

PALMER, JOHN

INTERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Grace Kelley

This report made on (date) September 21, 1937

1. Name John Palmer

2. Post Office Address Oksulgee, Route 3, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Three miles north and two miles west of Wilson School.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month -- Day -- Year 1870

5. Place of birth Benton County, Arkansas

6. Name of Father Jimmie Palmer Place of birth Middle Tenn

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Sallie Kirby Place of birth Arkansas

Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 11.

Interview with John Palmer
Route 3, Okmulgee, Okla.

Interviewer - Grace Kelley
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149
September 21, 1937

TRIP TO THE INDIAN TERRITORY.

In 1893, I came to the Indian Territory on horseback. Entered near Siloam Springs, from there to Tahlequah which was the first town we came to, Fort Gibson, Muskogee, and Okmulgee. We stayed there a short while, then moved west of Henryetta but there was no town there then. I lived with my father, who was a farmer. We raised cotton and corn. The only white families near were named Campbell and Bagwell. There was no cotton gin closer than Checotah, so we took our cotton there and traded at Ben Lafayette's store. He died a few days ago.

MAIL.

Once a week one of us would go to Checotah or Okmulgee and bring our mail home as there was no mail route close to us.

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TWO STORES IN OKMULGEE.

Jim Parkeson and Cap Severs had the only stores in Okmulgee but they had a big line of goods.

McDERMOTT TRAIL.

Started at McDermott or Okemah, went through by where the Sunset School is now, north of Springhill and Morris Rentie's, by Springfield, which was on Jim Boy's allotment, through our place but east of the house, though there was no house here then just a pasture with grass as high as your head, crossed Deep Fork at the ferry close to Sharp, into Okmulgee, Lee and on to Muskogee.

SPRINGFIELD.

Jim Boy had his home and Methodist Church there and he also preached for us at the Honey Creek Methodist. There is a church there at Springfield now. It is on his allotment.

FERRY BOAT OPERATOR.- MAIL CARRIER.

Billie Smith was the first one to run the ferry

boat that I know about; he was white. That was on Deep Fork between Sharp and Okmulgee.

Abe McGill drove the mail coach or hack from Muskogee to Okmulgee.

LARGE RANCHERS.

McDermott had a large ranch and store. He was white with an Indian wife.

Eluford Miller, northeast of Okmulgee, 12 or 14 miles, Indian.

Cap Severs, FS brand, on Bald Hill, Indian.

Jim Parkeson, big rancher, white man.

TRAIL FROM WETUMKA.

It crossed the Canadian at the Wetumka Mission, went close to Seleetka, through Spring Hill and Morris Rentie's, crossed at the ferry on Deep Fork and to Okmulgee. I've always heard it called the Chisholm Trail.

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LEE.

That was where the stages met and exchanged mail and passengers, the Okmulgee hack returning to Okmulgee and the Muskogee hack returning to Muskogee. That way they could make a round trip in one day. Lee was a negro who knew how to make money. He had rooms and a place for the white and Indian people to eat. The negroes ate there, but they must have eaten after we did for I never knew where they ate but I do know that they did not eat in the room with us. There was also a store and post office there.

A LATER STORE.

A store was later put in at Bald Hill by a man called Billie, but there was no post office there then.

LAW OFFICERS.

Light Horsemen: Tommy Larney, Sance Johnson, Duke Berryhill. U. S. Marshals: Bud Ledbetter and Bass Reed, white and colored respectively; went together most of the time from Fort Smith.

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I could have seen the punishment, whippings with hickory switches or poles but I had no desire to do so. I knew one who picked out his clothes and casket before being killed, but I didn't go to see him killed, could have but didn't want to.

Mose Tiger was a Judge.

RECREATION.

Siah Barnett was a well-to-do Indian who had his own place for his family and friends to play ball and have dances. It wasn't an Indian Town but at his home or allotment.

BALL GAME.

The last ball game I was to was between Arbeca and Tuckabatche Towns in 1895. It was a real ball game but they fought in it, that was as part of the game not as a fight. They camped quite a way apart for several days before the game. I don't remember who won the game.

The men of each town wore different colored "clothing." One side had red britch clouts and a band of feathers on

their heads, which were white with red tips; the other side had a different colored britch clout (but I can't remember the color) and mixed or various colored feather head band.

The women had pretty shawls, Indian blankets, beads, beaded buckskin moccasins which they used to bet on their ball players.

INDIAN PAYMENT.

I married an Indian girl and she got a payment. We went to Okmulgee in the morning but it was so crowded that it was three o'clock before she got her money. We lived so close that we didn't camp out but went to the hotel for our lunch. Others camped there at Okmulgee; others stayed at the two hotels, Colonel Throgmartin and Carl Hotel.

Lizzie Brown, the wife of Rolan Brown, had an eating house across from the Council house.

There was a water well in the Council house grounds on the east side.

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Sam Haynes lived where the old Cross Building is.

There was a well at Parkeson's back of the store, which was where the Batey Drug Store is, across from the Parkeson Hotel.

Big Nellie lived there close to the store and lots of friends and relatives stayed at her house for it was handy to the well.

Cap Belcher run the post office, which was a little building about nine by twelve feet.

INDIAN FOOD.

They lived on corn and meat mostly.

COLD FLOUR OR ABUSKKE.

Take corn that is harder than roasting ears and shell it and parch it, then put it through the mortar or pound it until it is similar to corn meal. Put it in water and let set a while or over night. Sweeten to taste; makes a nice drink and settles impure water, too.

SOFKEY.

Sofkey is a drink and food, but not an intoxicant; it is a good soft drink for sick folk, too.

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Put water on to boil, put lye in the water and add the corn and cook until done. The lye is left in, don't wash corn as for hominy. Fill up a stone jar with the water and corn. Most white folk like this while it is fresh, but most Indians like it after it has soured a little.

SCOUR BREAD.

This is a self rising bread and the only corn bread that I can eat for breakfast. It is very good. The corn is pounded in the mortar and soaked over night to sour, or until it sours. Salt is the only thing added before cooking, no eggs or soda.

Flour corn is used for bread but Flint corn is used for the boiled foods.

WILD GAME.

Wolves were plentiful and caught our stock, especially young calves, but they have been mostly killed out. There are a few through here now but not so many as before. The deer ran in droves or bunches as did

the turkeys, but the wild hogs were the worst of all.

We, my wife and I, had a patch of sweet potatoes and the wild hogs were ruining it. You couldn't keep them out and they were mean and would fight you. One day two of them got into the potatoes and we decided to put them in a good pen we had and keep them and raise us some tame ones. One was a sow and the other a male. You had to be horseback to get around them for they were dangerous. Well, there was a bunch of us and we finally got them in the pen, but we couldn't keep them there. I killed the male, but the sow got clear away. He was very fat, but so tough that he was not fit to eat, no good whatever.

OLDEST WATER WELL IN HENRYETTA.

The first well I know about in Henryetta was dug before 1905 and I believe it was in 1903. People carried water from it then and do now. It has never been walled up, but has been cleaned and covered a dozen times. The stream is the size of your wrist

and the bottom is a white hard pan that can be washed with a cloth. It is east of the K. O. & G. Depot on Mrs. McConnell's place, just west of First Street.

OIL WELL.

The first oil well on Tiger Flats was on Joe Berryhill's place. It was a good producer and was drilled in 1913.