

JOHNSTON, LACRESSA.

INTERVIEW

9217

480

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

481

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Field worker's name Robert H. Boatman.

This report made on (date) November 15, 1937

1. This legend was secured from (name) Lacressa Johnston.

Address Blanchard, Oklahoma.

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

If Indian, give tribe Choctaw and Chickasaw

2. Origin and history of legend or story Customs of Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians in early days.

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 4 sheets.

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Robert H. Boatman,  
Investigator,  
November 15, 1937.

Interview with Lacressa Johnston,  
Blanchard, Oklahoma.

I was born September 15, 1864, and am a native of the Indian Territory, having been born at Old Perryville, some few miles east of McAlester, in the Choctaw Nation.

My mother was a fullblood Choctaw Indian who came from Mississippi when the Choctaw Indians were removed from there to the Territory. My mother has often told me of the many unusual experiences and many hardships the Indians met with when first they were in the new country. Their homes were of the rude log type, usually one-room structures. Sometimes as many as three and four rooms were built, though each room was separate from the other.

My father was a fullblood Chickasaw Indian, and my husband was also a Chickasaw, a brother to Governor Johnston, of the Chickasaw Tribe.

The customs of the Choctaws and Chickasaws were about the same, as were the tribal forms of government.

At that time there was no Indian Agency. All business transactions among the tribe would be taken up with

- 2 -

the chief of the tribe, then if he did not settle disputes they were referred to the Governor of the tribe, who then was the final ruling power. In this way the affairs of the Indians were handled until the agency was established, then the business transactions were given largely into the hands of this agency.

I attended school for some time at an institution called New Hope, an Indian school located some few miles from Fort Smith, Arkansas. This institution still exists and many Indians have completed their education with very high honors there.

The Choctaw Indians kept lots of horses (Indian ponies), cattle and hogs. The more ponies an Indian had the more wealthy he was supposed to be.

The men of the tribe were great hunters, there being lots of game such as turkey and deer. Deer hunting was done mostly at night by a large light which in shape resembled a frying pan. This light would be strapped to the shoulder of the hunter just a little back from the front of his face, and would throw out reflections for several hundred feet ahead

JOHNSTON, LACRESSA.

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9217.

- 3 -

of the hunter. In this way the eyes of the deer were easy to shine, and in this way the Indians have been known to make some of their best kills. When a deer had been killed it was strapped across the back of the hunter and carried home in this way. If a hunter killed more than he could carry he just tied it up in a tree then next day he would go out and bring it home. The hunter always went on foot and hunting was done mostly in the fall and winter months. Deer and turkey when killed were dressed and salted down, the same as hog meat is today. It was not an uncommon thing at all for the Indians to salt down enough turkey and deer meat during the winter to last all summer until the next hunting season came.

There were lots of wild horses and wild hogs in the Territory and sometimes the Indians would rope some of the horses and have bronc riding, and generally would ride them till they were gentle enough to ride anywhere.

All clothing was hand-made, of cloth woven on

JOHNSTON, LACRESSA.

INTERVIEW.

9217.

- 4 -

hand looms, the thread first being spun on a spinning wheel.

The shirts of the hunters were made of various colors, as this seemed to attract the attention of the deer. Any bright color seemed to rouse a deer's curiosity, and the hunter could then come in close contact with it.

After cloth was woven it was then dyed from dyes made from various barks and weeds. The bark was gathered then placed in some container with a certain quantity of water and cooked or boiled until the desired shade was obtained; it was then ready to be used. Yellow was obtained from hickory bark, brown from walnut and lavender from sumac.

I speak the Chickasaw language as well as Choctaw and also learned to speak the Creek language. I now live at the home of my daughter in the town of Blanchard where I have made my home since the death of my first wife.