

McCOONTZ, PETER.

THIRD INTERVIEW

12544-a

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

Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns

This report made on (date) January 1 1938

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

Address Fairland, Oklahoma. Route 2.

This person is (male ~~XXXXXXXX~~ ~~XXXX~~, ~~XXXX~~, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe Ottawa- Chippewa

2. Origin and history of legend or story Personal experiences and told in the Indian Lodges.

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

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Nannie Lee Burns
Investigator
January 1, 1938

Interview with Peter McCoontz,
Fairland, Oklahoma.

Geese flying overhead, one by one, shows how Indian came.

See Indian on street, one by one, man and wife- man in lead,
wife behind the same way the ducks walking on dry land one by
one. You look up in sky when you see a flock of geese or swans
flying over your head, one by one. Sometimes they come like the
letters flying like an "A" when they fly. Sometimes you see a "V"
sometimes an "L", sometimes an "M" and sometimes a "W". M indicates
~~warm weather, A that all is over, V is very cold or hot and an L~~
either a long summer or winter. Circling Indians have Stomp Dance,
circle the world. Turtles and beavers jumping in water means lots
of moist weather. That attraction to Indian history, when you see
~~the fowls flying over your head that reminds you of Indian walking.~~
The old Indian, the head man, knows the history of the Indian Cus-
tom. Today you see the white man way up in the sky with airplane.
By these birds flying over our head tells you the weather for the
future. If they fly high in the clouds, very high just can be
seen at the long distance, that means long summer or long winter.
When they fly low that means short weather. It no difference which
way they flying, north or south. When very low, short weather,

short winter or short summer. That how we tell by these geese and swans. When flying medium high not so long winter, not so long summer, be pleasant weather. So you see, these geese and swans they know the true path of the Indian History that the Indian don't walk side by side but one by one.

In just the same way in their doings, in their stomp dances, feasts, in Green Corn Feast, they trot round like fox-trot, circle round the fire, just like you see the swans sometimes circle round and round way up in the clouds. When you see them, they remind you of Indian Stomp Dance. That's why the Indian hang on to the Stomp Dance and to the giving of the big Green Corn Feast to remind you that our Father who is in Heaven made the Heaven and the earth. These Indians circle around the fire all night long like you would circle round the earth when you make settlement of your relatives, invite them- different nations to come.

To our Thanksgiving what we raise, the fruit of all kinds, the crop of all kinds, the animals of all kinds like the horse, mules, cattle hogs and sheep and the fowls that you raise, chickens ducks, geese, guineas, peacocks, pigeons, ect. to give what you have raised to feed your brother and sister and neighbor.

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That's why the Indian gives his feast every three months. In the month of March, they divide the seed, in June they receive the harvest, their crop, and begin to give the Green Corn Feasts through the months of June, July and August. Green Corn Feasts these three months. Sometimes they have twelve tables, in some tribes seven tables set ready for you to eat your meals for the thanks of God who created the Heaven and earth and gave you of the crops you have raised for yourself and your neighbor. September you began to gather your crops and on to December you busy gathering your crops. In December you through caring for your crops and they put away to seed-time. Soon as these fowls, geese and swans gives us an idea, the action, movement and how they travel when seed-time will come. The Indian History beginning to fail, lose their attraction when the white man tries to take away the lead and have it published.

The great Indian Corn Feast, one come by one, come everybody, anyway you can get there, roll, tumble, anyway you get there. Now it cost you five cents for your drinks, five cents

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for your ice-cream cone. Now for what you get the white man make you pay drink and smoke, making money out of the Indian History. That the reason failing every year the Indian trail. White man makes money out of it so he breaks the Indian record.

Indian tell stories from December to March, then no insert evil spirits, not tell stories when evil spirits around. Tell stories after leaves fall. Quit telling stories when the leaves begin to bud and grow.

When I was a young man here, I was visiting some of my Shawnee friends when a friend came after me to stay at his house while he and the family be gone on a visit. "Pete, I give you dollar a day you stay at my home and do chores, you have no work to do. I be gone a week." A lady was to come each day and to cook for me but a great blizzard came and so she could not get to house to cook. It was cold so I put mattress on floor by stove where I had big fire and was lying there resting when I heard a spirit singing, a woman's voice. I got up and searched the house, the barn and outdoors. I went in and took off my coat and lay down again. I hear the voice again singing in Indian. Then I decided that they were having a drum dance upon the hill where some Indians were camping. So I put on my coat and went there. All the houses were

closed, so then I went to the home of the lady who cooked for me and told her that someone was singing at the home. She was surprised. Then I went back again and made me a big fire and took off my coat and lay down again to rest and I could hear the woman's voice, "Yea- Hee Yea Hee". As I lay and listened it rose higher and higher.

