

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

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Field worker's name Nannie Lee Burns

This report made on (date) July 22 1937

1. This legend was secured from (name) Peter Mc Coontz

Address Miami, Oklahoma General Delivery at present

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe _____

2. Origin and history of legend or story Ottawa-Chippewa

From Memory

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 22

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Nannie Lee Burns,
Interviewer,
July 22, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. Peter McCoontz,
Miami, Oklahoma.

My father was Peter McCoonse, a full blood
Chippewa, born in Michigan.

My mother was Kathleen Early Pes-Ke-Wa, a full
blood Ottawa, born in Wisconsin.

I, Peter McCoontz (spelling of name changed by
government to McCoontz when I was allotted in the
Ottawa Nation) was born March 5, 1870, six miles east
of Miami.

I am one of thirteen children and only my sister,
Sarah Mexley, and myself are now living.

Adoption

When I was two years old, I was adopted by the
Pottawatomie Tribe. I was adopted at the Sacte Ford,
northwest of Miami.

They give feast first, dance all night, next
day feast all day and dance that night. My mother had

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to take me- she give me up---give my life away.

Alex Bur-se-raw w s my adopted father and they call me Peter Bur-se-saw.

There were the Citizen Prairie-Vants.

When the Pottatomies came to this country right after the war, they took their location ticket at a place near Chetopa, Kansas, about six miles south-east and in the Indian Territory, which is now called State of Oklahoma. It was four miles square, the old home- the Citizens Prairie Vants Reservation. Finally they all disappear - some went back to Jackson County, Kansas, and some to Old Shawnee Town which is Shawnee City now.

They lived in tents at first and then in log houses.

My Indian name is Ne- Ch-Wa- which means Armstrong. The Sac and Fox, the Chippewa and the Ottawa have married among each other because they understand each other's language.

Then there were no schools here except at Quapaw,

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Pawhuska and Sacred Heart thirty miles south of Shawnee.

My adopted parents live near St. Mary's Mission at Kansas.

Here my adopted father died and I have to stay with my adopted mother till I become a man of my own.

My adopted mother remarried and by old Indian Custom I am now called Peter Whipple. Then we went from here to Jackson County, Kansas; then we moved to White Cloud near Heyton, Kansas, at the Kickapoo Reserve. We stayed there somewhere in that neighborhood till 1882 and then we moved back to his state, Indian Territory in the Ottawas.

We stayed here until 1884 at my old home six miles east of Miami. Then in 1884 we went to the big Pow-wow, the big Stomp Dance at old Charley Quappaw. We heard that the Pottawatomies were going to take an allotment so I drove the oxen away from here. I drove them to our allotments at Old Shawnee Town.

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Then Shawnee Town was only two stores. A white man owned store- named John Scott and the Indian store was owned by King.

In Shawnee Tribe of Indians, about six miles northwest of old Shawnee Town, we take our location. There were no schools. The Quakers came along; they pick me up and send me to Wabash, Indiana, to White Institute- and now I speak in the Indian language. I was reared among the Pottawatomies, Kickapoos, Shawnees and Sac and Fox Indians and I can speak all of their languages besides the Chippewa dialect which I have learned since I have lived at Wapole Island.

When I came back from Wabash in the year 1889 on the 4th day of July, back to the old homestead known as the Indian Territory, when I came back they began to take allotments.

The Roman Catholics- they began to preach out into the wilderness- everybody came to hear the sermon of the Scripture at the spring near the stream of water

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all these people were gathered around. The Scriptures, the Roman Catholics, cast out to all the nation. Many number of tribes were there. The word was cast out, the old Indian custom- to come - to be civilized- all the living Indian customs remembered by Roman Catholics.

Remarriage was to stand; the lawful wife and husband to take up allotment. Then we are now among the white race after we have disposed of our Indian customs- we are now of the white man's style to be educated. The white man has wonderful works. The Indian Training Schools by the government which is known as Haskell Institute, Chilocco, Riverside. Then the Mission of Michigan State at Mount Pleasant, which is now the Indian Institute, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, was the leading one. The old institute is now broken up for the benefit of the soldiers of the World War, and is now known as the Carlisle Pennsylvania Institute,

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the home of returned soldiers.

