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BANKS, LENA R.

KIOWA INDIAN LEGEND.

10617

1886

LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

1007

BANKS, LENA R.

KIOWA INDIAN LEGEND.

10617.

Field worker's name Bessie L. Thomas.

This report made on (date) April 21, 1938. 1938

1. This legend was secured from (name) Mrs. Lena R. Banks.

Address Cache, Oklahoma.

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe _____

2. Origin and history of legend or story This story was told to Mrs. Banks by a full blood Kiowa.

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____

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Bessie Thomas,
Investigator,
April 21, 1938.

KIOWA INDIAN LEGEND.

There lived in southwestern Oklahoma Territory and down near the Texas border close to the Rio Grande Valley, a family of Kiowa Indians. The husband and father, White Feather, had been for many years chief of the tribe in this particular Kiowa village where hundreds of his kinfolk lived. They were a very peaceful band, going on raids only when wanting food and when buffalo and antelope became scarce, in their own part of the country.

White Feather had a little girl, Almira, meaning Princess, who as a child was pretty with coal-black hair and eyes. And when she grew up, was very beautiful with an olive complexion, pretty white teeth. She developed young, as do girls of the Indian and Latin, or Semi-tropical countries. She was tall and stately; with a full rounded bust, and walked like a Queen. She was beloved by everyone in the tribe as she always had a pleasant smile for everyone who spoke to her.

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When Almira became fifteen, she fell madly in love with a young brave in the tribe and asked her father if they could wed. Her father liked this young man, but told his daughter she was too young to marry and for her to wait another year and then he would give his consent. So this beautiful girl waited patiently until the year was up with happiness and love in her heart for the boy who loved her.

Then again she approached her father in regard to her marrying but this time the father told her she could not marry the boy of her choice until he had performed some deed, which, in the eyes of the father would make him worthy of his daughter. This done, together the two young folk went to this chief, White Feather, and asked permission to marry. Again he refused, asking the young man to perform another deed of valor.

The young people thought they had waited long enough, so that night they left camp each riding a spotted pinto pony and set out across the prairie to go to another Kiowa camp in northwest Oklahoma Territory. They rode

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all night for fear their absence might be discovered before morning.

The white cattlemen of south central Oklahoma Territory had been losing stock for some time and thought the Indians had been stealing the cows and young calves from their herds, but could never catch them in the act. For days, a young cowboy had been sent out each day to ride the range and look for possible Indian thieves in the act of stealing cattle with instructions to ride back to the ranch and give the alarm if he spied an Indian anywhere near the herd. On this particular day the cowboy saw two horseback riders afar off coming his way, but could not at first distinguish if they were white people or Indians. He hid behind a mesquite bush and watched until the riders came close enough so that he could tell and saw that they were Indians.

He stayed hidden and watched to see what they were going to do. They rode on paying no attention to the herd but the cowboy, ^{thought} that this would be a good chance to get revenge for some of the missing cattle so he raised his rifle and fired. The Indian youth toppled from his

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did
horse and not get up and the horse also lay still. At the crack of the gun the pony Almira was riding bolted and being overcome with fear at seeing her lover killed, she did not try to stop her horse but let him run as fast as he would go. She was soon out of sight of the cowboy, but he had not fired at her.

After running about a mile, Almira decided to check her horse and try and decide what to do. Night was coming on and she knew there were no camps near where she was and she was afraid of the vastness of the plains. Just before she could stop her horse, he stumbled in a prairie dog hole, breaking his leg, and throwing Almira clear where she lay for several hours unconscious. When she came to, night had fallen but by the light of the moon she saw a clump of mesquite bushes for which she made hoping to get shelter under them for the night. Taking her blanket from the horse she raked together a few dry leaves for a bed and rolled up in the blanket, with a prayer on her lips that the wild animals would not harm her during the night.

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Here she was out here alone on the great prairie, her lover and his horse dead, her horse with a broken leg and miles from any human habitation, Indian or white. At first she could not go to sleep, from mourning over the loss of her lover and her own predicament but finally from worry and exhaustion she fell asleep. Sometime during the night she was awakened by she knew not what and sitting bolt upright she saw in the darkness before dawn, two big, round eyes glaring at her. In terror, she cried out, and the eyes disappeared. Soon it was dawn and she saw the tracks of some wild animal near where she had made her bed for the night.

She arose, folded up her blanket and started out on foot toward the northwest in the direction of the Kiowa camp, which she and her lover had been making for. For days this girl traveled on foot, seeing no living human, and making her bed at night on the ground under what little shelter she could find. Each morning she would find the same kind of tracks, near where she slept that she had seen the first night. She had no food during the day

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except what few berries and cactus fruit she could find and very little water, as most of the creeks were dry.

Soon her moccasins were worn out and she walked bare-foot over the hot, dry ground, rocks and grass roots, until her feet were sore and bleeding, and she could go no farther. So she lay down that night and prayed that she might die, feeling that she had nothing more to live for. The brave young boy she had loved so dearly was dead and she had disobeyed her father and thought she would not dare to return home.

During the night Almira saw again the two round, glaring eyes staring at her, but was too weak and too exhausted to cry out so she lay very still. Soon the eyes began to move, coming closer to her. In terror she watched and soon something touched the sole of one foot, something wet like a tongue, moved across one foot then the other and she knew some wild animal was licking the sole of her sore foot. Soon the animal was gone and she fell into a peaceful sleep, dreaming of her lover.

When morning came, she was too weak to get up but as she raised her head she found lying by her side, a

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piece of raw meat. She began to eat ravenously, but decided she had better save some for another meal.

Being an Indian, she knew, of course, how to prepare meat for drying so she tore this small piece of meat into strips and hung it on some low bushes near her head. She had no water to drink all day and by night was delirious from thirst and fever. Her feet hurt and her fever was raging. She was awakened along in the night by soft foot pads near by and looking up she again saw the eyes and this time was not afraid. The animal again licked the soles of her feet, as it had been doing every night and when she began to talk to it, came up to her head and she reached out and patted it. It was a big, grey timber wolf, or lobo.

It went away, soon returning with another piece of meat, which it dropped close to the girl's head and this night it rained. Almira capped her hands, catching in them as much water as she could, and drank freely. Then slept soundly the latter part of the night. Each night the wolf would lick her feet and bring her food until she was strong enough to get up. Then one day after her feet

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were healed, she set out once more for the camp in north-west Oklahoma Territory, the big, grey wolf following her at a distance, as if to protect her and now she was not afraid of it.

Almira kept traveling until she reached the Kiowa camp in safety, and there she lived many years until her father found her and took her back home.

The wolf is worshipped by the Indians as a sort of Deity, for they say it talks to them and brings them good luck.