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W. E. MCGUIRE - WHITE BROTHER OF THE OSAGES

(Interview with his sister, Mrs. W. B. Frederick, 119 N. Wheeling-Tulsa. Material from the files of the late W. E. McGuire-- now in possession of Mrs. Frederick.)

According to his sister, Mrs. W. B. Frederick, the late W. E. McGuire (died June 19, 1936, had planned, planned to write his memoirs covering his association with the Osage tribe over a period of 55 years. In keeping with this plan his files are filled with basic material, some of it still in manuscript form. Some of his early experiences are best told in his own words:

"It was in 1881. A boy of 22, I rode south from my father's Indian trading post at Jonesburg, Kansas (now extinct) on the Kansas Territory line to the site of the present city of Pawhuska to collect money due my father from the Osages. There was, however, no city then. Only a straggling little community known as Osage Agency, where white men were few and little welcome. From 1881 to 1884 I frequented the Osage lands, learned to speak the language and won the confidence of a people slow to friendship. In 1884 I was appointed teacher in the government school here. Except for the

period from 1893-98, I have resided in Pawhuska since postmater from 1898 to 1917- Scoutmaster fro 14 years.

"There were no hotels here then, no place at all for a stranger to stay. I solved the difficulty by bringing a complete camping outfit with me, a big mountain hack, two good horses, bedding, food. I taught here several years, during which time Herbert Hoover, later president of the United States, but then a lad of 8 years, spent a year at the Pawhuska agency with his uncle and aunt, Major and Mrs. L. J. Miles. Major Miles was government agent at the time. I recall Hoover, as a "fat little boy, always reading." He liked to stretch out on the agency lawn under trees and read for hours.

I didn't know then that he would one day be president, or I might have paid more attention to him."

"With the opening of the Cherokee Strip in '93 I made the run from Arkansas City to Ponca City, where I staked out townsite property. I was Ponca City's first city clerk, built the first frame building in the new town, was superintendent of schools, and later erected a three room frame home on the site where E. W. Marland's palatial residence was later to stand.

I planted two big pine trees on the grounds when my son Joel was born."

Tah-pu-scah-stet-tse, which is McGuire's Indian name, and means "tall white teacher," believes that the Indian will be what the white man makes him.

"The Indian is not criminal," says McGuire, "You'll never find a full-blood Indian robbing a bank, staging a highway holdup. He may be weak when tempted with drink; he may have learned the pale face's ways when it comes to paying debts. But he has never learned real criminality.

"It seems to me that what he ultimately becomes depends in large measure on the white race. What they do for him and, quite literally, what they do to him."

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"Take the matter of paying bills," says McGuire. "When I first knew the Osages, a bill, to them, was something to pay the moment they received their little quarterly allowance which came to them as wards of the government.

"On my first trip here, in June of '31, Wah-hoo-pah-shin-kah, chief of the "Little Osages," and Pete Corndropper came with me to explain my business.

At first I was rather uneasy, coming as I was to collect bills, at the war-like sight of the Indians in blankets, paint, and with their heads shaved. But when my companions told my errand, I was treated courteously and, what is more, paid my money.

"Later, when additional trading posts were established in this region, many of the whites ran up big bills on the Indians. On payment day each merchant set up a collector's table just across the deadline from the proration office. The moment an Osage received his money and came back across the line his creditors were upon him, each shouting 'pay me,' 'No, pay me,' 'Here, pay me, I treat you good at my store. I give you much credit.'

"I REMEMBER one day seeing an old fellow draw his money, \$40. When he came across the line the collectors pounced on him. From what they told him he owed every one of a dozen more than the amount of his payment. In despair, the old fellow raised his money high over his head, threw it out at the horde of creditors, and walked off, head down.

"He went up on the bluff and I saw him there throughout the day, head bowed down, mourning--literally mourning--because he could not begin to pay his bills.

The Indians could not count. When they asked for a certain amount of goods they could not be sure they had it all until they hit upon an ingenious scheme. At that time purchasers carried flour sacks to the stores for flour, sugar, coffee, and the like. The Indians got into the habit of buying a dollars worth of sugar--which wouldn't begin to fill a sack in those days, then a dollar's worth of flour, and so on. Then they would begin all over again. Another dollar's worth of sugar, of flour, of coffee. When they finished they had a dozen partly filled sacks, but at least they knew they had what they paid for. You never heard an Indian order .3 or .4 worth of anything at a time. He had learned a greater wisdom."

His favorite story concerns one of his earliest experiences with an Osage, Pete Corndropper, who, an educated Indian and McGuire's interpreter on his first trip into the Pawhuska region, apologized to McGuire on one occasion for swearing.

"But you must remember," said Pete Corndropper, "that when I swear, I swear in the white man's language. Indians have no swear language."

"And when I drink," Corndropper continued, "I drink the fire water the white men bring to me. Indians make none of the fire water."

Since that June day in 1881 McGuire has learned that Corndropper only began the explanation of his people's position. In later years were to come charges of dishonesty, of failure to pay bills, of a host of other grievances of the whites against the red men. McGuire looks back of the result to fathom the cause, and like Pete Corndropper himself, sees that the white brother played a major role."