I was at Haskell for eighteen months till I got hurt in 1896. Then I came back to my own mother here (now Cathrine Pe-Taw) in this county. I transferred back and took my allotment here in the Ottawas in 1898 and have been with my tribe here and here I marry and reared my family.

I marry Lizzie Davis in November, 1898, and we have four children—John, Joe, Jim and Francis all dead, except Joe who lives out here.

My wife died in 1910, January 2nd, with a hemorrhage and leaves me three boys— then I remarry in 1915 to Esther Clark, an Ottawa Indian, and she also is now my wife and is now living in Canada at Napoleo Island, Ontario.

What brought me home— was the poor health; I came to be with my relatives.

Three years ago, I was repairing a wire fence when lightning struck some distance away and the wire I was

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handling served as a conductor and I and a small boy near-by were knocked down. I am still in a very bad condition as the physicians say every bone in my body is welded together. I also have trouble with my ears and eyes and I walk only with a cane and crutch. I have been sent by the Indian Agency here to different places but it seems that nothing benefits me. I usually come here each summer.

Part II

My back track of history. Indian went west before white man came to this country. Indian travel-drove ponies, went west to between Mohawks and Kaskaskias which is known as Seneca. They took ponies when moving- use poles on ponies, make drag, fastened to pony with pole. The saddle is made of wood. It is packed with food and bedclothes. Bed clothes next to horse.

They came to a spring, camped many days- a month

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or two according to Indian custom. A young man was drinking at the spring- he was on his hands and knees. They called him to dinner- told him dinner was ready, he hung on to the spring. They called him three or four times- so he came, got his dinner. While he was eating , he said" I am so dry for water". They said;"You can drink the spring dry." So the young man got up, went to spring and stooped down on hands and knees. All at once, he turned somersault, ~~and~~ disappeared, they all looked for him and laughed at him when it was done.

One said, "I'll go see the boy, what the matter, not getting up"

When he got to spring, the boy had disappeared , could not be seen anywhere. They all got up and searched the stream of water for miles for the body. To this day, not yet to be seen. The Indians camped great many weeks from that on to find the body of this

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boy. After that, great many weeks, they could not locate the body, then the tribe made agreement--the tribe that wants animals on one side, then on one side. All those that wants fish go north. All those that wants turtle go south. We will now cut this tree, divide half and half of this tree. On one side they make wooden masks, the image of human face cut out. The other half of the tree was cut into a wooden bull, this representing the old Indian custom of pleasure, games which is now the Mohawks- take the false face for the benefit of the sick for the healing.

Take bench so on log placed north and south. These four men shall take the turtle shell, the black turtle shell, rattling, rattling gourd, and then they sing a song for the healing purpose.

Mon-das-i	Mond-das-i	Weebon	Mon-das-i	Chem-
Come on,	come on,	here	come on	i-tah

God or
father

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If he falls, that is the last of his life--his death is sure. Then he goes on, the boy is healed, then the old man goes on the lady's side and she rides on the old man's back, her arms around his neck. The old gent tries to shake the sick off his back. She also has received good health and is cured. This is held when any are sick.

They take the other half of the log and make it into pole for the pleasure of the game. When the ball is finished, they take the six peach seed rough on one side, smooth on the other. Now public gathering of Indian Custom of the four months of each year, is representing the four Sundays of each year to give thanks to the Heavenly Father, for he has given us the plants for a living. We give thanks four Sundays of each month to thank God, to help us on in this world for pleasure of this game.

Men on one side, ladies on other. They play this ball. So many men- so many women on each side- take

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this grain every person what's there. They put all grain in one pile, then the leader takes stick and calls; he points at man to shake the pole, whatever the peach seed falls, one, two, five that many grains off the pile, This is played at the Green Corn Feast is in August during the full moon.

This is for the benefit from the Father for what we have received. Use acorns, mostly locust seed. Rough side is black, smooth red.

Mohawks representing bear and turtle against the earth. The turtle and bear to sterilize the water to keep up the moss for the earth for all plants. God, He created everything to grow- if we had no moss, moss is like omen means fresh air If we did not have the turtles, if we did not have the bear, the world would burn up.

The end of the game, the end of the gathering.

