

STOVER, GOLD

INTERVIEW

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INTERVIEW.  
BIOGRAPHY FORM

Form A-(S-149)

4793. 535

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Augusta H. Custer.

This report made on (date) July 12, 1937. 1937

Name Gold Stover.

2. Post Office Address Geary, Oklahoma. Route 2.

3. Residence address (or location) Five miles north, two east; one and a half north, one-half east, Canadian County.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year 1887.

5. Place of birth Georgia.

6. Name of Father Joe Stover. Place of birth Georgia.

Other information about father Died in Okarche, Oklahoma 1929.

7. Name of Mother Bryant. Place of birth Georgia.

Other information about mother One-fourth Cherokee. Died when

Gold was two years old. He does not remember her.

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed; Refer to Manual for suggestions, subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and refer firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 9.

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Augusta H. Custer.

Interviewer.

July 12, 1937.

An Interview With Gold Stover.  
Route #2. Geary, Oklahoma.

Gold Stover was born in Georgia. His mother died when he was two years old and he does not remember her. His father, Joe Stover, married Lizzie Knight, and they had eight or nine children. He had one own brother and two own sisters. His father moved to Texas and later to Okarche, taking up a claim there in 1892. Gold has lived in Geary for forty-six years.

This is the story he told.

There were few settlers here when I came and those who were here had a hard time to live. The Government at one time asked the settlers if they wanted financial help, or transportation out of this state and many took advantage of the free transportation and went back to "the wife's folks".

Those who received wheat to plant often cooked it or ground in into flour and made bread. The railroad came as far as El Reno and the Chisholm Trail went northwest to Watonga. This was the road traveled by most everyone who went in wagons. Those on horseback took out across country in the direction in which they wanted to go.

I have seen a few large herds of cattle, of perhaps one thousand head, but these were not as large as some herds that came up the trail.

#### CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHOS.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians received rations once a week from the Government at Darlington. They would congregate and go in any kind of conveyance, and some would walk. They would go in any sort of conveyance and it would look as if all the Indians were leaving the country. But they would get their handout and then scatter out again. They would receive beans, soap, potatoes, onions, and meat. They did not care for anything except meat. The white settlers traded them out of their groceries.

#### ~~A DEATH BY LIGHTNING.~~

A young Cheyenne girl was sleeping in a teepee and during a storm the teepee was struck by lightning. They called her many times and as she did not answer, they were afraid to go in. When they did they found her dead. Some one made a rough box and then they were told to dig a big, big hole, and they did not get the hole deep enough for all her possessions.

There were about two wagon loads of things and these were dumped in the grave and covered with dirt. Her parents waited near the grave for three days and placed food there. Sometimes a dog would come along and eat the food and they would put out more, as they wanted to feed her spirit.

## WEDDING CUSTOM.

One custom of the Cheyenne and Arapahoes is for a young buck to hide in the weeds near a camp and if a young woman comes by and he can grab her and keep her three days, he may take her back to camp as his wife. Then he gives her father as many ponies as he can afford to give. The girl does not have much to say about it, but if she can escape from her captor during the three days he is trying to keep her <sup>hidden</sup>, she goes free.

## GIFT DANCE.

One of the customs of the Cheyennes and Arapahoes is to hold a Gift Dance. This is celebrated by giving blankets, guns, moccasins, horses, in fact, anything that they have. One man may receive several horses, and blankets but he is expected to give them to some one else, and when it is all

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over no one is any better off than when they began their dance. I have not heard of one of these dances for several years.

When I came here the Indians lived in teepees made of buffalo hides, and the clothes they wore are like the clothes white folks wear today, and that was very little, mostly a breech clout. The Darlington agency issued to the Indians blankets and shawls. They would wrap these around themselves and often had nothing else to wear unless it was made of buckskin.

