

McCOONTZ, PETER.

FOURTH INTERVIEW.

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LEGEND & STORY FORM
WCRHS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

MCCOONTZ, PETER

FOURTH INTERVIEW.

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Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns,

This report made on (date) December 29, 1937

1. This legend was secured from (name) Peter McCoontz

Address Route #2, Fairland, Oklahoma.

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe Ottawa-Chippewa.

2. Origin and history of legend or story _____

As told in the lodge and from observation.

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 10 sheets.

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Nannie Lee Burns
Field worker,
December 29, 1937.

Interview with Peter McCoontz,
Fairland, Oklahoma.

Spring River.

Spring River, flowing south, enters Ottawa County just south of Baxter Springs, Kansas. Its course is mostly south with the exception of three bends until it unites with the Neosho River just west of the town of Wyandotte. From here the two rivers which have united are known as Grand River.

About five miles south of the Kansas-Oklahoma State line and one-half mile east and the same distance south of Lincolnville on Spring River is the present Spring River Bridge. Just north of the bridge and on the west side of the river is the place referred to as "Lover's Leap" and still north of it only a short distance is the Devil's Promenade. The other places referred to in this narrative are north of this bridge.

A long time ago an old teacher named Watson lived in a cave. He was a gray-headed old man who lived in Fine Bluff, this side of Blue Hole. He drove a little

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team of oxen with brass knobs on their horns. He drifted away, nobody knows where. He went at foot of the hill, bottom of river, yoke of oxen stood down-stream with log-chain thirty or forty feet long. When he disappeared it was at the place known as Dardene's Ford. This crossing is very dangerous, people were warned not to cross at night - seems like wagons go up-stream, not down and there is danger around that curve at the ford known as Devil's Hollow. It is safe by day, but people drown at night.

From Dardene's Ford about a mile there is another Devil's Hollow Crossing, shallow but rough - this crossing is around the curve from Dardene's Ford. From that curve, running west, you come to a village ford where John Quapaw ran a ferry until the present bridge was built at Lover's Leap. This ford was a dangerous crossing, the river gets high and gets muddy on the banks. The banks get soft like muck and when you cross it seems like the stock get stuck, something grabs them on the hoof and they can't pull out. They die there and after they are dead it is no trouble to get them

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out.

Below this 150 yards is a deep short-cut hollow called Devil's Washboard where water circles round. Once I took a long pole and tried to reach bottom; then took a long pole with a big rock at the end of the string but could touch no bottom.

The Devil's Promenade.

On the end of the Devil's Washboard Hollow comes the Devil's Promenade, where the bluff sticks away out in the River like a porch - a cement porch. It is from six to ten feet high and one can walk without bending over on that clear, open space. It bends down to the water from five foot ahead of it to a tail short-pointed into the water. Above the head part and on the "S" part of the bluff or promenade which is anywhere from twelve to fourteen feet above the water there was a great snake that lay under that porch known as the Devil's Promenade. This snake's shadow can be seen on a clear day when the sky is blue. One day the husband of Grace Coldspring said to me, "Let's go to Lover's Leap, there

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is an eagle's nest in the crack." When we arrived there I said to him, "Look at that snake and at his shadow." The shadow dodged back under Lover's Leap. Below, at the mouth of Rock Creek, is a great sized hole where the big snake crawled under that big hill on the side of Rock Creek. The snake that used to be at Devil's Promenade.

On this "S" curve or Promenade between the head and tail, a distance of 100 yards, embedded in the floor are the Devil's Biscuits. These are rocks five inches round like eggs.

Here many people swim for good times during the stomp dances. The stomp grounds of the quapaws is but a short distance from here and many people have been drowned at this place, they are drowned by the breathing of the snake - the moving of the snake. When he takes in a breath he draws the people in. The snake can be seen at Blue Hole on cloudless days, I mean we see its shadow.

One night, my wife was sick when I was crossing the river. I was caught and was sinking when I said, "Anything hindering my movements, turn me loose. I am needed at home?" and I was loosed. Some day, when we are dead

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and gone and buried our great-great-grandchildren in one thousand or more years will see some great insects or great snakes hatch out from the Devil's Biscuits at the Promenade. Then will come back the history that our forefathers have seen.

