

STAN, HENRY

INTERVIEW

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Lenna M. Rushing,  
Field Worker  
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Interview with Mr. Henry Stan.  
Born 1880. Stroud, Oklahoma.  
(Full Blood Shawnee Indian)

After the Shawnees had been removed to Oklahoma, they settled along Little River and in the Territory which is now Pottawatomie County.

The Shawnees were very poor, not like the other tribes who had money given them by the government. There were many in my family, and we all had to work, as did all the others in our tribe.

The Shawnees possess a happy carefree nature, which makes them very agreeable to work with. We lived in log cabins as a rule, and farmed. Our principal products were sweet potatoes, corn, and pumpkins. Squirrels and wild turkeys were about all we hunted, but there was an abundance of them. We drank river water.

Our tribe soon took up the stomp dance from the Creeks and Seminoles as a means of recreation. They would come from miles around just to attend one of these gatherings. There were no trails to speak of and they had to make their own over the sandhills.

There were four places where the stomp dances were held. One was on Old Man Charley Starr's allotment four

miles southeast of Shawnee. Another was on Little River fourteen miles south of Shawnee. Another was located at Sandhills, a settlement eleven miles northeast of Shawnee. The last was at Longhorn's place,

many fights, knifings, and a few killings took place at these stumps.

The white man's dress was as peculiar to us as ours was to him. They wore tight cotton pants, coats like the preachers wear, derbies, and bullhide shoes with huge buckles on them. Before the law came, everyone wore revolvers, too. These were still 30-30's, 32-30's, and 45's, all of which were long range guns so to be able to shoot deer. In those days everyone was a true marksman; they had to be.

All of these conditions existed before the agency at Shawnee existed. After the whites started pouring in (after the opening), the wild game diminished quickly. It wasn't particularly because they were killed out--it was more that they moved to a less thickly populated district.

One of the ceremonies peculiar to the Shawnees is bread dance, which takes place in the fall of the year.

It is a thanksgiving ceremony. The whole tribe came together for four days of singing, dancing, and feasting. On the last day every woman baked bread and brought it to the dance. At noon they feasted of the bread and some wild game. However, the feast consisted of bread mostly. Homage was done to the god of the harvest.

The older Indians predicted many of the changes which have taken place. They said that eventually there will be no Indians. They will work side by side with the white man. Many will intermarry with the whites, and become a race of mixed breeds. There will be wars. The Indians will forget their native tongue, and speak the white man's tongue entirely. They will be weak and helpless to feed and care for themselves. They will have to be cared for. All the ways they know will be gone, and their native means of livelihood will be taken from them.

All these prophecies have come true, and it has been sad to see. The white man has been the cause of the downfall of the morale and character of the Indians. I, myself, have no means of livelihood other than my old-age pension.