The Indians would steal horses belonging to white men, and often cattle and it was very seldom that the settler ever got any of them back. They would not tell on each other. The only thing they feared was the soldiers at Fort Reno. ~~Often they would get painted up and put war paint on their ponies, get out tom toms and make every preparation for a raid on the white men, but some one would get word to the fort and the soldiers would ride out and the Indians would quiet down. That was after the Indians attacked the soldiers,~~ <sup>with</sup> and the first shots fired by the army there was not an Indian left on his horse.

The Cheyennes and Arapahoes wanted to make big camps, but the soldiers would not allow this, and they would have to scatter. The greater the number the more likely there was to be trouble.

The Indians make their paint from clay, which is some times brought in from other states.

They traded for guns from the white men, but when I came to Oklahoma they did their hunting with bows and arrows.

#### MEDICINE MEN.

One time many Indians had measles, in a camp near Darlington. The Medicine Man went and beat the tom toms, sang songs and gave them sweat baths, just as soon as they were ready to leave the sweat house they made a dash for the river and plunged into the cold water. Thirty-five of them died.

#### SWEAT HOUSE.

A sweat house is made by digging a hole about two feet deep and two feet in diameter. Posts are placed around this and canvas or blankets are placed over the posts so that it is close and no air can get in. Their rocks are heated

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and placed in the hole, water is poured on the hot rocks which causes a steam and the patient is placed in this sweat house until he is hot and perspires freely. Then often he is given a cold bath. Sweat baths are good but the cold water proved fatal to the measles cases.

BIRTH.

A Medicine Man would be called and he would go into the teepee with the woman. He would sing and beat the tom tom and just before the birth he would leave the mother alone and she would take care of herself and the baby. If she did not know how or was too sick, she would die. It was simply the survival of the fittest.

BURIALS.

When I first came to Oklahoma, the Indians would watch the person who was very ill, and when he began to take his last breaths they would wrap him tightly in a canvass and sew him up. By the time he was dead they had him well and securely wrapped, and would take the body and place it up in a large tree. There were larger trees in Oklahoma than there are now. They have been cut down for building logs.



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The white men would carry off the possessions of the dead Indians and then the Government began to try to get them to bury the dead. The first coffin issued to the Indians was new to them and they dug a hole about three feet deep and stood the coffin on end, leaving about three feet out of the ground. They had to have more instructions.

Red Bird of Watonga had a brother to die and after he was buried they led his horse to the grave and shot the horse, then they carried off the meat to eat. The saddle was a \$40.00 cowboy saddle and Red Bird said that some white man would carry it off so he took it himself, but he had to quit being a member of the tribe for years.

The graves were dug so shallow that when you were passing you could see clothing and smell the corpse, for a while until the skunks and small animals had devoured it.

#### PUPPY SOUP.

Indians are very fond of dogs, and they have a dainty dish when they can get a fat puppy and boil it and drink the soup. They also take a dog, tie a string around his neck and hang him up until he chokes to death, then they hold the

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body over a blaze until the hair is all singed off. The body is then placed on the hot ground, and covered with dirt and a fire is built over it and it is roasted until done. The intestines are the choice part of the roast. Roasted dogs are served at all special occasions.

## DANCES.

Indians worship the crow.

They put on a Crow Dance. This is done by one old Indian whose body has very little on, except paint. He holds a dead crow on a stick, and he will dance for rain. Medicine Men beat the tom toms and one will keep time with the skin of a rattle snake which has been filled with shot or small pebbles which rattles when the body moves.

Swapping Back was a noted Crow Dancer. He died a few years ago.

I think it was in 1894 that the Government refused to let the Indians have the Sun Dance, because of the common use of peyote. There was a severe drouth and the Indians wanted to dance for rain. The Government let them dance. Indians came from Minnesota, South Dakota and other places and there were many hundreds of dancers. They made many

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preparations and ate peyote, When the clouds were right they began to dance and were rewarded by a four day rain.

Peyote is a small bean and when the Indians ate it, they ate one and then another and the more they ate the longer the dream. I have been told that these dreams go back either one thousand years or forward the same length of time. I can give you names of several who can get, or have peyote.