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BAPTISTE, JANE

INTERVIEW

#12238

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

Field worker's name Minnie Lee Burns

This report made on (date) November 22 1937

1. This legend was  
learned from (name) Mrs. Jane Baptiste

Address Miami, Oklahoma, General Delivery

This person is (race or family) White, Negro, Indian,

if Indian, give tribe Kaskaskia

2. Origin and history of legend or story From memory

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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Nannie Lee Burns  
Investigator  
November 22, 1937.

Interview with Mrs. Jane Baptist  
Miami, Oklahoma.

My father was Lewis Paschall of French and Kas-  
kaskia descent, born in Ohio. My mother was Sarah Ellen  
Hill, a white woman who was born and reared in Missouri.  
I was born in Miami County, Kansas, August 8, 1861.

Kansas Life.

Living in Kansas we had a nice home which was a  
frame house and we were comfortably fixed, but Father died  
when I was very small and soon Mother married again, this  
time a white man, named John Smith and he persuaded Mother  
to sell our home and move farther west in Kansas. They  
settled near Fredonia, Kansas, in 1869.

I was four years old when she married John Smith and  
until we moved, I attended school at Paola and later such  
schools as were near our Fredonia home. But, as my half-  
brothers, two of them, and three half-sisters grew up, I had  
enough more work to do so later did not get to attend  
school so regularly.

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Move to the Indian Country.

When I was fourteen, in the year of 1875, the folk decided that they would bring me to the Indian country and they could live on my land that I would get here. They loaded our things into wagons and, driving a herd of Hereford cattle, they set out. It rained every day and we were a week on the road. We finally reached our old friends and neighbors, some of whom were living around Peoria. We stayed for a few days with the Peter Labadie family. We stayed here until my step-father could rent a place. He rented from Ed Black, then the Second Chief of the Peoria Tribe.

Our house was a three-room box house with small box outbuildings on the edge of the timber south of Peoria and about a quarter and a half quarter south of where Ed Black lived. Our cattle took the Texas fever and all but one cow died. In two years, my mother purchased from Ed Black the buildings where we lived and his claim to the land and later I filed on it and we continued to make it our home.

Ed Black.

Ed Black was, I think, an orphan and Peoria Baptiste, the Chief, took him and sent him to school, intending him

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for the priesthood, but when Black had received his education, he declined to become a priest, and later became the Second Chief of the tribe under Peoria Baptiste and after Baptiste's death, he became First Chief.

Peoria Baptiste was a man of little education though very shrewd and a good business man. He found Black of much use to him in affairs pertaining to the business of the tribe and depended largely upon him in his later years.

Black lived in a log house of three rooms built east and west and on the south was a shed room. The building was single story and had a large fireplace.

There was a big spring under the hill near the house. The house was located on the hill above the old Peoria school-house.

#### School Days.

I started to school again at the Old Peoria school-house. George Lindley was our teacher. He had peculiar eyes but he could see pretty well. Our next teacher was Mr. Laughlin and he and John Harris were always fighting. One day the girls behind me were talking and said something

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to me and he accused me of talking and slapped me and I hit him over the head with my book and he told me to take my books and go home, but I did not go.

I quit school because I was the eldest at home and my step-father was not well and I had much work to do. Memories that linger around those old school-days, are of times when the creek was up and the boys would carry us girls across and when the snow was deep they would go ahead single file and break a road for the girls.

Another thing I remember while I was going to school there, the Modocs were being kept here and they would come to school and sit in the room for hours and watch and not say a word. Most of them wore civilian clothes and shoes but some of the older ones wore leggins, moccasins and blankets. They were not guarded and were allowed to go where they chose. They would come to the house and trade Mother beans and other things they were allowed for eats for fresh vegetables, eggs, butter, chickens, etc.

