing

HUMPHREY, CATHERINE.

INTERVIEW.

5665.

-3-

and belongings of the dead would be placed either in the grave or on top. If the corpse happened to be a baby or small child, the mother would sit on the ground by the grave, holding it until they were ready to place the casket, which would be of heavy wood pointed at each end, in the grave. When the grave was filled with dirt an Indian of the tribe dressed as a "ghost" would slowly come from the hollow about a hundred yards south of the cemetery, then all the Indians would leave and go to their homes.

Mr. Humphrey died in the spring of 1898 and left me with five children to raise.
