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Nannie Lee Burns,
Investigator,
January 25, 1938.

Interview With Edward Peckham,
325 K Northwest, Miami, Oklahoma.

My father, Thomas Peckham, Wan-pe-mong-wan, meaning Running Water, was born in Louisburg, Kansas, in 1851. Here his parents died and he, with an older brother, William, came to the Peoria Nation in the Indian Territory in the year of 1868, when father was seventeen years old.

My mother Laura Paul, a white woman, was born in Greene County, Missouri, September 6, 1856, but soon moved with her parents and located seven miles east of Seneca, Missouri, where she was raised and where she married my father, September 2, 1888. I, one of a family of three boys and four girls, was born on the old homelace near Peoria, Indian Territory, September 10, 1891.

FATHER'S BOYHOOD DAYS.

During his earlier years Father attended the schools near in Kansas and thus learned to write and speak good English which was very valuable to him in later years as

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after the Peorias and their associated tribes the Weas, the Kaskaskias and the Piankeshaws settled in the Indian Territory, he became their official interpreter and made several trips to Washington, D. C., with delegations of the tribes. When he came to this country, having no parents, he rustled for himself and for many years worked as a general help for the various farmers and, during these years, acquired a wide knowledge of tribal affairs as well as the way those around them lived.

When the Peorias removed to their reservation here from Eastern Kansas very few of them had much means and most of them made the trip on horseback and carried what belonged to them either in a two-wheeled cart or in packs on additional mules and ponies.

After their arrival, came the task of building a permanent shelter. With the exception of perhaps a half dozen houses, including the home of the Chief and a very few who had the means to build frame houses, these houses were of rude logs, perhaps a puncheon floor and I have heard Father say that where clapboards were not to be had

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as shingles they made shingles of bark for the houses and these were fastened to the rafters by means of wooden pins.

When father and mother were married, Father had improved his home and had a two-room log house and a kitchen of native lumber and hung a blanket up at the door as protection from the cold weather.

PIIONEER LIFE.

After the Peorias and their friends came here, they endured many hardships while trying to build their homes and get settled. Once when they had raised no crops because of a drouth, I have often heard Father describe the many things that they did to get along and among the things were:

They cut the hackberry, the elm and the poplar tender shoots and fed them to their stock to keep them alive and they cut up the sycamore to make syrup, and tea. When they were hunting and would kill a deer and have no way of cooking, they would clean the paunch, cut up the meat in chunks and put these inside the paunch. They would then build a fire between two stakes and over the fire, suspended from a pole

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connecting the two stakes, they would place the paunch containing the meat and this was kept turning continually until it was cooked. Sometimes meat was fried on a rock that had been heated over or in a fire.

Bread was fried on two sticks over the fire or cooked on the hot rocks as well as baked in the hot ashes.

The Indians would roll a fish in mud or clay, put it in the hot ashes and when cooked the skin came off with the baked mud or clay. The sinew weed was used to make thread. This grew here and after peeling off the bark the body of the weed could be separated into very fine threads which are very strong and durable. The bark is white and the plant grows about two feet high.

Indian greens was another food greatly appreciated by the Peorias. These grew two or three feet high and had a square stem and little tender shoots protruded at the leaf stem.

In those days, father helped to make many coffins. When one was needed they cut a log the length required, which was barked and then space sufficient for the body was then hollowed out in the log.

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In the early days a soldier came through the Peoria reservation here and was taken sick and died. Father helped to make his coffin and, with others of the tribe, buried him in a grove near Spring River. They marked a hickory tree at the head of the grave with marks three feet from the ground and a chinquin oak at the foot of the grave near the ground. Later, some officials came from Washington looking for this grave, saying that the man had some valuable papers with him. Father went with them and searched for the grave but the marked trees had been destroyed.

Another incident that I have heard my father tell and laugh about was an old custom that after the death of an Indian the body could not be buried until some one would tell of some good deed done by the deceased or something that he excelled in. An old man died and they were still holding the body and asking those who came if they knew of anything ^{good} that he had done or excelled in, when one day an old lady came. They asked her if she knew anything good of the deceased and she asked to see the body and when she saw who it was she replied, "He was a good smoker". He was buried.

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Another incident that Father liked to recall, happened after the Peorias had been here some years. One day a white family drove in looking for a place to lease. They came to Uncle John Charley's place and he told them to come back the next Wednesday, that he thought that he could find a place for them. Before time for their return he gathered up turkey feathers and made a large head-dress, smeared his face with the red paint from the redroot and some yellow clay, dressed himself in some old beaded clothing and, armed with a huge tomahawk, waited for them by the side of the road, concealed in some bushes. When they were even with him he sprang to the road with a wild yell, brandishing his tomahawk. The family left as fast as their horses would travel and never returned and Uncle John never tired of laughing over his "Wild Indian Stunt".

WILD GAME.

When the Peorias first came to this state most of the land that was theirs was an open prairie, with only a little timber along Spring River and less along the smaller creeks.

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Today there is a growth of young timber over a large part of it which has changed the looks of the country very much.

There were some deer here - not many, but even then the Government did not allow you to kill them except under certain conditions. There was a deer lick of fat from our barnyard and I have seen quite a few come here but I never tried to kill one. Wild hogs and wild turkeys were plentiful as were also the prairie chickens, the squirrels, etc.

MARRIAGE.