The Modocs lived in tents. They were brought in here late in the year and were moved to their new homes the next fall. This place not being their home, they did not attempt

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to farm and during the summer spent much of their time fishing in Spring River. There were lots of red horse fish in the river and the MODOCS had a peculiar way of fishing. I have often watched them. A MODOC would take a pole that had a hook in a split in the end of the pole and he would wade in and work this pole back and forth until he had hooked a fish. They were camped east of Peoria on the Jim Charlie place near the Big-Knife Ford. They held no dances while they were here but they did have church. This was held in a big tent in their village.

#### The Poncas.

The Poncas were quite different. There were many more of them, in fact a whole tribe. They were guarded by the soldiers who had their buildings on the north side of Hunt Hill, now known as the Abrams Hill. The Commissary was the largest building, it was about sixty feet long, I should think. There were other smaller buildings for the soldiers and their horses and mules. They rode horses but they drove mules to their wagons and they brought the supplies and rations to the Commissary across the prairie in large wagons drawn sometimes by two and three mule teams.



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Baxter Springs was then the nearest railroad point but quantities of their supplies were hauled from points farther away.

I have attended many dances given by the soldiers in the Commissary. There was a platform at one end and the captain, or the officer in command then would stand on this platform and we would have to salute him before every dance. They sometimes had two fiddles and sometimes an orchestra.

The Poncas had horses and they farmed while they were here. They made one crop and they were taken away before the second crop was gathered and the Quapaws on whose land they were held got the crop. This land was near Spring River. They had some dances of their own while they were here. I attended one that they called a Warrior Dance and I did not care to attend another.

When the young men have reached a certain age, they are given chances to prove themselves and then to be classed as warriors and then they do not have to work. Hooks are attached to lines from a pole. The hook at the end of the line is then thrust through their skin on their backs and then

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if they have the courage and endurance to pull on this until the skin breaks and they are loosed from the hook they become warriors. This is accompanied by dancing, music and a feast is given for the newly made warriors.

The soldiers wore blue uniforms with brass buttons and had red stripes down the legs of their trousers. These dances at the Commissary would often last all night and we would dance until daylight.

The custom of the Ponca was then to bury the dead above the ground in a sitting position and then to build around them and to keep them in a sitting position by putting trees and rocks around. The soldiers furnished them with coffins here, but they could not get them to put the bodies in them and then to put the lid on and fasten it. Instead, they would set the body in the coffin and then build around it.

While they were here a chief died and they arranged him in the sitting position and then built a house of rocks around and over him and left an opening in one end. In this opening daily, for a long time, members of the tribe would place food for him on his journey to the Happy Hunting Ground.

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After they were gone and Mr. Abrams chose this hill on which to make his home, he had the bones all gathered and buried on the north side of the hill and the site is marked today by the trees that have grown up on the site.

The Poncas lived in tents while they were here. I think the Government intended settling them here as so many of the Quapaws were gone from their country and were staying with their friends, the Osages, but the Quapaws here fought the plan of the Poncas being settled in their midst, so finally the Government moved them to their present home farther west.

#### Marriage.

I married Jay Myers, a white man and a carpenter who came with the soldiers. We had one child, Lottie Lewis. When my child was very small Mr. Myers left me and went away, so I had to leave my little boy with Mother and go to work for the neighbors.

After a while I married Charles James Baptiste who was a son of Teoria Baptiste, the Peoria Chief who had passed on before our marriage.

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Peoria Baptiste had been married twice. By the first wife he had one daughter, Elizabeth, who was educated in the Catholic schools of Saint Louis. By the second marriage there were four children; Charles, my husband, was born in 1866 at Paola, Kansas; a sister, Amanda, who died when she was eighteen, and the other two children by this marriage, Lizzie and James, died when they were small. Charles was sent first to school at Peoria and later was sent by his father to Haskell. We went to live on Charles' place one quarter east of the new Peoria school house where he had a nice two story frame house. Here on his place we lived and here fourteen years ago the 23rd of September he died. We never had any children.

My husband never rose in the tribal government as might have been expected, for the reason that Ed Black who had been educated by his father became his assistant as Second Chief and after my father-in-law's death became the Principal Chief. Ed Black had for so many years been Father's assistant that my husband looked on him as his elder brother and when anything of any importance came up he would say, "I will go ask Ed".