

PERRY, SAMUEL

INTERVIEW

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Field Worker.

Interview with Samuel Perry,
Full Blood Shawnee,
Tulsa, Okla.

I was born in Johnson County, Kan., on Nov. 5, 1859. We, my mother and stepfather, Buckham, and my maternal grandmother and my uncle, George Perry, came to Oklahoma in 1871, settling at White Oak Hill, about 10 miles west of Vinita, Okla. I have three daughters, married and one son, married, all living at White Oak Hills, west of Vinita.

The reason for coming to Okla. and settling at White Oak Hill, was told to me by my grandfather, who died before we came to Okla. They told me that, "In the early days, several years before the Civil War, the Osage Indians of Okla. were a war-like tribe of Indians, while they had a territory of their own, they didn't seem to be content, they kept intruding into the territory of the Cherokee, a people content to live at peace and within the confines of their own territory. This, however, didn't prevent the Osage Indians from invading their territory, which they did repeatedly, this was resented by the Cherokee, who engaged them in battle from time to time, but all the time the Osage Indians were getting further and further into the territory of

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the Cherokee.

The Cherokee§ finally saw that they could not hold their land further, against the invasion of the Osage, and assistance from some source had to be secured. The Chief of the Cherokees called a meeting of the Council and it was decided that he go to the Shawnees of Kansas and seek help from them and, too, to see and confer with the Delaware Indians, also of Kansas, regarding assistance from them. So the Chief of the Cherokees started on his journey to the Shawnees of Kansas. He arrived in due time, and met the Chief of the Shawnees, who called the Council together, and the Chief of Cherokees got up and told them of the action of the Osage Indians, how they were invading their land and asked that assistance be given them.

Of course, there were conditions to be met before the Shawnees would consent to aid them. So it was agreed by the Cherokees, that for the assistance given by the Shawnees in driving out, and keeping out, the same invaders, they were to share equally with the Cherokees in the distribution or allotment of all land in Oklahoma, thereafter. They, the Shawnees, were to be on

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equal footing with the Cherokee in all land allotment thereafter and too in all cash payments made by the government. This was agreed to.

After this meeting and agreement, the Cherokee Chief then went east of the Shawnees to the reservation of the Delaware tribes, where the same agreement was made with them, this agreement being known to and agreed to by the Shawnee Indians.

They then, the Shawnee and the Delawares, sent their forces into Oklahoma and assisted the Cherokees in driving out the savages, and in reestablishing their lives. The time of this was, according to my grandfather, was about 1825.

So, some of the land allotted to the Shawnee, under this agreement, or treaty, was west of Vinita, and it was to this land we came in 1871. In 1873 iron posts were placed at each and every corner of the lands of the Osage, Cherokee, Delaware and Shawnee Indians, to serve as markers of the boundaries, as agreed years before. After this date, the Shawnee Indians received equal allotments of land with the Cherokees, and in all matters were recognized as one. In later years the Chief of the Cherokees was also our Chief. Henry F.

Rogers was the last Chief of the Shawnees.

The first houses, or tepees of the Shawnees were made of poles, covered with buffalo skins. Long green poles would be secured, some ten to 16 feet in length. The butt end would be placed in the ground, in a circular manner, ten feet, or more in diameter, according to the room needed, the top bent over and tied in the center, making a rounded top, this was covered with skins. they were made of elm bark, where it could be found. This bark would be taken from the trees, in 4 or 5 foot length, when the sap was up, and would be placed flat on the ground, until it dried out, where it would be used to make the sides of the houses. It, was tough and lasted well. Later, logs were used to build houses, which would have bark, grass or skin covering for roof.

My early life in Okla. I came here when 12 years old, was as most Indian boys, I hunted, fished and attended the various dances and celebrations of our people. What schooling I got in my early days, was that of a tribe, taught only in my native language. Not until 1885 could I speak English. In 1885, when I was 16 years of age, I went to school at Hampton Institute,

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Hampton Roads, Va. I spent 4 years at this school.

This was where I learned to speak English, and where I received practically all the schooling I got.

My grandfather told me much of the early life of my people, in fact, all I know that is of the tribe before my time. The Buffalo hunts etc. He said, on these buffalo hunts, the Indians, who were skilled with the bow and arrow, and in riding, too, would locate a herd of buffalo and ride into them. This usually disturbed them and caused a stampede, then the Indians would get busy. They would ride into the herd, not shoot the first one, at all, but would ride along until they found a fat buffalo, when they would shoot him in the side, then fall out, or ride along until the buffalo fell, which he usually did after running a hundred or two hundred yards. After the herds had gone on, they would skin the buffalo, and the feast would follow.

At that time there were vast herds of buffalo on the plains of eastern Okla. and Kansas. In the summer they would graze north and in the fall and winter would be found in the south.