

THOMPSON, JOHN. INTERVIEW

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Sac and Fox Indians
Baths--Sac and Fox.

THOMPSON, JOHN, INTERVIEW

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Field Worker: Lenna M. Rushing
April 27, 1937.

BIOGRAPHY OF Mr. John Thompson (Fullblood Sac and Fox)
P. O. #2, Depew, Okla.
9 mi., south, 1 mi., west of Depew.

BORN Iowa

PARENTS

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Me-do-de-sno-ke
III. SWEET-PA.

The old time medicine was made by the Indians of the
the Indians of Iowa. They were strong, healthy, and
able to withstand any kind of weather. One reason
why they were healthy was because they kept their
systems clean by taking sweet water. I am still
still healthy and strong, eye, to me, I am
sixty, because I have taken the sweet water since I
was a young man.

The Indians made their own medicine of the earth.
They were quite simply constructed. Eight or nine
slender poles of green wood six to eight feet high
were used to make the frame. These were set in the
ground opposite each other and at equal distances
to make a circle about a yard and a half in diameter.
Then the poles were bent across each other till they
nearly reached the other side, and tied with slippery
elm strings. (To make these strings, the bark from
the elm is peeled off, and soaked in water to soften.

They are usually one and a half to two inches wide.

When they are tied and dried, they shrink and make a very tight fastening). When this was done the

whole circular house stood only four feet high, just tall enough for a man to sit in comfortably.

The frame was covered with buffalo hide so that it was nearly air-tight. A small opening was usually available in case a person should faint or succumb to the heat.

Before the frame was made a pit eighteen inches deep and fifteen in diameter was dug in the center of the area. This was to receive the hot stones and water.

Four hard rocks which wouldn't break in the fire, preferably blue limestone or granite, were heated red hot. These stones were slightly smaller than the pit so as to fit in easily. They were carried to the pit with sticks and placed in there, one on top of the other. A wooden bowl full of water was also placed in the inclosure. The Indian then stripped and went inside. He sat down and accustomed himself to the heat for a few minutes, then he poured about a cupful of water on the hot rocks, and the steam shot up.

In a few minutes another cupful of water was poured on. After he got used to it he poured the whole bowl of water on and the steam filled the bath so that one could hardly see. The sweat poured off, and sometimes he would nearly collapse. The steam went up his nostrils and seemed to go even into his brain. The ear drums felt like they would burst. As the steam kept up its good work, circulating up, out, and down from the pit in the center. When he had enough, he went out and jumped in the river. (The bath was always constructed near a river or spring. Ours is near the spring on my place.) After a brisk rub-down he was ready to don his clothes.

The Indians took the bath on an average of about once a week, but this was not a set rule. This kept the Indian clean from his scalp on down to his toes. I really believe that is one reason he had such lustrous black hair.