Two days later, the man came home and after supper I told him what had happened and he said that in a few days that I would hear news, that the spirit had come to give me the news. I wanted to return to my aunt's house but he told me to wait to the next day and he would take me. When I got to my aunt's home she told me that my brother had not come home and for me to go and look for him and as there was plenty of horses there to take one of the horses. My uncle caught me a horse and I started.

My chum was living on the way to Shawnee and when I reached his house I saw an Indian lady carrying twin papooses on her back. She stopped me and said, "Pete, you know lady who stays here, you tell Indians in Shawnee, she died." My chum, when he learned that I was going to Shawnee, said he go with me but said, "Your brother is not there for I just

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came from there but to please you I will go with you to look for him". We go to Shawnee; not find him, so eat dinner and then went home and when I got home my aunt told me that the lady who had the twin papooses was dead. She had died that morning.

I had hear of Spirit cave and I look for it but could not find it. It is near Five Mile Creek. One day Benjamin Quapaw say he show me where it was. When we reached it, it was a round hole covered with brush. "Ha", I say, I hear someone say, "What you want?" John told me not to talk to it. Later, one night my cousin Joshua was coming to John Quapaw's and pass Spirit cave and said he heard someone whistling and he said he whistled back and told us about it. He passed the cave at midnight. I told him not to answer it or he be dead in a year for it is "Evil Spirit". He laughed and gave me a (celluloid) pair of celloid rings and told me that he gave me them to remember him. He died before the year.

There is old Spanish graveyard somewhere near there but I have never been able to find it. And when I was little in this country there was a Catholic Church but it has been torn down and I can't find out about it since I came back here.

Once we have lots of cattle and wild hogs in the Indian Territory. Once I started over to house ten miles away. My aunt told me to wait till after dinner and when I started she told me not to go on foot as the wild cattle would chase me but I started walking and took my old shotgun with me. I go 'bout one-fourth mile when I come to open space in the bottom where there were a few trees. I see old cow raise his head, "Booh", he shake his head, "Booh" I saw them coming, I was surrounded. The old bull coming towards me shaking his head, pawing and raising a dust. I shot at him and, seeing a tree near, made for the tree and got up the tree and around me I could see nothing but horns.

Another time I was chased by the wild hogs. Friend say to me, you folks got forty acres land in that hollow so I think I go to see it. I start about three o'clock in the afternoon. It nice day so I take my gun and my dogs. It was five miles over to the land. I see three wild hogs run in some sand plum bushes. My dogs bark. Then I hear the wild hogs barking and they chase the dogs out of the bushes. The dogs came towards me with the hogs after them. I look to save myself and I see treetop blown down about eight feet high, top on the ground. I run to tree and look, hog at my feet, grab one

of my dogs and the hog toss him up in air. My three dogs got away from the hogs but I was treed. Big drove of hogs all around the treetop where I was, they kept me there all night. I stay in that treetop all night, plenty of panthers around. I was saving my cartridges to save my life in case of the panthers but the wild hogs around kept the panthers away. When the day came they began to thin out and by noon when the sun was high they were all gone so I could get away and go back home.

In 1882 there were still a few wild horses and buffaloes near Four Mile Creek, this side of Chetopa, Kansas. This was their headquarters. Four Mile Creek was named for the Pottawatomies, who at one time had a four mile reserve there and that is where Peter Bursaw lived when they adopted me when I was two years old. The horses were a Spanish horse and weighed about 1400 pounds. They were high headed, straight up from the hoof to the head. They could travel much farther in a day than the common horse. They could travel over a hundred miles a day and were so large that you had to have a special high wagon or buggy to work them. They were so tall that you would have to stand on a block to harness them. The last team of them

that I remember belonged to Milt Drake, who married an Indian woman. This team was ten feet from the hoof to the top of the head. One was a chestnut sorrel and the other a light brown.

These are the fords on Spring River from the bridge over Spring River at the Devil's Promenade to the mouth of Spring River, just west of Wyandotte: First, the Bigknife, then the Big Charlie down the river which curves back west through the Dan Eddy Ford, then three miles south to King's Ford where the Miami - Seneca road crosses that river, around a curve and below the curve in the Hudson Ford, then around back three miles east is the Old Moccasin Bend Ford, which is on the Shawnee Reserve at the heading of the Ottawa Reserve and down to the Sub-Oak Ferry and below 200 yards is the crossing known as the Sub-Oak Crossing and on down the river to the Wyandotte Ford, that the end of my footsteps and information of Spring River.

Messrs. Hayworth, Watson and Kirk established the Ottawa Mission School for the Ottawas just east of the Ottawa Stores. First Agency built in this county in 1870 on Five Mile Creek south of Baxter Springs, Kansas. Mr. Mitchell was the Agent. Later, moved to west of Seneca, Missouri, and in 1896 when part of it burned they moved it to Wyandotte.

(NOTE: Peter McCoontz was adopted into the Potlawatomie
Tribe when two years old and for many years lived near
now Shawnee, Oklahoma.)