

GILROY, THOMAS A.

INTERVIEW #6006

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Grace Kelley

This report made on (date) May 25, 193 7

1. Name Thomas A. Gilroy
2. Post Office Address Henryetta, Okla R. R. ?
3. Residence address (or location) 5 miles west of Henryetta 18-11-12
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 7 Year 1901
5. Place of birth Colorado

6. Name of Father D. Gilroy Place of birth Born in New York State
Other information about father 1/3 Seminole-Veterinary
7. Name of Mother Mary Swan Gilroy Place of birth England
Other information about mother Well-to-do white

girl who didn't like the new state.
Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 9

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FAMILY AND CIVIL WAR STORY TOLD
BY
THOMAS GILROY.

FIELD WORKER GRACE KELLEY.
May 25, 1937

Father's mother was a Seminole who had married a white man, Thomas Gilroy. I don't remember having heard her name.

At the beginning of the Civil War they were living in New York State. They crossed the ocean to a place spelled "Syria Labano" (I don't just know where that is) to keep out of the war. When it was over, they came back to New York; then to Alabama; and to Arkansas when father was a boy. When he was a young man, he went to Colorado and while there married a well-to-do white girl and they had some children. They came to the Indian Territory but she couldn't stand this country and took the youngest children back to Colorado. He kept the oldest and they were allotted while the youngest weren't but they were given a University education by the mother who wanted to "make something out of them." I went to the Denver schools and the University at Denver where I learned to be a medical doctor. (Mr. Gilroy has some medical magazines, addressed to him, that are sent only to doctors) I will explain my doctoring later, but I

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don't practice exactly as my mother expected me to, and she might not think that I had made anything of myself.

CHURCH LIFE.

When I was a small boy I was sprinkled in the E Church and later I was admitted into the church but when I got old enough to do my own thinking, I wasn't satisfied with the sprinkling and joined the Arbeca Baptist Church one mile west of Bryant, by immersion. Then I was ordained later, as Deacon of that church.

When the church decided to ordain me as Deacon, it called these men to do the ordination: Ministers; Irans Grayson, Rolla Sands of Okemah, Hemsy Roberts of Cronwell, Mose Walla of Dustin and the Pastor of Arbeca, G. B. Looney; Deacons: John Chapko of Weleetka, Jimmie Ashberry of Weleetka, Mose Birdcreek of Weleetka, Oscar Harjo of Hickory Ground, Danna Watson of Dustin, William Fisher of Weleetka and Henry Day of Dustin.

When a man is ordained Deacon, he dies a deacon unless he is ordained a Minister; but a Class leader is disqualified if he does anything that is unfit for a Class leader to do,

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and then she is just a plain church member.

CHURCH MOTHER (CLASS LEADER)

Molly Ashberry was the Mother at Arbeca Church, I guess always as far back as I know anything about, until she died January 21, 1933, at the age of 85.

Then Louisa West, the widow of Billie West, the Light-Horseman of this District, was chosen by the Pastor to take her place.

DUTIES OF CHURCH MOTHER.

The Church Mother is a good and loved woman to whom all the other women go for advise in time of trouble or disagreements. She will tell them what is the right thing for them to do. Her home is at the church, and she is expected and usually is, to be Mother as long as she lives.

Alabama Church is the oldest church in the Creek Nation and is called The Mother Church. It is one mile west of Weleetka, and Alec Low is Pastor now.

DOCTORING.

My father was a Veterinary; owned lots of stock, hogs, cattle and horses, and was a spirit doctor. That is a gift in two ways. I don't believe you can understand what I will

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try to tell you but there are some things I won't tell you at all. He was a child of a large family and the only one who had it. He gave it to my sister and she gave it to me. The personal gift is handed from male to female and from female to male but not to the same sex nor outside of the immediate family. I am the only one of my family who has the gift or talent from God.

You can't return evil for evil but when someone says or does something wrong to you, you just smile; that works like fire on ice. Wonderful things can be done by prayer and fasting if you know what to say and have faith or know without a doubt your prayers will be answered, and you have to know what to do for the work.

I never need a doctor for these reasons. I went to school and learned the Medical way. I use herbs, as I know them and what they are for and how to use them. The gift came through my father and my associations with Little Fish, my wife's father, who was a great Medicine Man.

