

An interview with Miss Ruth Parks,
a full blood Delaware Indian born
at Alluwe, I. T.

L. S. Wilson, field worker,
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Miss Parks' father George Parks and mother, Nancy Wilson now Parks, were born in what was known as Indian Territory. Father was born in 1873 and died in 1920. Mother was born in 188 and is still living. Her grandparents on both sides were born near the present town of Leavenworth, Kansas and came to the Indian Territory in 1863 along with other members of their tribe and died in the early part of the twentieth century.

MIGRATION OF THE DELAWARES

Since the settlement of the colonies along the Atlantic Coast, the Indians of all tribes have been gradually forced back into the interior and among these Indians were the great-great-grandparents of Miss Parks. (Let it be understood here that Miss Parks is the only one of her immediate family who speaks the Delaware tongue as well as English and relates what she has been told by her mother). She is justly proud of her nationality because the Delawares of which she is in direct line came from Pennsylvania, and it was her people who met the pilgrims when they landed on Cape Cod. It was her people with whom William Penn made a treaty where the city of Philadelphia is now located. With the steady influx of migration from across the Atlantic her people were not forced but persuaded by the white man, to make their abode elsewhere and they began step

by step to retreat westward, first to Ohio, thence to Kansas and their ultimate the Indian Territory and settled one mile west of the present town of Alluwe, Oklahoma.

LIFE AND CUSTOMS

Unlike the plains Indians, they lived in the forest and are called forest Indians. Their houses were built of bark and also houses built of logs.

The Delawares lived mainly by hunting and trapping and planted small crops of corn, etc.

Their clothing was made of tanned deer hide with ribbon work trimmed with beads and other ornaments and trinkets.

Their food was cooked on open fires and later in fire places. Their menu consisted of corn bread in various forms, buffalo and deer meat, wild fruits, nuts, and berries. They also hunted for wild game that was edible. The grinding of their corn was similar to all other Indians (mortar and pestle).

They made boats from trunks of trees or used birch and other barks to make their canoes.

In the early days they tilled the soil with a crooked stick or a hoe made of stone or a large shell. After the arrival of the Pilgrims the natives came into possession of horses, and other necessities by trading hides and furs with the white man. They were easily persuaded, more so than most other Indians and enjoyed being friendly and eager to adopt doing things as they observed them to a certain extent.

Their weapons were bows and arrows, hatchets, tomahawks, and knives of stone and had lances with flint heads. The source of the paint which they used to paint their faces was from a plant called (Pa-kon) and made a red color. They seldom made war on the whites but did war frequently with various tribes. The attribute here that their war with other tribes caused them to not be able to unite themselves with tribes against the white pioneers. The bows were made of hickory, balsam, ash or cedar and the bow string from deer sinews.

The Delawares were artistic. The women loved beads and made many articles with them. They embroidered leggings with beads and ribbon work.

The Delawares never had schools and had no written language and do not even to the present day. Miss Fames states she cannot write even a letter to her mother, as her mother won't speak English but reads by sight, therefore silently.

Primitive people, as was the Indians, were superstitious. The Delawares peopled the forest and within the forest was peopled with spirits and the streams with water sprites. He heard the Great Spirit's voice in the thunder and lightning. He could not fathom from whence came the rain, sleet, and snow. The Delawares knew there was a Supreme Being in some manner although they had no churches with preachers and missionaries could do little with them because they clung to their own belief. Finally

they began to worship here in the Indian Territory in their way.

MARRIAGES

Not many Delawares married out of their tribe possibly because at that time the tribe did not want to mix with other tribes. If a Delaware boy and girl married it was arranged by the parents of both and they started living together without farther pomp or ceremony.

BURIALS

The Delawares always buried their dead the same as today. Unlike the plains and other Indians, their earthly personal effects were not buried with them. These personal effects were given to the ones who prepared the body for burial. This was his pay for his services as we would call it today, "a worker."

MEDICINES

Like all Indians their medicines were made from barks, roots, and herbs. Different herbs, etc. were used for different diseases. Miss Parks could not recall the English words for the different herbs used. They had their "medicine man" or as Miss Parks called him "sweat doctor" who could cure diseases and keep away evil spirits.

WORSHIP

As stated, they believed in a Supreme Being and they delighted in dances and feasts at Copan, Oklahoma where part of the remains of the old church known to the Delawares as the "Big House."

It is located two miles west of Copan. (We refer today to the Big House as being our penitentiary). At the Big House they came to worship once each year. The time of year being after all crops were gathered and before the winter hunt, being about our present Thanksgiving. The meeting lasted twelve days and everyone stayed the entire time in camps around and about the "Big House." Services were held in their native tongue. Everything they did ran in the multiple of twelve for reasons Miss Parks could not fully explain. This part of the entire meeting was prayers for continued good health, abundance of happiness, good crops, thankful for what they had received in the past and good will on earth to all.

SCHOOLS

As previously stated, they had no schools and there will in time to come be lost forever the language of the Delawares. In the Indian Territory under the direct supervision of an Indian agent, the Delaware children in some instances were picked up with the consent of their parents and sent to school at Lawrence, Kansas, Quapaw Mission School, Chilocco, Oklahoma, and to Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Since statehood the Delawares like all other races, colors and creeds have had the benefit of our public schools and Miss Parks, of course, attended school first at Alluwe, Oklahoma when her father would take her to school on her back. Then we moved to Copan, Oklahoma in 1911 and attended school there the next ten years, and attended the last year of high school at Deway, Oklahoma.

