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BANKS, DICK.

SEVENTH INTERVIEW

10369

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma
 BANKS, DICK. SEVENTH INTERVIEW #10369

Field Worker's name Bessie L. Thomas

This report made on (date) March 29, 1938

1. Name Dick Banks

2. Post Office Address Marlow, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

5. Place of birth _____

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about mother _____

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 6.

BANKS, DICK

SEVENTH INTERVIEW

#10369

Bessie L. Thomas
Investigator
March 29, 1938.

Interview with Dick Banks,
Marlow, Oklahoma.

My association with, and what I know personally of, the Indian, his business deals, his mode of living, his religion and friendship with me, through forty-two years, would fill a good-sized book.

In business dealings I have sold them merchandise, bought and resold to them, horses, cattle, milch cows and large work horses.

My best beloved Indian friend was Quanah Parker who gave me a home for over a year, when I first came to the Indian country and when only a young boy of seventeen.

After I grew up and was in business for myself, I have had these Indian friends on numerous exhibitions, at home and in some of the larger cities throughout the United States, having produced a motion, silent picture, taken from an Indian Legend that was told to me in my youth by an old Comanche Indian Chief. This Legend was based on facts of more than a century ago.

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I've always found the Red man ready to do his part in a business way, or acting for the mere sport of acting before the camera or before a thronged audience, and the thought of drawing good pay for their acting would spur them on harder than ever to please their director. As individuals they seemed to live the part they were trying to portray.

I have always found them to be honest people at heart. If one told you anything pertaining to the happenings of the day or that he would do certain things from a business standpoint, I had no fears nor doubted his word. I've yet to be wholly deceived by them. They are a race of people endowed and trained with a wonderful knowledge of the past, being able to explain the happenings at the time in question, in the minutest detail, giving you a mental picture so clear and concise that you sometimes think that you might have been present; equally, if not a clearer conception than our made-up written ideas of explanation. This of course is in the education of the mind to register and be able to transmit a true conception of the distant past, from father to son, up to the present time.

The legend as to the origination of the Comanche tribe of Indians, to some extent, crosses our historic records of them.

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The word Comanche is derived from the Spanish word Comanche, serpent or snake. They were a powerful band of people who inhabited a strip of country from northern Old Mexico to the Rocky Mountains several hundred years ago. This comprised the western part of Texas, part of Oklahoma, Kansas and New Mexico. This was probably three hundred years ago. Their chief at that time conceived the idea of emigrating to the Pacific Northwest, in hope of bettering their condition. After several days journey in that direction, and having crossed the timber line, a number of this chief's followers became very dissatisfied. Seeing no wood and nothing but buffalo chips for fuel, going into a country where northerns and snow always came from, they had a premonition that perchance they would all freeze and perish, not being able to hunt for game and not having any fuel with which to build a fire.

The wise old chief and leader halted the procession, called a council of all his wise men and rulers in an effort to overcome their fears. But their minds being fully made up that they were going to retrace their footsteps back to their

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homeland, the old chief saw that to ask them to go further into this barren northland would be folly and probably cause bloodshed. But he became angry with them and reluctantly told them they reminded him of a snake backing up in its tracks. From that day, the universal sign language that has been used down through the centuries is the sign known to all western tribes of Indians, or Comanches, as "Snake going backwards".

There were about five thousand Comanches that gladly returned to their familiar haunts. However, some followed their gaunt leader into the northwest, the land of snow, ice and cold. The Comanches had possession of vast domains for years to come^{and} the increase in their tribe amounted to several thousand people. They negotiated and carried on trade relations with the Indians of Old Mexico for such things as they used at that period, steel tomahawks and bowie knives.

The constant association of the Comanches with the Mexican people and other tribes of Indians accounts today for the mixed race that they are. The majority of them are more Mexican than they are Comanche Indian.

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The food of these people consisted principally of buffalo, deer and antelope meats. They would jerk and dry quantities of these meats for winter use, hanging the strips about twelve feet high, where the flies would not bother it. After a glaze was formed by the hot sun, the meat was then lowered and drying completed. Some of the dried meat was pounded up very finely in mortars made of large stones, or the butt of a tree hollowed out. This was eaten raw, mixed with nuts, such as pecans, walnuts and pinions. Or, the meat sometimes was cooked in pots for an hour or more with dried corn which makes a very delicious meal. The suet or fat of a beef was always separated and cured separately. The loin tallow and that around the kidneys, was, and is to this day, eaten in the raw state. It tastes something like and no doubt gives the same food value as our butter does today.

The Indian lived on a more economical basis than any race under the sun. He only took of the game as he really needed it, nothing went to waste, and all the meat was consumed for food. The bones were used for a number of purposes, for knives, forks, spoons, ornaments for their moccasins, belts,

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and scrapers, which they used to tan the hides. All the hides were tanned on one side, the flesh side, and for moccasins and clothing they were tanned on both sides. They had a process for this work that was equal to our best tanneries today. Seemingly they got more life and wear out of their clothing, shoes and moccasins, than we get out of our modern wearing apparel. The thread they used was taken from a large ligament that extends from the head of buffalo, or cattle, to their shoulders. This ligament, when properly cured, unravels into threads, any size desired and from one-half to one yard in length. From a standpoint of endurance this sinew is equal, if not better, than our thread of today. In doing bead work, this sinew might become worn and lose one small bead, but the balance of the beads would be intact.

The Comanches are given credit for having more pretty designs and doing finer and nicer bead work than any other tribe.

During my years of association with the Comanche tribe of Indians I have never had any difficulties with them. I speak their language and know them all personally and really appreciate the Indian for what he is.