We Indians do exactly as told to do in the Old Testament and we did so before we ever saw an Old Testament.

If a woman is sick she does not sleep in the same room.

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with her husband but has a room of her own for that time.

They used to have a little house of their own but nowadays they just use another room. She has her own dishes and no man ever eats out of them. She cooks if there is nobody else to do the cooking; otherwise she doesn't touch the food except what she eats herself. She stays to herself as much as possible, ~~never going to dances, and leaves the~~ garden, mares, cows, chickens and turkeys alone, for she will cause bad luck to come to them. An Indian can tell as soon as he come in the room. If she makes soap it will be soft soap, and won't harden as it should, and the fruit she cans won't keep.

I have to be careful with myself. If I know I will have some Veterinary work to do in three or four days, I sleep by myself those intervening nights. I have better luck for I figure that the pores of the skin carry off the poison of the body and that will cause infection.

If you have something in your eye, I can put my hand over it and the water will start pouring out of your eye and your eye will get all right.

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In my collection there is a bone of almost every kind of fowl or animal, of course not every kind; bear, deer, human, and that is a small corn cob. They are all good to cure a disease if you know how, and I do. I shot that turtle, for when you shoot them they die instantly while if you cut their heads off, they will live twenty-four hours. Then I put it on a ant hill for a week or ten days and they cleaned it out perfectly clean. ~~It's almost impossible for a person to clean it and leave both upper and lower sides together.~~

← This stick looks like a home made cane but it is the one I use to mark in the sand with, to see what I want to know. It is made of dogwood, about the thickness of your middle finger and about three feet long, limber. These marks near the end, the meaning of them are ~~unknown to any~~ ^{as the cross piece} one but myself. It is of one piece ^{is grown there or is a} limb.

If something is stolen from me and I miss it, I can find out who stole it and before twenty-four hours they will bring it back and put it where I can find it without my saying anything to them.

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HOT SPRING

When I was a small boy I was hunting with another boy and we got very thirsty. We found a place that looked like a spring was there so we dug ~~the~~ wet dirt or mud out and made a spring. It was hot and smelled awful bad but we were so thirsty that we drank from it anyway. It made us sick and I told my father about it. He said it was the same kind that was at Hot Springs, Arkansas. ~~Some day I~~ intend to buy the ground and then I will tell the location and make some money. If I told the location now, somebody else would make the money. It is still in existence but nobody could find it unless they knew more than that it was in the Creek Nation.

CLAN LAW

When a man would be walking and meet another man's wife in the road, he either turned his back until she passed or looked another way while walking fast. He never faced her or spoke to her or looked at her. If he was caught disobeying this rule, they cut part or all of his ear off. Coosa Yahola had both of his cut off. It is most strict if they

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are Clan Kih. If the woman is guilty they will whip her terribly but not cut her ear off. (there are other punishments that I know about from my mother but she wants me to get it from the Indians and I will but it may take quite a while as they are so secretive-G. K.)

INDIAN BALL

I belong to the Tuckabatchis Town.

~~Two different towns match a ball game, and if they like~~
each other they play for fun, but usually there is a grudge between the rulers and it is a fight instead of a game. I never have played in a match game that wasn't a grudge game.

The two camps are a mile or more apart and we don't speak to each other before the game commences. They, each town, have a messenger who talks or carries the messages for the town.

We camp for a couple of days and take medicine to get us in condition to play and win the game.

When the game has been matched we get together and vote to select which town's ball ground we will use.

Then after we have taken the medicine and are ready to

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play we go to the ball ground, and meet the other team. Our women and their women bring silk handkerchiefs and ribbons and whatever they want to bet and make their bets before the game starts. Then a man is selected to throw the ball, if it is a friendly game, someone catches the ball with his ball sticks. He has two of them, about three feet long with a spoon on the end. They are made of hickory and the spoon is made of a strip of hickory held together with buckskin.

If it is a grudge game they will never try to catch the ball but will start fighting with the sticks.

Every Sunday the members of the one town gather and have a friendly game and just play for fun. Some times they have for visitor any other town that wants to play them for fun. But when the chief is there it usually is a grudge fight but not always.

Nuyaka Town is the closest to us and it is about eight miles northwest.