Way back one thousand years or more when the Indians first discovered America they found the Great Snakes - big animals. They discovered the Indian Territory before the civilization of North America. Plenty wild game, animals, fowls, fish, plenty eatables. The Indians found plenty to eat - wild game and fruit and were happy. There was joy among the wild animals and wild savages. There were no houses to be seen but along the streams of water, springs, rivers or creeks, you would find Indian Villages - wigwams along the stream of water somewhere. When you went out in prairie or country, you could see wild cattle, buffalo, wild hogs. There were great wild animals in those days; wild horses to be found as high as eight-ten- twelve feet high and wild hogs two-three-four-feet high, eight-ten-twelve feet long.

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Lover's Leap.

Right below the Devil's Promenade about fifty yards is the old trail where the animals climbed that hill up and down many years ago. Then fifty or seventy-five yards below the trail is the Lover's Leap. This is a round castle-like rock that raises many feet at the edge of the water and farther out and higher than the rest of the cliff like banks. This castle-like projection is known as "Lover's Leap" and here many, many years ago, the eagles used to build their nests and had their young ones.

A couple, a young man and a young lady, grown up, were in love with each other and wanted to get married so said to each other, "You ask your parents and I ask my parents if they care if we get married." They made a date to meet here again in a day or two and find out whether or not they could get married. The parents on both sides didnot agree, because the lovers were not old enough to support themselves. They met and after the word was told the young man said, "Then if you love me and I love you, will you follow me?". They ran to the

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edge of the bluff, the lady following. He leaped and his sweetheart followed. Both have gone forever to sleep to the Judgement Day.

The False Face.

My fore-fathers and mothers were traveling along through the wild country and prairies, traveling, moving, one or two times each year. They were traveling by droves of ponies so took the ponies to tame them down. They make a cross-saddle, bound it with bark to make it strong to hold four or five-hundred pounds of weight. They would take an old age mare, put a cross-saddle on her back and put the four or five-hundred pounds weight on it, catch another pony to follow the old mare - follow until they had enough ponies to carry the buffalo robes, etc. Then another old plug of a horse would be dragging two poles, one on each side like a buggy shaft. They would pack food there and when it was all packed they would start. The old horses would lead and the young ones would follow one by one, like swans or wild geese up in the air as they fly from the north going south.

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These Indians came to a spring which was bubbling like hot water. It was a beautiful spring, you could see the clear crystal rocks in the bottom. They camped a few days at that place known as the Splitlog Spring; nobody knows where that spring is now. After they camped the ladies put up the poles for the tepees. They were sitting around for meals in broad day-light and a certain young man was drinking water at the spring. They were all sitting around where they ate and called him to come eat, He sprang up, jumped across that stream of water and sat down to eat with his family, then said, "Oh, I am so dry for a drink." His mother said, "Son, there is a spring over there. If you want to, you can drink the spring dry." He jumped up and went running to the spring, stooped down on hands and knees and bowed his head to the spring to get a drink of that stream of water.

Soon some queer feeling came upon him to draw water with his lips and he turned somersault into the stream of water. My brother went to that spring, looking for his nephew, thinking that he would see him leaping in the water. He disappeared first down the stream, and though

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they looked high and low, no one knows where he went to. Our Father which created Heaven and earth, he sends the message - the stream - living water for the playmates, from beyond. From spring to branch, branch to creek, creek to river, and river to ocean. Some day our poor fathers and mothers will understand where our son went to. Our Dear Heavenly Father pointed the way. Then we will understand that our son was not dead, but turned into some serpent or fish that draws back our line, some great man to explain.

Some day When you are living on this earth it will come to you again to draw your attention; the earth will be burned. The oil fields all over the country the stream of oil - ditch into gutter, gutter into branch, branch into creek, creek into river and the river into the ocean. Up and down in the deep sea the oil shaking up and down by high winds sterilize the water. The wind keeps the oil together in the water sinking down, back into the earth and comes up to the oil streams and down the branches, creeks and rivers to the ocean. He will draw our attention by and by so you can understand which

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is known as the young man who fell in Splitlog Spring.

Our brothers and sisters were well satisfied that he had given up and was safe by turning his flesh into a fish. Now, my brothers and sisters, our Father divided this body half and half, fish and man. Do not let your heart be troubled, be happy. we will take this tree and cut it into a block. We split the block half and half never mind about our son. We play some kind of game not to worry. We make a False Face like a human face to represent our child that disappeared in the water. The other half of the block was hewed out into a bowl. When they had completely finished the bowl, they took their fruits - the peach seeds, the six peach seeds were placed in the bowl. The birth was first an odd number, the second birth was an even number. The birth was evenly divided, half and half, to play this game which is the fruit from the tree that the Spirit has given to us also will come out by our son disappearing. Some day you will hear wonderful words have come back to your heart when gathered around to play this bowl of the seed and the grain, also.