She has also attended the Bartlesville Business College at Bartlesville, Oklahoma and is at present an accomplished stenographer.

DANCES

Indians' dances are usually referred to as "Stomp Dances," but there are various dances such as war dances, doll dances, ghost dances. They never made special preparations for warfare because they didn't fight until forced to. It may be that after the warfare they would hold a dance making merry for victory won and displayed the number of scalps taken from their victims. In later years, the "War Dances" are only mockery of the ones of early days. The Doll Dance is a very beautiful dance as well as one of fascination. The origin of this dance could be understood better by someone who knew the old Delaware traditions. Both old and young participate. This dance lasts for one night. Provision is brought and cooked there at an open fire and served after the ceremonial part of the dance. The food consists of Deer meat in the early days, pounded corn made into bread, and corn cooked similar to hominy. Today, the deer meat substitute is that of beef. The Ghost dance was always held in the early spring months, and to this was also attached a certain degree of religious ceremonies as to spirits. Music furnished at these dances in some cases was the toe-toe, which was made by stretching deer hide over a clay jar and on this they would beat. Hoops of deer were tied below the knees of the men and contained

small beads so as to rattle when they danced. These dances have been perpetuated through the years and these dances are enjoyed to the utmost for various reasons.

TRADING POST

The only trading post recalled was the one patronized by her parents and grandparents, which would be about or near the present town of Alluwe, Klahowa. It was operated by a man by the name of J. Campbell who carried a complete line of all available merchandise at all times.

HUNTING

The hunters were the best of the people and considered the upper class of men in the tribe. They would locate a favorable hunting ground and in the late fall would pack their equipment and all necessary supplies and pack their ponies to start out for the trip. At the same time that they, were on the hunt they kept a lookout for hostile Indian tribes who may happen to be camping near them. The prize game desired was buffalo, deer, and bear. To hunt buffalo they took their fleetest ponies, mount them, carrying all the gear. To them the traits and characteristics of the buffalo was well known, as to the speed they would go as starting out slowly and continuing faster and faster as the chase progressed. One of the hunters always came close enough during the chase to select his choice and strike the buffalo with his lance if possible just behind the left foreleg to halt him.

If the first hunter failed to bring the buffalo down, the next

behind rise up and throw his lance. The hunters rode in such a formation as to hardly ever let them escape without getting one or more of them. On returning to their homes and coming within a certain distance they would make a certain whoop to let all know that all are returning and that none had been killed or missing. Those who stayed home would all come out and remain in sight so the hunters could see that nothing had happened during their absence such as death.

The Delawares, Shawnees, and Chickasaws were amiable and got along exceedingly well together and had little trouble about the hunts. The plains Indians and particularly the Osages, Cheyennes, and Arapshoes were always intruding and many a battle ensued between them. These Indians often came into the vicinity of the families left behind by the hunters and commit depredations such as stealing horses, food stuff, and in some instances attempting to scalp the women and children thus creating a hatred in the hearts of the Delawares. The Osages were ^{too} lazy to hunt or to raise anything to eat. They roved around over the plains stealing and pilfering. The Delawares had permanent lodges and cabins at all times.

PAYMENTS AND ANNUITIES

The Delawares lived in the Coe-wee-scoo wee District of the Cherokee Nation accounting for payment being made at points in Vinita, I. T., Chelsea, I. T., and Alluwe, I. T. The first payments received by the Delawares was the interest on the money for lands sold in Kansas to the government. These payments began in 1885 to 1887. The amount

of the payments ranged from \$30 to \$40 for each member and was paid semi-annually. The total of these payments amounted to thousands of dollars. The money came to Coffeyville, Kansas by railway express and it was transported to the pay-off stations by horse and buggy. Seldom did more than two armed men accompany the money en route. It took at least a week or more to finish these payments. Around the payment grounds great throngs of Delawares visited with their friends and killed. Sometimes soldiers, presumably from nearby forts were on the ground to preserve order or to keep watch over the money or possibly both. Other times U. S. marshals filled the soldiers' places. No violence was ever committed during these payments. All full bloods had been checked by the government on the reservation as to who was entitled to receive the money. If a Delaware girl had married a white man and had a child, the white man could not register the child but it became the duty of the mother to do it as the government would not accept. Vice versa if a Delaware man married a white woman she was not allowed to register herself or child in no way. The last and final payment made to the Delawares was in 1894 amounting to \$600 or more per head.

peculiar to the registering was that no Indian knew the month and day he or she was born. They reckoned their date by saying when the red bud trees were in bloom, or when the corn tassled, or when the sunacs turned red, or when the first fell. The year in some instances was well remembered by referring to

incidents which occurred and the Indian agent, known about
 see here the registrar of Indian agent had to be a fairly well
 educated man along historic lines our well known Robert [?]
 was instrumental in the pay-offs to the Delawares.

CIVIL WAR

History reveals that the Delawares together with their
 friends, the Shawnees took part in the Civil War on the Union
 side. Her grandfather, Thomas Wilson drew a soldier's pension
 from serving in that war until the time he died in 1868.

COMMENT

Miss Parks is to be complimented for the stride she has
 made in her wonderful accomplishment of the English language
 under her peculiar circumstances. She is not only accomplished
 but is loved by all more than one can imagine by her people and
 her race. She regrets very deeply that it is only a short time
 until the Delaware language myths and legends will perish from
 the face of the earth for it cannot be written and there are only
 a few remaining to carry on because the history of the Delawares
 will be obliterated from memory forever except that which the
 white man has observed and ^{written} ~~wrote~~ and a few like herself can
 reveal in their humble way.