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BARNARD, LENA FINLEY

INTERVIEW

#12242

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma
BARNARD, LENA FINLEY. INTERVIEW. #12242.

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Field Worker's name Mary D. Dorward,

This report made on (date) November 17 1937

1. Name Lena Finley Barnard,

2. Post Office Address Tulsa, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 1311 South Baltimore,

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 26 Year 1888

5. Place of birth Ottawa County, Oklahoma.

6. Name of Father George Finley. Place of birth Kansas

Other information about father Last full blood Piankashaw Indian.

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about mother White.

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 Fourteen.

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Mary D. Dorward,
Investigator.
November 17, 1937.

Interview with Lena Finley Barnard,
1311 South Baltimore, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Lena Finley Barnard is the daughter of the late George Finley, last full blood Piankashaw Indian. Mrs. Barnard, together with her children and several cousins, constitute the last of the Piankashaws.

The Piankashaws (pronounced Pyan'ga shaw) was one of five tribes under the Peorias; namely, the Peorias, Piankashaws, Kaskaskias, Miamis, and Weas* (pronounced Wee'ah), all of whom came from the region of the Great Lakes, the Piankashaws having been in Indiana. The Peorias all were agricultural peace-loving people who had been preyed upon by warlike tribes, particularly the Iroquois, until they had been greatly diminished in numbers.

Some time near the middle of the nineteenth century all the Peorias were moved by the Government from the Great Lakes region to Missouri; to Kansas about 1852;

* Mrs. Esta Beaver Pope of Muskogee is a Wea.

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then about 1876 to Indian Territory where, in exchange for their lands in Kansas, they were given lands among the Quapaws, in the extreme northeast part of the Territory in what is now Ottawa County near Miami.

The Peorias had been closely associated with the French in their explorations around the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi because the tribe names are of French origin. The name Miami is derived from meamea, meaning selfish; Kaskaskia means katy-did; Piankashaws means separate from; Peoria signifies moving about as a wild fire which the wind blows in one direction one day and the next day blows back, evidently meaning a roving band. French Catholics established missions among the tribes of the Peorias in Indiana and Illinois and many Indians took Orders. The old cemeteries in those states have graves of Indians who took the Orders.

My father was born somewhere in the fifties, about the time the Peorias were moved to Kansas. His meager

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schooling was received in a school built for the Peorias, which is still standing. It is in the middle of a road about fourteen or fifteen miles northeast of Miami, the first school erected in that vicinity.

Father was very unwilling to start to school, and it seems his parents had not compelled him to go. One day, however, he was passing the school and saw some of the other boys out playing. They said to him, "Why don't you come? It's lots of fun", so after that he was willing to go. The day he started he went with another boy and when they came to the door of the school they were afraid to go in. They didn't want to knock and they began to wish they hadn't come. They finally decided to wait outside there until someone should come out, so there they stood in the cold until someone came out and took them inside.

It was difficult at first because he knew only Indian language while the teacher spoke only English and knew no Indian. He used to tell an amusing incident

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about a little Indian girl who was just starting. The teacher began by teaching the abc's and was trying to get the little girl to say the letter A. The child was, it seems, quite stubborn and would say nothing for the teacher. The letter A meant nothing to her so she would say nothing to the teacher, but would turn to the rest of the school and say, "I don't know anything about that A", forced to speak the letter itself because there was no Indian word for it.

Up to the time he went to school Father had had no name except his Indian name which meant as nearly as I can translate it to go out and see where the storm passed over, or the path of a storm. It was necessary in school for brothers and sisters to be distinguished from others and the teacher could do nothing with the Indian names, so, a cousin having been given the name of John Finley, they named Father George Finley then gave all his brothers and sisters the same family name.

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As nearly as he could figure it, Father attended school only about six months. He remembered that he had about five or six report cards and if they were given out every month he must have been in school about six months. That was all the schooling he ever had but he was always eager to study and improve his education and if he heard a new word he would find out what it meant and use it.

Father served as Indian police for the Quapaw reservation for four or five years between 1890 and 1895. He told many amusing incidents that happened then. One was about a white family which had gotten itself adopted by the Quapaws by illegal means through the influence of powerful friends and had been given possession of certain lands. The police had been ordered to dispossess them but each time such an attempt was made the Wades, for that was the name of the white family, would speed over into Missouri, their land being quite close to the Missouri line and in Missouri they were

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out of the jurisdiction of the police. The police tried many times to dispossess them but never succeeded and through their friends, the Wades were allowed to keep their lands. I still have Father's belt that he wore as policeman and my brother has his gun.

Father was an expert horseman and at one time traveled with a band of Indians as a bareback rider with Sells Brothers Circus. He at one time was elected chief of the Piankashaws but the man who was already chief, a friend of Father's, had certain work planned for the tribe that he was desirous of carrying out himself so Father relinquished his right to become chief in favor of his friend and as that was the last time the Piankashaws elected a chief, Father never got to serve in that office.

Father often served as interpreter for the Government. He also was frequently called in for consultation in establishing claims when the allotments were being

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made. Father had made it a practice to keep records of important dates such as births, marriages, and deaths, together with an accurate account of the persons concerned, not only of his own family but of friends as well and as there were no official records kept of such things by the Government or the tribe, his records were very often consulted by the Government officials. The Government finally put him on the payroll and paid him for his time when he was giving such information. He also furnished information for the Government concerning the history of the Piankashaws and for this also he was paid. He made several trips to Washington, D.C., in the interests of the Piankashaws.

