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INDEX CARDS

Pawnee Agency  
Pawnee Tribal Customs  
Freighter

BERRY, G. M.

INTERVIEW.

7422.

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Goldie Turner,  
Interviewer,  
August 31, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. G.M. Berry,  
Pawnee, Oklahoma,  
Pioneer cattleman who came to the  
Pawnee Agency in 1879 as a freight-  
er, with supplies for agency.

The Indians in the early days buried their dead in shallow graves which were usually dug open by the coyotes. It was very common to see Indian bones scattered over the prairie. One time a Chief came to the agency and said his brother was about to die. The Agent told him if his brother died to bring his measurements to the agency and the agency carpenter would make a coffin and he could be buried like a white man. The next day the measurements were brought and the coffin made. When the coffin was taken out and they attempted to place the corpse in it, it was found that the Indians had never straightened the corpse out after he died and when he was placed in the coffin his knees stuck up too high to place the lid on. So the end of the coffin had to be knocked out to make room for the extra length when the legs were straightened. So the Indian was buried like a white man except his feet were sticking out of the coffin.

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When the law abolishing plurality of wives was passed, Roan Chief, who had married two of Sitting Bull's daughters, was sent to bring in his wives and decide which one he wanted to keep. He came in and there was another Indian on hand to take the extra wife. Roan Chief told the Agent through the interpreter that he loved both <sup>of</sup> his wives and couldn't decide which one he wanted and that the other fellow could have his choice of the two. One of the wives had a baby and the other Indian took the wife with the baby because then he would get the extra annuity.

Pawnees on the war path the last time.

One time about 1885 the Agent decided that instead of making the payment to the Indians he would buy cheap provisions from his brother who had a post in Arkansas City and ration the Indians. The Indians refused to use the rations and bought of the agency traders as long as they would let them have it. When the traders would no longer give them supplies they

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sent a message to Washington saying they were going on the war path if they did not get their payment. A United States Inspector was sent to look into the matter and met in a council lodge with the Indians. Baptiste, a Skedee who was chief spokesman for the Indians and who could speak good English but who on this occasion chose to speak through an interpreter, came in wearing a bright calico shirt. He stated the case of the Indians and at the close of his speech grasping his shirt at each shoulder he tore it off threw it down and said "The Great White Father has treated the Indians unfairly and they are now ready to go on the war path if they are not treated better." The inspector, thoroughly frightened, slipped out of the council room and hurriedly departed from the agency. In a few days a buckboard accompanied by armed soldiers on each side drove up to the agency and lifted out several tin boxes containing the deferred payment.