

HICKMAN, M. C. (MRS.)

INTERVIEW

#7211

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

HICKMAN, M. C. (MRS.)

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Field Worker's name Grace Kelley

This report made on (date) August 18, 1937

1. Name Mrs. M. C. Hickman

2. Post Office Address Henryetta, Oklahoma, Route 1, Box 84B

3. Residence address (or location) 5 miles west of Henryetta
1/4 mile east of County line.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

5. Place of birth _____

6. Name of Father Little Fish Place of birth Unknown 1857

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Eliza Barnett Place of birth Barnett Ranch

Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____.

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Interviewer,
Grace Kelley
August 18, 1937

Interview with Mrs. M. C. Hickman
Henryetta, Oklahoma
Civil War story as told to Mrs.
Hickman by her grandmother, Mary Barnett.

Mary Barnett was a little girl when they were brought from Alabama. She died twenty-two years ago and as near as we could figure her age she was a hundred and two years old. Nobody knows the exact age of any of those old Indians.

This is how she told me the story: All the women were hidden; we were lying out and hiding in old hollow logs. For weeks and weeks we had nothing to eat nor drink. I ran to a great big hollow log to hide and when I looked in I saw someone in there and ran away scared. After going a little way I changed my mind and went back and looked in the log again.

A little girl about six years old was sitting up in the log. She was afraid of me, barefoot and her feet were so swollen that she couldn't walk. I got her out and carried her on my back. I came to a covered wagon with a white family in it and I don't know whether they or I was scared worse. They wanted to know if any men were with me and I

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said that I was alone except for the little girl I had found in a hollow log and that I was starving. The man said, "Well, we are too. Get in and go with us." So I got in and went with them. He would drive the covered wagon down in big, deep ditches to hide it, it seemed no one could drive in such places. We passed through the Indian town of Waw Seeda.

Tuckabatchee Sacred Plates

I know about this but can't say that it is anything but selfishness and cruelty to women. My husband is a white man but I have relations who believe in this way of doing.

My brother-in-law, Salahi Lewis, has his own plate, cup and saucer, knife, fork and spoon, his own chair and bed. No one is allowed to eat with or use these things. His wife is past the change so she is considered like a man but they have some young daughters and daughters-in-law and relatives and his wife has to be very careful to watch that they don't bother his things or he raises a terrible scene.

I believe they get this idea from the Old Testament

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which is the reason they call them Sacred Plates, and Tuckabatchee is Salahi Lewis' Indian town.

Salahi Lewis won't eat roasting ears until after he has taken the Green Corn Medicine. If some of the women eat roasting ears before that time he is very strict about telling them not to drink out of the same cup or dipper that he uses. He will take them over to the water and show them the cup he uses and tell them to be sure and not use it as he hasn't had the medicine yet.

Creek Indian Confinement

I was a grown woman but was young and had no children, however, I figured I was old enough to be around at the time of confinement.

When Grandmother took a quilt and started out with it I thought she felt badly and would go and talk with her so I followed her. She went a quarter of a mile from the house and made a pallet under a tree. When I got there I asked her if she was going to take a nap or just lie down. She said she was sick right now and for me to go back to the house. I asked her why she came so far from the house and she said so that nobody could hear her if

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she screamed. She kept telling me to go back to the house as I was too young to be there, but I stayed, and she was sick quite a while. When the baby came I asked if she wanted me to take it to the house but she insisted that I leave it alone. So I went back and left her.

She took care of it herself and after a while she came back carrying the baby and the quilt. They had a little old house in the back with half the chinking out and no stove in it. She was put to bed in there until she was well, then she was allowed to come back in the house but had to use separate things. The baby was four or five months old before the father ever touched it. The women were allowed around as long as they were pregnant but not when they were sick.

When they were on a trip and a woman was ready to bear a child, she would stop them and would take her quilt, go away and hide. The others would sit around or stand a around and wait for her on the trail but they didn't go about her. After a while, sometimes a short time and sometimes longer, she would come back with the baby and they would go on.

Women dance at the stomp dances but only the ones who are feeling well. They dance around a fire and the smoke will follow one who isn't well. They don't hesitate to tell her to get off the ground. That ground is considered in the same way as the dishes and chairs, etc.

Creek Stripes

They still do this but I will tell about the one I really knew about. Papa told us not to look but I saw enough to tell about. There was a big crowd of Creeks who camped in our yard all night. They took pins and scratched themselves from the wrist to the elbow, across the chest, on their legs and backs until the blood ran off. They didn't wash in water but after a while they washed in a jar of medicine which was three feet high.

The baby boys were scratched but no women nor baby girls. That was in the morning before they took their medicine, after they took a dose of medicine they went in the woods to vomit to get rid of all malaria, chills and fever.

