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INDEX CARDS

Pawnee Reservation
Indian Burial Customs
Livery Barn

Goldie Turner,
Research Field Worker,
June 3, 1937.

Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Mayo Bellew
501 Granite Street
Pawnee, Oklahoma

Mr. Mayo Bellew was born in Sheridan County, Missouri, in 1866 and came to Oklahoma in 1897.

When we first came to Oklahoma I leased a 160 acre farm from Mr. Kellogg, a blind Pawnee Indian doctor. I was to pay 15¢ an acre but the lease didn't go through although I was allowed to stay the year. This lease was about ten miles northeast of Pawnee.

There was an Indian cemetery on this lease but none of the graves were marked and the ground is farmed over now. I dug several graves for the Indians while I lived there. One day an Indian man by the name of Sargent Peters came and wanted me to dig a grave. I asked him when he wanted to use it. He held up his fingers toward the sun and said, "Maybe so one day - maybe so two days - maybe so three days." It was for his son who had tuberculosis but who wasn't dead yet.

Early the next morning we saw him coming across the prairie in his spring wagon alone. He went out to where I had dug the grave. When I went out there I found that he had the corpse of his son lying in the back of his

spring wagon ready for burial. There was no ceremony whatever and no one there other than the father and myself. This was not the usual custom of Indian burial I was to later find.

A short time after that Mr. Kellogg died. I dug the grave for him. When I finished the grave, Mrs. Kellogg got down in it and lined it all around with straw matting. Then a bed of blankets were laid on the bottom with several cushions. Mr. Kellogg was placed in the grave in a sitting position. Mrs. Kellog then placed cushions behind him and blankets over him. His personal belongings and clothing were laid in his lap and at his feet. To cover the grave a shelf about eighteen inches from the top was dug all around when the grave was dug. Poles were laid closely side by side all across the top, they were then covered with the straw matting and then the dirt was filled in. All the Indians were buried in much this same way. A group of the tribe attended the burial of Mr. Kellogg. When they left the grave they drove by our house and at the gate set out a high trunk. It had been filled with things to be put in the grave and they wanted us to have the empty trunk I suppose

although they said nothing about it. Just set it out at the gate and drove away.

In 1899 I bought out a livery barn from Les Davis and "Pappy" Burch. It was a half block north of the northwest corner of the court house square in Pawnee and about a half block south of the Frisco depot. There was another livery barn run by a Mr. Goble across the street and on the corner south of my barn, where the Swalley second hand shop now is. One summer afternoon about 1899 a fire was discovered in Mr. Goble's barn. Of course there was no equipment for fighting fires at that time in Pawnee so a bucket brigade was formed and water carried from a little pond on the west side of the square where the water had collected. We could not put out the fire but did save the building next to the barn and saved all the horses in the barn and part of the equipment.

The west side of the square was not filled in for several years, and after every hard rain, water collected there and formed a pond several feet deep. It covered nearly all the west half of the court yard as well as the street next to it. All the business buildings on

this side were built up high and had steps leading up to the entrances. A high board walk was also built along the block but most of the buggies used the other streets.

RELATED BY MRS. BELLEW

Mr. and Mrs. Kellogg were certainly a nice Indian couple. They were very religious. When we moved into the house Mrs. Kellogg had left a picture of Jesus tacked on the wall. I left it there and when she would come to see us she would stand before that picture for minutes then say, "Jesus - heap good Jesus."

They were an elderly couple but always seemed to enjoy being together. I have often seen them sitting side by side in the back of a wagon playing hide the straw.

One time when they were coming to see us, their horses ran away with them and upset the wagon on them. They were both badly bruised but not seriously. We went to their aid and carried them to our house. Mr. Kellogg was not hurt so bad as his wife. He took his pocket knife punched little places in his wife's arm, then chewed some

herbs he had and put these on the punched places on her arm. I asked him why he did this, he made a snorting noise indicating to make her sleep. Later we moved them to their son's place on the farm next to ours. Their son had a frame house but they preferred a tent at the side of the house and a pallet of blankets to a bed. I took them milk toast several times. They had never tasted any and enjoyed it very much.

The first Indian I ever saw scared me very much. I was standing before the mirror combing my hair. I was bent over combing the tangles out of it. My hair was long, thick and wavy and I had to pull it to get the tangles out. When I raised up I saw through the mirror an Indian man standing in the door watching me. I turned and asked him what he wanted. He said, "No, no pull - heap pretty hair." He then asked where Mr. Bellew was and went out.

Another time one real cloudy evening I was hurrying to put out some tomato plants before it would rain. An Indian came by in his buggy. He said, "No rain - no rain for five days." And it didn't rain for five days.

The first spring we were on Mr. Kellogg's place, Mr.

Bellew leased some land from George Crow for a third of the corn planted. When the corn was up good, George Crow turned his horses out in it. We kept putting them up for him and letting him have them when he came and telling him to keep them up but he couldn't seem to understand that he shouldn't do it. Finally one day Mr. Bellew was in the field when I saw the Indian's horses, seven of them in the corn. I ran them in and tied them up. When George came for them later I told him he could have them only when he paid me fifty cents apiece for them and, if he stayed for dinner which he always did, it would be twenty-five cents more. He seemed amazed because I was angry and wanted to charge him. He went out to the field where Mr. Bellew was but Mr. Bellew told him that he would have to settle with me. He came back to the house and said, "You cook dinner - have chicken - me eat - me going to get married - you come eat with us - maybe so have chicken." I told him that I would not go eat with him, that he would have to pay me. Finally I made an agreement with him.

We were not allowed to cut any wood on the leases. The wood for fuel had to be gotten from the drift wood

and limbs of trees that had been cut for the saw mills from the creek beds and then for every load the white people got they had to give the Indian owner a load and haul it to camp. So I told George he could have his horses if he would let us have several big loads of wood. Later he said to Mr. Bellew, "Hurried away soon as I could - white squaw mad - maybe so fight."

When the corn was in roasting ears George built him a twenty foot trough and put it at the end of the field and began feeding his horses from it. When Mr. Bellew told him he couldn't divide it evenly that way, he said that part of it was his and he wanted to feed his part then.