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Indian-Pioneer History S-149

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5287

An interview between Mrs. Matie Mowbray Thomas of Tulsa, and Field Worker, Lawrence D. Hibbs. This story has never been written before.

EARLY DAY WEDDINGS IN INDIAN TERRITORY AT TULSA.

When we first came to Indian Territory in 1888, it was not necessary to have a marriage license, but a law was passed, I think in about 1889, making it compulsory to have a marriage license before one could get married. For this part of the country the only places you could procure a marriage license were at Muskogee and Vinita, Indian Territory.

My father, Reverend G. W. Mowbray, as a minister, was the only one in this district who was empowered to secure these licenses and for quite some time he did a large business.

THE FOLLOWING INCIDENTS HAPPENED AT A LATER TIME  
BETWEEN 1888 and 1892.

I remember one couple that came to be married; the man, a white man, who could not speak the Creek language, and the woman, an Indian, who could, or would not, speak the English language. They came after dark bringing a number of Indians with them, among them, an interpreter.

They came into the kitchen and didn't want any of the family present but my father, naturally, he being the minister. But we were peeping anyway. The ceremony was performed and the crowd left to partake of a feast A-la-Indian.

At another time a couple came from across the Arkansas River and as there was no bridge, they had to come over a ferry. There had been considerable rain and the river was running high and was still rising, so this was cause for the couple to be in a hurry. So when the ferry arrived on the Tulsa side of the river, they dispatched a rider after my father, who drove with his team to the river and went onto the ferry and performed the ceremony and the couple immediately returned to the other side of the river.

Another couple had crossed at the same time and had driven up to our house and they, naturally, were in a hurry, so father married them as they sat in their buggy in a pouring rain, while a friend of ours held an umbrella

3

over my father.

On another time, I remember a cowboy and his "Bride-to-be" had driven in from a ranch east of Tulsa. They brought with them as a witness, one of their sisters. When my father was performing the ceremony and he would ask the questions, their answers would be; "Yep, or yep, I reckon." After the ceremony was performed, my father congratulated them and remarked to the Groom that this should be one of the happiest days of his life. The Groom replied in this manner; "Some says tis, and some says taint." We heard later that they went back to the ranch and had a big dance and feast and that it all ended up in a free-for-all.

Another time a couple came riding across the prairie, both astride one mule, and as they approached, we wondered at the fantastic dress of the bride. A big diamond of a contrasting color was sewed in the center of the back of both the waist of the bride, and the shirt of the groom.

4

Little bows of ribbon were tacked at every conceivable point. They left after the ceremony in the rain, walking arm in arm, leading their mule, seemingly perfectly happy.

Another couple came one morning before we had had our breakfast and wanted to see the Parson. We told him that he was sick. But he replied: "Wal, I want to see him." So we took him into father's room where he told father he wanted to get married. Father asked him when, and he said, "Right now, my gal she's out to the gate." So my father told him to bring her in while he dressed and in a few minutes they were man and wife. After the ceremony, we learned they had walked sixteen miles.

On another occasion father was asked to go sixteen miles into the country to marry a couple and it was raining, but he went, taking him until after midnight to make the trip, and get back home. They paid him a dollar to make the trip.