There is human birth to each tribe.

Mohawks have own language.

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When you see sunfish, black spot on ear male, yellow, female. That sunfish in ocean has head, hands and hair like human person. Mohawks say the human body will come back. The boy's body will come back. This Indian custom--complexion has changed, getting lighter all the time.

Easter--First Sunday in March, get ready to plant.

They gather all seed and divide it equally.

In August, Thanksgiving for growing crops.

In November, thanks for gathering of crops, representing different colors of the clouds. The Indians celebrate on that for gathering.

In December, you call your relatives to come, you make feast, give thanks to God. You give this thanks to feed your relatives and neighbors for crops raised through the summer.

Now the last day of the year, they ring sleigh bells, anything that makes rattling. You take sack and

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go from neighbor to neighbor and put in sack what you receive. You trot all night. The New Year morning what they have received of that year last night to give to all neighbors and friends on New Year's Day. A New Years Feast lasts from noon until night then all shake hands and go home. To here is of Mohawks and Kaskaskias.

Explanation

They lived in tepee made of animals skins- buffalo and elk. They were round. Later after Columbus came they lived in wig-wams. Wigwam means adopted. Moses adopted back into this world. Wild people live in tepees. The boy who disappeared representing in the future people begin to understand Spirit coming back. Boy turned into fish.

This is representing white man, he so easy discouraged.

God he plant that between white man and Indian. This boy when they discover he disappear, God, He

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appoints that body to draw that blossom back, representing of God. He gave his only Begotten Son. When Christ he appointed twelve disciples. He disappeared one day when he was here on earth.

Coming of the Indian

Way out in far country on other side, ten thousand years ago- before white or Indian ever came to this country the Indian were all on far side, not a single soul in this North America. Birds, called wild pigeons, brought the Indian to this country. The Indian, they go by sign of the spirit, echo, it bounce back. They put old Indian, the oldest Indian in that village to guide all the noise on the air whatever that echo sound, that draw their attention, their movements.

One day the wild pigeon flew over the sea. The Indian one time think there no more dry land, that what he thought at first, until he discovered the wild pigeon flying over the sea. One day the old Indian lay on his

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back to review the movements of the pigeon. So he discovered the wild pigeon to go forward. He decided to go meet the pigeon. He made up his mind to call the village together, have a little powwow. He hollowed three or four different times, the village heard the sound of the old man hollowing to go and see the old man- what he have to say, now we all hear- what it shall be the news.

The old Indian says, "The bird coming from across that water, we go and meet the bird to see what the answer. It may be another world where the bird comes from. In ten days we all meet here again. We all decide what to do. We'll go meet this bird in ten days. Whatever your son brings-your daughter look after it cook it and sun-dry it.

They cooked it by campfire on sticks, it cooked- then sun dried the cooking so the food never be spoiled to keep good many weeks, months and years. The old ladies to go in a stream of water, in a valley break

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off the weeds and make them into strings. You take string and spindle it like a thread or twine. To make a sack, to make it water proof use honey, locust, beeswax for waterproof. The old ladies place cooking outfit in sack to be ready for trip.

Old men take logs, soft maple, scrape with flint or fire-rock. He scrapes first one way then he reverses the scraping till he burns out hollow as deep as wanted, make canoes.

The old man again on tenth day he hollows again. Now you are ready to make a trip, game sacks and canoes all completely finished- come on, my children. I appoint the strongest ones men and women to go meet the bird. In ten days time all the strongest women and men who be able to paddle the canoe. We have twelve canoes ready to make trip. To understand the rules so you all understand how to paddle your way across- day-time, sight by sight, night-time in row something like Stomp Dance- one by one, day-break you all come in front breast to breast- when night comes, you repeat all night long. The first canoe hollows, the second, the third, so on to the last canoe back, that to

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across at night.

The ten days up now all come to the shore, your canoes are ready, your food is all in place in canoe all pointed out who are the strongest to go overseas. All starts, watch your bird. Coming across, all keep your eyes on the birds coming across. We all start now. Everybody come, bid your relatives good-bye- we all going now. God will keep you until we meet again.