Father's father was a medicine man and knew how to prepare remedies from herbs. The only ones I remember his telling about were: mullen for kidney trouble, calamus root for colds, and black root for colds.

I have heard Father say that, speaking of all the Peorias as lovers of peace, he never heard his father speak of a war in which they had engaged.

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I was born June 26, 1888, at the old homestead in what is now Ottawa County and adjoining the town of Miami on the northwest. My first schooling - and my only free schooling, incidentally - was at a mission which had been established by the Catholics among the Quapaws. It was quite a distance from my home so I couldn't come home except for an occasional weekend. But I only stayed there for one term. I got sore eyes and the Government shoes made my feet sore, so when I came home for Thanksgiving I never went back. After that we had a teacher in our home until I started to the school at Miami, a subscription school.

The old mission has long since been abandoned and there are not even any of the buildings left standing. Only a few trees in the old orchard are left. The first lead mines opened in Oklahoma were on the old mission grounds and were called "mission mines".

The country then looked so different from what it does now. Everywhere there was tall prairie grass almost

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as high as my head. The roads were mere paths through the tall grass. We often saw wolves along the path when we would be going to Baxter Springs, Kansas, or Seneca, Missouri, our nearest sources of supplies. The wolves would take off in the grass when they heard us and the only way we could tell which way they went was by the movement of the tall grass as they went through.

The grass so often caught fire and then we would have to burn a strip around the house, which we called a fire-guard, or plow several rows around. Once Mother came home and saw a fire coming from the northwest. She was nearly frantic for she feared the fire would reach the house before anyone could come to help her. She finally asked a stranger who was passing to hitch his team to my father's plow and plow a fire-guard but about that time the wind changed and the fire did not reach the house.

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Father always thought the fires were the source of much misunderstanding between the Indians and whites. When the fires came from the direction of Kansas, the Indians would suspect the whites of starting them and when they came from Indian Territory up towards Kansas, the white people suspected the Indians of starting them.

There was abundant game, especially prairie chicken then. Wolves often came right in to the chicken house.

I recall attending the last council of the Peorias. I do not remember when it occurred. I have in my possession the original transcript of the proceedings, which pertained to getting removed from the rolls a white family which had been enrolled illegally.

ALLOTMENTS.

The Piankashaws held their lands together until the allotments were made, when each one was given two hundred acres. After the allotments had been made there was still land left. This left-over land provided us with school lands and burial tracts, while the wooded portions provided

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our fuel.

Father's allotment was west of Miami, the ford over the Neosho on the way to Welch being on his land. I remember how before he made his selection he went around to different localities and dug up portions of the sod to see what the soil was like. When he finally made his selection his place had a six-room house and a large barn, none of which he had to pay for. It had been a horse ranch called Horseshoe Ranch and had been leased from the Government. It had a huge corral with trees, one tree in the center having been used to tie the ponies to while being branded.

My own allotment had been taken about twelve or fourteen miles northeast of Miami, but when a rough class of people began to settle there, Father traded it for one across the road from his place which had very fertile soil.

Early Miami.

Miami for a long time was just a townsite which had been bought from the Government by a townsite

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company, a situation I have never clearly understood. There was a trading post there and a few houses and several saloons. It was of course against the law to sell liquor to the Indians but that little plot of territory seemed not to be under the jurisdiction of any authority. It was not part of the reservation, it didn't belong to either Kansas, Missouri, nor Arkansas, and there was no way to reach the saloon keepers by law. It was simply no man's land and those living there did as they pleased. Outlaws and desperadoes of all kinds made that a hideout since there was not even a city government, nothing except a post office. This continued until after statehood.

The first mines were opened by capitalists from Joplin and the settlement was called Lincolnville. After those mines were exhausted the town died.

The first post office in Miami was not in what is now Miami but was in what is now North Miami. It stood off by itself and had a name which I have forgotten.

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LEGENDS.

I expect some day to publish my collection of legends. They are those of the Piankashaws and were told us by my father. They include the legend of the creation, the story of the flood and Noah, that of Jonah and the whale, as well as others.

The tradition among the Piankashaws was that the stories should be told only in midwinter after the frogs had ceased croaking in the fall and before they began to croak in the spring, and also that they should be told only after a story had been begged for by the children. Father always preserved this tradition and would tell them only at the appointed season. We would sit before the fire on winter evenings while he related some old legend which we had coaxed for, and if one of us got sleepy and dozed off we were rapped sharply on the shin with a stick kept for that purpose, for it was also part of the tradition that if we begged for a story we had to stay awake to hear it, by force if necessary.

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Most of the stories had a lesson of some kind to be taught, such as obedience, kindness, or kindness to the aged, and others. We were always interested and seldom got sleepy.

Mother once fed one of the Dalton gang. A man wearing a handkerchief tied over his face came to the house driving a drove of horses. Father was on his way home and saw the man ride up so he hurried home as fast as he could. The man was a stranger to Father but he asked Father to feed his horses as well as himself. That evening long after he had departed, a posse rode up looking for the man. He was a Dalton and the horses were stolen horses.