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ARNOTE, TAAFFE ANNIE.

INTERVIEW

12706

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

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ARNOTE, TAAFFE ANNIE

INTERVIEW

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Field Worker's name Hazel B. Greene,

This report made on (date) January 18, 1938 193

1. Name Annie Taaffe - Arnote
2. Post Office Address Antlers, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) _____
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 27 Year 1871
5. Place of birth About nine miles north of Lanos Port, Arkansas,
on Red River in Arkansas.
6. Name of Father George Taaffe Place of birth Arkansas
7. Name of Mother Freedonia Harris Place of birth Ultimathule,
Indian Territory, Choctaw
Other information about mother Nation.

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 _____.

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Hazel B. Greene,
Journalist,
January 18, 1938.

Interview with
Annie Taafe - Arnote,
Antlers, Oklahoma.

I was born December 27, 1871, about nine miles north of Lanes Port, Arkansas. Lanes Port was on Red River.

My father, George Taafe, was an Irishman who looked like an Indian. He had dark hair, dark eyes and skin. Nearly any one would take him for a quarter-breed Indian. He was raised in Arkansas.

My mother was blue-eyed and red haired and looked like she had not a drop of Indian blood in her, yet she was about one-fourth Choctaw. Her father was Lorenzo Harris, a white man. He was a North Carolinian and married red-haired, blue-eyed Elizabeth Pitchlynn, commonly called Betsy. She was a half-breed Choctaw. Then her father was John Pitchlynn, a retired English Naval officer, who came to Mississippi and fell in with the Choctaws and fell in love with Sophia Folsom, whom I have always understood was a full-blood Choctaw. They

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were married in Mississippi, as were also my grandparents, Lorenzo Harris and Betsy Pitchlynn. I have been told that Betsy Pitchlynn Harris was a bride of about eighteen when the Indians came over the "Trail of Tears", and that she and her husband settled just inside the Indian Territory, near Ultimathule, Arkansas, which is right on the line. But my grandfather's property was all in the Indian Territory. He owned and operated a big general merchandise store, gin and a big plantation. He had a partner in his store named McClain.

Grandfather Harris was a well educated man and Betsy Pitchlynn came of a very wealthy and aristocratic family on the Folsom side. She was a college graduate herself. The Pitchlynn's, Harris's and Folsom's all kept governesses for their children.

At Ultimathule, my grandfather Harris built a school house at his own expense and had his children's governess teach the children of the neighborhood as well as his own and he paid her.

My mother was taught at home by a governess as was the custom of the Harris, Pitchlynn and Folsom families

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until she was ready to go to college, then she was sent to college at McMinnville, Tennessee, then to old Ward College, now Ward-Belmont, at Nashville, Tennessee, where she was graduated.

Mother taught us children at home. I never entered a schoolroom until I was thirteen years old, then I was sent to a convent at Texarkana and I studied there until I was competent to teach, then I began attending normal schools.

I remember attending a normal school at Fort Scott, Kansas. It was customary for negroes to attend schools with white people in Kansas, but a Virginian named Andrews came to Fort Scott and took charge of that Normal College and prohibited negroes from attending. I think even the Kansans were appreciative of that. He built up the biggest enrollment, in the three or four years that he was there, in the whole history of the college.

I was sent to the convent in Arkansas after the death of my mother. She and my father are both buried in the old Catholic cemetery, at Rocky Comfort, almost in the shadow of the old Catholic Church, that my father's father built

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away before the Civil War.

The Howells ~~were~~ aristocrats, also, and related to the Harrises and Pitchlyns, and they all had big plantations and lovely homes around Eagletown and Ultimathule. Grandfather Harris' house was somewhere not far from Ultimathule, though I don't know exactly where, and I have been told that his home was burned during the Civil War, and that for years the chimneys stood there and the place was known as the "Chimneys". The "Chimneys" was a landmark.

Henry Harris was an uncle of mine and he inherited that benevolent disposition that was so strong in my grandfather, Lorenzo Harris. He was always taking orphans into his home. He was a good man and believed in God and in the divinity of Christ, but could never seem to anchor himself to any one church. Henry Harris believed the best of mankind. He was so eager to do good that sometimes he went to the extreme but he had his confidence in mankind rudely shaken when he gave \$10,000 to an old missionary to the Indians. He thought he was

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giving it to further the cause of Christianity among the Indians, and was rudely awakened when the old man quit preaching and put in a stock of merchandise with that \$10,000.00. I believe that one reason that the old man did not prosper was because he had misappropriated that money. He never did prosper.

The noted Peter Pitchlynn, leader among the Choctaw Indians, the one who helped to write the Constitution of the Choctaw Nation, was an uncle of my mother, and a brother to Betsy Pitchlynn - Harris. He, for years, resided in Washington, D. C., most of the time but was ever on the alert for anything that was to the interest of the Choctaws and was always their friend and adviser.

He died in Washington and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. He was Principal Chief of the Choctaws sometime in the 1860's. I had innumerable letters from him to the family. I lost them all with many priceless records when my home burned.

Peter Pitchlynn's daughter, Sophia Pitchlynn, still resides in Washington. She is well up in her eighties.

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She was his child by a very late-in-life marriage.

She is a confirmed spinster, also a chicken fancier, yet she is very public spirited and keeps up with current events and affairs of importance, especially those of the Choctaw people.

Peter Pitchlynn was of a pacific nature and when the Civil War broke out, he wanted to keep the Choctaw Indians neutral and so instilled his ideas of pacific neutrality into the head of my grandfather, Lorenzo Harris, that he, too, advocated neutrality for the Choctaws and took advantage of every opportunity to so express himself and was doing so at a Fourth of July picnic, when a nephew of his shot and killed him.

Charles Dickens once wrote an article about the nobility of Peter Pitchlynn.

My father, George Taaffe, believed that everyone owed it to his fellow man to assist in bringing out the best there was in everyone and not to place temptations of wrongdoing in the way of the weak, who might take advantage of opportunities to commit crimes. For instance,

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he owned and operated a large farm and employed many negroes. Any one of them could come and ask him for a side of meat, a bushel of bread corn or a bucket of molasses and they would get it but they must not steal from him. He locked his smoke house and corn crib, not entirely through distrust of the negroes, but so, as not to put temptation in their way. He held that if he did put temptation in their way, he was largely responsible for the downfall of those who did steal from him. Very few ever stole from him.

Our home place was about three miles north of the present town of Lawton in the Choctaw Nation. That is where I was reared.

I have the autograph album that belonged to my mother when she was a girl in college and after she returned home. I can tell that some of these autographs were written by classmates and some were written by prominent men of the Choctaw Nation. Among them were the Reverend Mr. James Dyer, Cyrus Byington, Jefferson Gardner and Peter Pitchlynn. Some of the beautiful verses are dated 1862 and some 1864 and the surprising

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thing is the unfaded appearance of the ink and pencil writing and flowers that they evidently colored. When my mother died someone threw that old album in the wood box and I rescued it.

James Dyer, besides being a Representative in the Choctaw Council, was a Confederate soldier, and too, he served as a minister at Eagletown up to his death about 1921.

My husband, A. J. Arnote, was a young attorney from Missouri. He first settled at old Shawneetown. The court was there then and when the railroad was built from Monett, Missouri, to Paris, Texas, Antlers was built and became a court town and he moved to Antlers. I was teaching school when I met and was married to him. He was the first county attorney of Pushmataha after Statehood. Our daughter, Suzanne Arnote, is a writer on staff of the Daily Oklahoman. She attended Oklahoma University. All of my children attended some kind of a college.

A sister of mine attended a little college in Paris, Texas, called Jones' Academy.