

FOSTER, WILLIAM

INTERVIEW.

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Tribe- Sac and Fox
Sac and Fox Removal
Ranchers

Field Worker, Lenna M. Rushing. June 17, 1937.

William Foster (Indian name, Ha-pe-tu-ke), Prague Oklahoma. Born, 1870, Kansas. Father, Chief Greyeyes. Mother not given. Indian (Sac and Fox). Father was one of last Sac and Fox Chiefs. Full blood.

"I am a Chief of the Sac and Fox tribe by birthright. We moved from Kansas when the rest of the tribe came to Oklahoma.

"Two miles south of Lawrence, Kansas, was the site of the last village of the Sac and Fox tribe. Some of the barkhouse poles still remain standing.

"We were a peaceable tribe, and life was easy for us. Our homes were scattered over a wide range of territory in the new country. For many it was fifteen to twenty miles to their nearest neighbor, and the only store was the trading post near the Sac and Fox Agency. This post was run by a man licensed to sell to the Indians.

"Many things new to the Indian were sold: old-fashioned muskets, powder and powder horns, woven cloth similar to jean cloth, and later percale and calico. These articles were shipped by railroad and wagons from the east, St. Louis, being the nearest shipping point.

"After the opening of the Indian Territory the agency soon grew into a good-sized town. The Indians, as well as the employees of the agency, built houses there. They also camped for months at a time along the creek banks north of

the agency.

"I knew Isaac McCoy, the white man, when I was small. He had married an Indian woman, and was preaching to the Indians.

"When we first came to Oklahoma there were several hundred in our band, or clan. One time the Chieftains had a council on the agency grounds. Our band camped south of the school house about three-fourths of a mile on the hill where an old house now stands. By the river was another band, and south of the store was still another. These bands always traveled in a group, forming a sort of village wherever they camped.

"I am a member of the medicine Lodge, and am one of its spokesmen. I also am a spokesman for the tribe.

"After the opening the Indians began dying out fast. Plagues took many of them, and other sickness took others until there are few left of our tribe.

"Before the opening cattlemen had five or six big ranches on this reservation, and many cattle and horses were pastured here. They were forced to leave, however, to make way for the white settler. The cattle were driven west through Fort Dodge and beyond.

"The broad ranges were gone. The Indian's freedom was gone; the wild game and abundant fish were no more. Soon the Indians were again without land, or they were being taxed. Money became scarce, and the tribe began to feel the sensations of hunger and cold. Our customs are dying fast. It will not be long before our tribe will be no more.

"The older Indians foresaw this. They said that this would be our last move, our last stopping place. We would scatter, intermarry with whites, and become poor.