

SKYE, ISABELLE

INTERVIEW

13008

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

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SKYE, ISABELLE (MRS.)

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Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns.

This report made on (date) February 22, 1938. 1938

1. This legend was secured from (name) Mrs. Isabelle Skye.  
Address R.F.D. Quapaw, Oklahoma.

This person is (male or female)  White,  Negro,  Indian,  
If Indian, give tribe Quapaw.

2. Origin and history of legend or story As handed down in tribal stories.

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 7

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Nannie Lee Burns,  
Investigator,  
Feb. 22, 1938.

An Interview With Isabelle Skye,  
R. F. D. Quapaw, Oklahoma.

#### BITS OF QUAPAW LORE.

My father was a full blood Quapaw as was also my mother but I do not know when or where they were born though I think here for I can remember when we returned from the Osage Nation to live here though I was but a small girl.

I was born December 22, 1874, and my name before I married was Isabelle Josett.

#### THINGS THAT WE HAVE BEEN TOLD.

The Quapaws have always been a peaceable tribe and have lived somewhere in the Mississippi River Valley and for this reason our braves have had to go on long hunts for the buffalo and other skins.

In the old, old days, they made pottery, some of which is still to be found where they used to live in Mississippi; then, too, they made beads from clay colored by dye. They made their own blankets to wear and their shoes of birch bark and even then the Quapaws lived in wooden houses. Some-

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times these houses were made of logs and sometimes of bark, and a long time ago there was a hole in the center of the roof for the smoke to go out and later they began to make chimneys and build fires in a fireplace at the end of the house. The first chimneys were made of sticks and mud. The sticks would hold the mud together but the fire would burn the sticks that were on the inside of the chimney.

Indians never liked to live out on the prairie. You always found him in the woods along a stream of water. Here the men could fish and hunt while the squaw raised the children, did the work, went with the other squaws to the streams and did the washing and here in the running water they pounded the dirt out of the clothes. The same wash day was kept by the whole tribe.

The women also raised Indian corn, lettuce, turnips and gathered wild onions and wild potatoes from the valleys. Here in the hollows, we can still find the wild onions and some wild potatoes.

The men used the bow and arrow to hunt with. The arrow of the quapaw was feather trimmed.

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Later the white man came and made the Indian restless and he began to move and go farther away where he thought the white man would not come. They went North and stopped in Arkansas and they stayed there until the white man wanted their homes there. Then they had to leave the homes that they had made and the graves of their people and then they went to a bad, swampy country where many, many got sick and died. Discouraged the Quapaws went back to those of their old friends who had not left Arkansas; but the white people did not want them to stay there and after some time they were sent here to this Quapaw Nation and told that the Quapaws should stay here. They were told that each family should have a home by itself. They did not know how to live that way for they had always worked the whole tribe together. Then, too, when they came here they were poor and did not have many ponies and there were no houses here for them to live in and it was colder than where they had lived.

They were not even allowed to sell a load of wood from the country and with no way of making a living for their family, most of them were forced to go <sup>to</sup> the friendly Osages for something to eat and there was nothing to bring them back

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to their own nation as then this was covered with great tall grass and they had no cattle to eat the grass and no way to cut it and they would not have been allowed to sell it after it was cut. The men who brought great herds of cattle here to graze would give them a few cents per acre for their grass.

With nearly all of them gone, the word went out that this country was to be given to the white man to settle and make homes here. The paper in Baxter Springs printed a story that you could bring your family here and pick out a spot and make it your home.

On May 2, 1880, a run was made into the Quapaw country. The white men on horses and in wagons drove over this nation and put stakes in the ground with their names on it and some of them took their teams and ploughed around the ground that they wanted. Some of the Quapaws who were here went to the agent and got word to Washington that their homes were being taken from them and that this was all they had and this country had been given to the Quapaws and that they wanted to keep it. So the Government sent soldiers here to move the white folks off. They moved the whites back into Kansas

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and Missouri and then the soldiers stayed here to see that they did not come back. The Indian was told that, if he wanted to keep his land, he would have to live on it.

Some of them who were here got Mr. Abrams to come here and look after things for them. He got Frank Valliere and some one else to come to the Osage Nation with him and to talk to the Quapaws who were there and tell our people there that if they did not come back, the land would be taken away from them, so lots of us came back. We had no houses and so we either stayed with those who were here or lived in tents along Spring River. Mr. Abrams helped the Quapaws to build little houses and then he got people to come here from where he had lived and rent the land out on the prairie that had had the cattle on it and they built houses there where they lived and paid us money for the land. Then as we did not have any schools or churches they made a school here at Quapaw Mission for a while. Most of our people are Catholics. Some send their children way to Catholic School but most of them do not get much schooling.

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## QUAPAW WAY OF BURYING.

A long time ago, the Quapaws dug a hole in the ground long and wide enough for the body and over this they lay poles, then they lay the body on the poles, covered it and let it lay there till the poles gave way and let it down in the ground. In this way the spirit could come and go and the body was not shut up when it would come back. We had feasts before the funeral and our leader would sprinkle tobacco over the body.

White men did not like our way so now we bury in the ground. We dig a deep hole and put the body in a coffin but we sprinkle the tobacco over the coffin and put some in it. They get everything ready and bury the body in the morning and then at noon they have big feast at the home and some one talks or you might say prayers and talks. They put everything on one table, folks eat and what is not eaten is taken away by those who are present. Sometimes yet we bury things in the coffin with them that they have liked and have asked that these things be buried with them.

We do not have any big cemetery but every family has his own. It is a very common thing here to see large



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monuments of the departed ones of that family either in the yard or close to the house and in plain sight from the house.

Frank Valliere, who is helping me with this interview, knows most of the older ones are buried in small groups along the banks of Spring River and that even the location of many of them are now not remembered with the changing of the country and the old landmarks gone.

#### WORSHIP.

The Quapaws have not built any large churches but there have been several small ones built at the homes of the different families. These buildings are round in shape and have a round cupola in the middle of the roof. The fire is in the center on the ground and the smoke escapes through the openings in the cupola. We burn green cedar on the fire to drive the evil spirits away.

When the day comes for the meeting, we have big feast and pray for the meeting in the quapaw language. We stay all night and have meeting at sunrise again.