Many years ago, the parents of a young squaw demanded payment for their daughter, so many ponies or blankets, etc., and this condition had to be met by the man's family before the marriage. This changed later and when the missionaries came among our people, they began to marry them in their present fashion.

One of the old marriages that I remember was when Uncle Jerry Hubbard, the old Friends Missionary, married an old man named Fish at a Brush Arbor at a meeting at the old King Place near Ottawa.

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THE NEZ PERCES.

While the Nez Perces were held in this county they were camped on Spring River not far from my father's place and he took a great interest in watching them, as they did so many things in a different way from our people. They were an industrious people and made many things which they would take them to the nearby homes and try to trade for things that they did not have. They made a basket out of the buck-bark and willow reeds, also large carved wooden jars and much beadwork.

In the spring, when the bark would slip easily, they would select their tree and cut it and then carefully remove the bark and sew the ends together. This was waterproofed and then across the center to hold the sides apart they would put a pole to make it as wide as they wanted it.

Their fish hooks were made of bone, shaped by placing them in the fire and shaping them while they were hot. Also they would cut a hole in the ice and spear the fish but one of the things most remarkable was once when there was only about an eighth of ^{an} inch of ice on the river and they wanted

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to cross was to see them cut for each person two poles each about ten feet long and then, holding one pole in each hand, and with the other held in position between their knees and their feet, they would start across this thin ice and the length of the poles kept them from breaking through.

To make their bows they would bury their hickory poles in the coals until the outside of the poles charred and then would scrape off the charred portion. This was repeated until the pole became the size wanted and in this way the wood was seasoned at the same time.

They would hollow out a round bowl out of rock and then another that would fit into this one and between the two bowls they would grind their corn and other grains.

The women, dressed in short, full, ribbon-trimmed skirts and moccasins with a bright blanket or shawl around their shoulders and their black hair worn loose and bareheaded were a familiar sight to any of the neighbors or even in the streets of nearby Seneca. One could drive a good bargain with them for bright colored ribbons.

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When the first members of the Nez Perce tribe died after they came here they wrapped the bodies in either a deer skin or blanket, sewed them in and then either set them in the forks of a tree or hung them from one. If they could find a hollow tree the body would be placed in the hollow and sealed in here. As soon as their practice was reported they were compelled to bury in the hewed coffins made from logs the same as the rest of the Indians. Their principal burying place is one ^{on} the Stonor Place, one-half mile north of Spring River.

(After they came here the Nez Perces discovered a cave in the side of a bluff on Spring River south of the Big-Knife Ford, that was very hard to get to and well concealed and here they hid many of their belongings which were found many years after they were gone from here, by two members of the Peoria Tribe. It is also said that many years before this an old Indian had lived in this cave and it was called the "Old Indian Refuge".

Cave Springs is about four and a half miles southwest of Peoria on Spring River and a mile northeast of Big-Knife Fort. This water around the mouth of the cave has been all

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dammed up and now ^{it} is quite a fishing resort and the water is so very cold that it is impossible to stay in it even in the warmest weather. This water course has been traveled by boats for about sixty feet back to the cave but men have gone back through the passage two miles and in some places it is so narrow that you have to crawl. It is evidently an old water course.

The Old Spanish Mines are in this part of the county and are about five miles north of Seneca on the old Seneca-Peoria Road. These were supposed to be old copper mines but with the coming of the Indians to this country at that time they were so badly caved in that nothing could be learned about them and about the only traces that can be seen today are a few old shaft holes about two feet across which go straight down a ways and then turn at right angles.

There is an old Indian Battleground some three or four miles east and south of Peoria but this is now overgrown with timber and is today just a hilly, rough piece of timber, with small mounds and holes that have been made mostly by prospectors.

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Another cave on Spring River, just south and west of the old King Ford east of Miami, is about half-way up the side of the steep bluff. This is about seventy-five feet from the ground and about the same distance from the top of the bluff. At one time there was a path leading to the mouth but these rocks have crumbled and fallen and today there is no way to reach it. Tradition is that this was a hiding place of the James boys and that their initials are to be found around its mouth.

South of our home about a half mile is another old battleground. The burial mounds are on the side of a hill and behind these mounds the Indians would hide and shoot those who came around the hill. This hill is now covered by timber, also. One of my childhood memories is of a great herd of sheep on the hills between our home and Baxter Springs, Kansas. In the early days we would pass them and see the sheep either lying or grazing on the side of the hill, they looked just like little round white mounds. They belonged to an old man at Baxter Springs named Rickstraw. One day I was passing his house and wanted water for my team and he charged me 50¢ for two buckets of water.

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The Peoria Indians have always been resourceful. They have even been known to steal people from other tribes and from the white people. It is said of both the Peorias and the Quapaws that they stole a blacksmith from the white settlers. They needed his services, so took him. It is also said that the Peorias stole a negro boy in Indiana which they brought with them to Kansas and kept him here until his death. Jim White was a Mexican stolen by the Ottawas.

Among my prized possessions is my father's patent issued by Benjamin Harrison to wuh-pe-mong-wah or Thomas Peckham, a member of the Waa, Peoria, Kaskaskias and the Piankeshaw Tribes under the date of February, 1890.

Speaking of tribal matters, the Peorias are called at this Indian office, "the Lost Tribe". When George Durant was the Indian Agent, he had a complete record, but when he left the office he took all the records with him and we have no records except the few that my father kept, and they are not complete. Many persons still come to Mother and me for dates that they think we have. Father died at the old home, December 27, 1915.