

McCURTAIN, JIM

INTERVIEW

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**502**

Field Worker: Jennie Selfridge  
 March 5, 1937

Chickasaw

BIOGRAPHY OF Mr. Jim McCurtain (Full Blood Indian)  
 Marietta, Okla. (Enville Route).

BORN Wapanucka, Okla.  
 December (?), 1873

PARENTS Unknown. Father from Mississippi.

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I was born at Wapanucka, Indian Territory, some time in December 1873. I first attended school at Hawkins Neighborhood School, about one and one half miles north and east of the present town of Russett, Oklahoma. This school was taught by a Rev. Spaulding, a Methodist minister. The school house was a one room log structure. The usual attendance was from twenty five to thirty pupils. We studied Barnes and McGuffey's readers.

Later I attended school at the old Harley Institute, south of Tishomingo. I attended school there for two or three years, then was sent to school at Whitewright, Texas, by the Chickasaw government for one year. After that I came back and entered the new Harley Institute.

Professor Harley was certainly a fine teacher. All of the Indians liked him. The big boys studied United States History, Arithmetic, and fourth part Geography. School always started the first Monday in September. It always opened with a song and prayer. I remember well the first morning of school after some of us boys returned from State School at Whitewright, Texas.

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Professor Harley picked up a fourth grade reader and handed it to Turner McIish, one of the State school boys, and told him to read. After he had finished reading one paragraph, Harley told him to stop and explain what he had read. After all of us boys had finished reading one paragraph, Professor Harley told us we could start in the fourth reader.

Professor Harley told us we must study hard because the day was coming <sup>when</sup> card playing would be allowed in the school, and the State would be in debt, also the principal interest of the school would be amusements, and the students then would have only an imitation of an education. He would not let us use our bows and arrows. He let us play a little marble and ball. He told us our parents were paying him to educate us, not for allowing us to play. We drilled every evening. Harley said that the day was coming when the United States would have war and that we must be prepared to fight.

After attending Harley Institute for about one year, I took pneumonia. Dr. Vannoy of Tishomingo told me I was liable to have consumption so I never went back to school. I later worked on a ranch for Jim Bonds near Kingston, then moved to Love County.

My wife's mother, who is living here with us now, is somewhere around one hundred years old. She doesn't know her exact age. She was told by her mother that she was born at Boggy Depot the year the Chickasaws moved west.

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Her name is Elie Lone. Her Maiden name was Pist-Okchaya. In the Chickasaw language 'Pist' means to see, and 'Okchaya' means life. Her father and mother told her of the many hardships they endured on the way to the west during the removal. On this side of the Mississippi, they had trenches laid off and the Indians were not allowed to cross the trenches. There was much rain and snow. Many of their horses died, and finally smallpox broke out and the Chickasaws began to die.

Field worker's name Jennie Selfridge

This report made on (date) 3-5 1937

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WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma  
 Burial Ground Form

1. Name of burial ground McCurtain
2. Founded 1881 by McCurtain family
3. Abandoned (date) Still in use.
4. Present owners of premises Jim McCurtain
5. Address of above Marietta, Oklahoma
6. Approximate number of the graves 15 or 20
7. Approximate number of marked graves all
- Original owner of the premises Ish-tia-Pa-I
8. General condition of headstones There are no inscriptions other than the few remaining papers in Ish-tia-Pa-I's marker.
9. Other information Elie Lone's mother was buried here years ago, her name was Ish-tia-Pa-I.
10. Legal location of burial ground, County Love  
 Section 3 Township 7 south Range 3 east.

This plat on this form represents 640 acres, one square mile, and is subdivided into 40 acres plat. The center of this plat is the center of the section.

		O McCurtain Cemetery	