

SMITH, ISA S. . INTERVIEW .

#12127

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

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SMITH, ISA S.

INTERVIEW.

12127.

Field Worker's name Grace Kelley.

This report made on (date) November 16, 1937. 1937

1. Name Isa Smith.

2. Post Office Address Henryetta, Route 1, Box 95.

3. Residence address (or location) 2-11-11, Southwest of Rock Store.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1876.

5. Place of birth Indian Territory.

6. Name of Father Isaac Smith. Place of birth Indian Territory

Other information about father Creek Council Member.

7. Name of Mother Hanna Robinson Place of birth _____

Other information about mother Reared at Fort Gibson--115 years
old and still living.

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 8.

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Grace Kelley,
Field Worker.
11-16-37.

Interview with Isa Smith,
Henryetta, Route 1.

Yahola Harjo was the prophet and doctor who lived twelve miles west of Muskogee. He was my uncle and I feel that if I had brought him home with me and taken care of him in my own way he would still be living. He was supposed to be Indian.

That is something I don't exactly know about. Everyone judges by the eyes if a person is white, Indian, or colored and it should be by the blood. I'm colored but have Indian, white and colored relations. My aunt Sallie Mona had some children who were light as she was part white. The white ones married white people and eat in the restaurant with white people and laugh about fooling folks. Some of the darker ones married colored folks and Indians. It is my opinion that's the way with the whole Creek Nation. They were all crossed up.

OLD PERSONS TO INTERVIEW.

York Jackson is same as Indian but is considered colored. The oldest living settler near Taft, anyone at Taft can tell where he lives as he is well known.

Hanna Robinson is a hundred fifteen years old and lives west of Love Lady's store twenty-eight miles from here.

She was reared at Fort Gibson and stayed there during the Civil War. She went to school where the Cherokee children went and they fought her all the time. It would be difficult to get a story from her as she is hard of hearing but she would have an interesting story if she told it. Her master's name was Yajie.

Her husband, Isaac Smith, was a Northern soldier and for some reason that I don't know he was born free and never had an owner or master. He was a Council Member of the Creeks of Canadian Town.

INDIAN POLICE--COLORED.

Bass Reed, Colbert, Crowder Nicks and John Garrett were all colored and could arrest anyone colored, Indian or white. They would camp close to a house and ask if any stealing, killing or anything like that had been going on in that part of the country. If there had been and you didn't want them to get the guilty person you just said that you didn't know about anything like that.

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If the crimes had been against you or your friends you told them about it and where the guilty person would be likely to be found. They didn't need a writ but just went and arrested the persons and took them to jail.

LIGHT HORSEMEN.

I was a Light horseman from Canadian town and I want to say that we only killed a person for killing another and then we took this evidence.

If you shoot or stab a person in the side, back, or back of the head you have stolen his life and must give yours.

If you get into a fight with another and stab or shoot him an inch or more in front of the hip bones on either side--that is in the abdomen--you are turned loose for he had the chance to kill you and you beat him to it. That was a fair fight and didn't deserve the death penalty.

An officer couldn't abuse a prisoner and they had better laws then than they have now, too.

If the inquest showed that you stabbed a person in the back they pinned a white piece the size of a quarter as near your heart as they can guess and two Light

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Horseman shoot you and you are dead. If a person was guilty of stealing, he was hobbled like a horse and hung to a limb by the arms. An eight foot log is put on the hobble and it stretches the person to the ground. His feet were two feet from the ground when the log was put between his feet. It stretches a big person until he looks tall and thin. Then he is given fifty lashes on the bare back.

SIGNS OF INNOCENCE.

If a gun snaps without anything being wrong with it or the Light Horseman drops a switch before it is used, accidentally, it is a sign that the person is innocent and had lived near God as possible. He was turned loose without paying the penalty.

MONEY-BELT AND SCABBARD.

I have a money belt and scabbard that is over seventy-five years old. The scabbard back wore out and I had to have a patch put on it. The red bead stand for blood. There are two places that were cut on the right side in front. The second time the knife hit the cartridges and broke the blade. The whole belt is hollow so that money can be carried inside.

TWO CEMETERIES.

There is a good sized cemetery, like a small town cemetery, that is still in use on the Pompey Robinson allotment a mile east of Section 2 Township 11 Range 11. E.

In 1836 there was a grave yard containing ten or twelve graves including Flufo Harjo and William Sullivan a quarter mile east of Section 2, Township 11, Range 11 E. The houses were torn down and cotton planted over the graves.

WILD GAME.

Wild hogs were thick and fierce. About four in the evening you'd hear the mothers calling the children to come in close to the house for the hogs would be coming out looking for something to eat and they would attack a person and tear him to pieces.

Deer were almost as thick as cattle and the turkeys would come up and pick in the yards.

WHERE THE INDIANS GOT THEIR TURKEYS.

The Indians used to find the turkey nests and take the eggs and set them under their hens. That is where all the tame turkeys came from except the yellow ones.

The big, proud, black ones are descendants of our wild ones. Almost all Indians raise them now. There were panthers and wolves, too.

WOLVES.

Almost all of our dogs were part wolves. We even had tame wolves that stayed around the yard unless a stranger came, then he was gone and he stayed gone until that stranger left, then he would come back. They seemed to know us and didn't attack people who lived here. It may be that they knew our smell, I couldn't say. One time down on the Canadian River, we called it North Fork, some white people camped about a quarter of a mile from the river so that they would be safe from the river.

There were four wagons of them so the men must have been awful lazy because they let one of the women take a bucket and coffee pot down to get some water for supper. They heard her scream two times but said they thought she saw a rabbit or something and didn't go to see about it. When she didn't return with the water they went to hunt her and could only find little pieces of cloth and flesh. There must have been forty or fifty of the wolves to have completely devoured her.

WHITE FLOUR, HEAVEN DUST.

You know the walls of heaven are supposed to be smooth. White flour was smooth and precious. Precious because we couldn't get it very often. So the mothers started calling it Heaven Dust.

Combread was called John Rastler because it was rough.

STORY OF RED ROOT.

There is a very old story about how the Indians started using Red Root. When an old Indian came to himself he had a bunch of red root in his hand and the Great Spirit had told him to never be without it, to make a tea by soaking it in water and wash his head in it so he wouldn't have the headache and take it internally for other ailments. Ever since that the Indians have used it especially at their Stomp Dances.

I have a jar over a hundred years old, two bows and different kinds of arrows. Different kinds of roots tied in bundles and chicken feathers. Little packages about an inch square and a half inch thick covered with cloth and tied with string. Terrapin shells and a horned owl that I killed. Lots of folk came to me to be a doctored.

I never went to school as there wasn't any for me to go to. Mostly Indians came to me and I fix them up some herbs. There are different things to be doctored for like colds and fevers and aches. Then there is the kind of sickness when somebody bewitches you. When somebody hates you and you want them to love you. When somebody loves you and you want them to quit loving you.

I use a two foot hollow cane, exactly like the end of a fishing pole hollowed out, to blow through into the medicine after I have made it.