After we are started for four days and four nights, we went nicely. On the fifth night, the wind began to raise, high wind, high waves, white caps way out in blue seas. By and by one canoe began to fall according to wave drifted him to one side- when you hollow, it began to glance off, another one glance off, new four canoes drifting away on strong currents of the waves to keep straight sound with the other beats.

"Who-ee, Who-ee", until the twelve canoes answer one by one. The four canoes glanced off by themselves not in line with the eight and out of hearing by and by so the next morning the four canoes shifted back which way

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they had come from and were received home with a good life when discovered back home. The parents received their children home safe. This information was not yet learned, the answer of the bird the answer not knowing.

The eight canoes was lost and still going on, was as far as I could give the story of the trip. In the future, our brothers and sisters, In God we trust will bring back a good message.

In ten or fifteen years, they look, people, they discover movements, way out in the water, later on they discover the canoes return, been gone good many years. It was the same, our brothers and sisters returned to our fathers and mothers. They all shook hands to receive our brothers and sisters back. Then no sleep all night. They gave a message, the new world they discover. They have another pow-wow. Old Indian says, "Our sons and daughters bring back good news. We are thankful that wild pigeon found a new home for us. We glad to receive this message. Don't

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give up but push. Let us go where our children are. We must make more canoes, get ready, make more canoes and all your canoes made and your food laying all in sacks, we must move in the new world. Come on, let's go."

We all started in the sunrise. Sight by sight, night hour comes, all in a row, hollow, "Who-ee, Who-ee" to the end. Fifty canoes came across safely. All here in a country not a single soul, nothing but wild animals. We are glad plenty food. Now we safe.

In a great many years the Indians scattered over the country well satisfied.

So the village heard another sign, coming to us, by and by we may see what the visitor will turn, the knocks, the complexion white and black. The Indians were discouraged, they did not understand the meaning of complexion. Our great, great grandchildren may receive the story of the visitor coming in the future knocking, who is there?

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Now then, we are just about to receive another of the good messages. The person will be hung, then that complexion will be interpreted for the movements which God has pointed for us to see now.

When the bird is knocking, knocking on the dry limb, yellow hammer "kooch, kooch." That is the visitor coming closer, closer.

Our great grandchildren will understand of the good will that man be hung on the cross, He be the leader into this world. So now we found the blossoms in bloom- everlasting life, we find Christ to heal the nation.

Columbus discovered the Indian. Columbus told them that he would like to have deerhide for himself. They did not understand, they could not live on small deerhide. He took deerhide, made string and put it around a large piece of ground. That is how he got so large piece of land. Majority willing to give Columbus home. When Columbus went back and came back again, this time he brought hoes and axes. He gave hoes to the ladies

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and axes to the men. So the Indians did not know how to use them; the women got strings and tied them around their necks. The men tied the axes around their necks but Columbus explained how to use them, he took ax and made handle and show men how to use to cut trees with ax.

For ladies, made hoe handles and placed it in hoe and show the Indian woman how to plant seed and cut weeds with hoe. That how they came to be civilized.

About how they came to believe Christian life. Columbus was a Catholic. He taught them how to worship so the Indian began to understand, after Columbus had taught the Indian to worship but one God, one Son and Holy Ghost but now they see different and they began to unbelieve our Catholic Rules now in many ways. They believe now in good many ways to worship. That how we all scattered one church to another.

In the genuine old Indian time, it was difficult to get married. Had to go to uncle and aunt and get

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permit, then to my parents. My parents pick out the girl. The man's parents give the feast, public gathering, big pow-wow. If aunt living off distance, girl has to ride on her aunt's back. If aunt can't pack her, she can't get married. It too hard work, have to change.

Have white pony all decorated with different kinds of ribbons on manes and tails something like tassels. Then the beads was decorations. Ready now to be married, the lady rides the pony to her home that is to be. Aunt or uncle lead the pony. Feast last maybe one day, maybe a night.

Camp first day, dance that night, feast next day, dance that night, then for home that man had ready to take her.

Indian Burial

Way back, make hole in ground, put body in dressed in best suit, maybe buckskin, and decorated with beads.

Note: The fieldworker has written this interview as Peter McCoontz talked and it is so presented that the strength of Mr. McCoontz's wording may not be lost. - Ed.