Each woman has to take a bowl of food to an arbor where the men eat after taking medicine. The women eat at the camp, then the men come to each camp and eat a

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little. While the women are preparing the food the chief goes to each camp and jabs the ground with a very old stick he has and tells the women to hurry up. He makes the trip to all the camps several times and then everyone is ready to eat at the same time.

Corn for the Men who take Medicine.

There are quite a few men who take medicine and they have fasted and taken medicine for four days. Only four ears of corn are allowed for them to eat.

The chief takes the four ears of corn and blows
on them; then the men take the corn and either blow on it or rub their faces with it and I couldn't tell for sure just what they were doing. Then the corn was divided into little pieces and each man ate some of it. They had different dances which lasted four or five days and the last night the dance lasted from seven at night till seven in the morning.

Ribbon Dance

This is their pretty dance but I don't know its meaning. Each woman has ribbons of all colors fastened to the top of her head with the ends streaming down behind. They dance in a circle around the fire in the

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afternoon. That is the afternoon before the all night dance. No man dances in this dance unless it is the chief, he sometimes does.

Marriage and Divorce

In 1882 the Creeks passed a law that each couple living together at that time were man and wife but after that time the Creeks had to be married by a preacher or officer. After that their marriage and divorce laws were the same as ours.

Before 1882 they had what we call common law marriage. Many Creeks had more than one wife but they usually had a house for each wife. I only knew one Creek man who had two wives living in the same house. I don't know of any Creek having more than seven wives but I did

know of one Creek who had that many. The houses were on the same ground but a little way apart, like a little town.

This way of living was like free love. If a man could get a woman to quit her old man, he would live with her for a while. If a woman's husband died, she was a widow until someone came along whom she liked then they lived together, sometimes they lived together as long and were as true to each other as if married by our way.

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Old Books, Treaties, Pottery

I have an old iron pot belonging to Salahi Lewis' mother that is about six or eight inches in diameter.

Uncle William Sullivan had a lot of books and treaties dating back at least to 1845. When his widow died some of her things were put on exhibit over in Okemah but I don't know what became of these papers. I believe they would be considered valuable if they could be found.

The Creeks made clay pots, shaped them and pounded the centers out and let them stand in the sun to dry. They boiled food in them and if a pot made the food gritty it wasn't used again. The pots they cooked in did not make the food gritty nor taste of the clay in any way. Aunt Lowina Sullivan's pots are at Okemah.

The Creek Indian women rode side saddles, even rode wild horses that had been ridden only once with side saddles. Aunt Lowina Sullivan's saddle is also at Okemah.

Creek Laws

The Creeks had Lighthorsemen the same as we have sheriffs. When anyone did wrong these Lighthorsemen arrested him and guarded him until the trial which was held

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before twelve jurors and a judge. The judge passed the sentence and the man was released until the time for the execution. The Creeks usually sent out word that on such a day and time they were going to have the execution and to come and see it if you wanted to.

The person I saw whipped was a negro who had stolen a cow. They took all his clothes off but a breech clout. His feet were chained together and a log put between them and a Lighthorseman stood on the log to hold him down. His hands were chained to a limb overhead and he was stretched as tight as a drum. A hundred lashes were given for the first offense, two hundred for the second and death for the third offense of stealing. This negro got a hundred lashes. The first ones were light licks; one Lighthorseman gave fifty lashes and the other stood on the log then they exchanged places and the other Lighthorseman gave the negro fifty lashes. It seemed that every lick got harder than the one before it. Toward the last the negro would cry, "Oh, Lordy". and leap upward taking the chain and log with him.

The Indian I saw killed was executed like this; they dug a long ditch and stood him on a box at one end

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of it. A piece of paper was pinned over his heart. Two Lighthorsemen walked back some distance, each having a gun; one of the guns had a blank in it but the Lighthorsemen didn't know which one it was so they wouldn't know who killed the Indian and both Lighthorsemen shot the paper in the center. The Indian fell over in the ditch. I suppose he was covered and there might have been a coffin in there but that is all I saw for sure.

Murder carried the death penalty unless the prisoner could prove it was done in self defense and not cold blooded murder.

That was at Nuyaka Town and Billie West and Sanco Johnson were Lighthorsemen for this district. You know they had Lighthorsemen for each district just as we have the sheriff and deputy for each county. Both these men are now dead.

Tuckabatchee Town is west of Bryant. Sanco Johnson's place is three miles north of here to the Rock store, two miles farther north, five miles north of Okfuskee on the Okmulgee line of Highway 75. Sanco Johnson's place where the Creeks could play ball had a pole in front with a horse's head on top.