

GRAY, TOM M. . . INTERVIEW

CHISHOLM TRAIL 287 303

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Robert Boatman,
Field Worker.

An Interview With Tom Gray,
Five miles east of Blanchard,

CHISHOLM TRAIL.

In 1878, I came to Indian Territory with my parents when I was seven years old. I was born August 5, 1871 in the State of Illinois. We settled near the south end of Kickapoo Flat, on the Washita River. I have been familiar with Indian Territory and Oklahoma since that time.

There were lots of Indians when I first came here. The women always had a good supply of beads, ear rings and shawls. The shawls were thrown around their shoulders and worn most all the time. These garments were issued to the Indians by the Government, from the forts that were established in the Territory.

The Indians were in some ways peculiar, especially in regard to the sick, and the burying of the dead. No doctors were used, only some medicine man of the tribe; and only herbs were used as medicine. Each family would have their own burial grounds, which was in the back yard. After one had been buried, a pen was built over the grave, and covered with boards.

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The old Chisholm-Trail that has been discussed so much, crossed the Territory in the west-central part. It came from the Red River by way of Rush Springs, just east of Chickasha along the Washita River, and passed on by way of old Silver City and on to the Kansas line. From here the trail led to Honeywell and Caldwell, Kansas where cattle were marketed. There is no doubt as to this route being the first established one through the Territory. This trail was blazed and so marked; that by being careful to watch for the marks, it can be followed across Oklahoma today. If there was ever any other trail known as Chisholms' Trail it was many miles west of this one. Cattle were driven over it into Wyoming and Minnesota for grazing purposes only.

There have been many stories told relative to the Indians, as to their customs and feelings toward white men. I have often wondered why so many tales have been told. Some tribes were very hostile, especially the Comanches, Apaches, and Arapahoes.

The Indians of the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes were very friendly. Their customs, of course, were different

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from those of the white people. The Indian's meat consisted mostly of wild game and beef; they were especially fond of beef. Their clothing was made by hand and was very bright colored.