

MAYTUBBIE, MATTHEW

INTERVIEW

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

Field Worker's name Zaidee B. Bland.

This report made on (date) July 22, 1937. 1937.

1. Name Matthew Maytubbie. (Colored)

2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 321 South Jackson Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 3 Year 1889.

5. Place of birth Oberlin, Indian Territory.

6. Name of Father Isam Maytubbie Place of birth Indian Territory.

Other information about father One-half Choctaw and a worker in wood and iron.

7. Name of Mother Mirah Gorden Place of birth South Carolina.

Other information about mother _____

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.

Zaidee B. Bland,
Interviewer.

An Interview With Matthew Maytubbie,
321 South Jackson Street, Altus, Okla.

If I can remember right I was born March 3, 1889, in a little town in Indian Territory named Oberlin. My father and grandfather were both born there or near there. My mother was born in North Carolina and my grandmother was a native of Africa. One of the very first things that I can remember was a little old lady sitting in the chimney corner and sometimes being very very sad; even crying when she would tell us about her childhood home. She was over one hundred years old my mother said.

I cannot remember how they got them into a ship but my great grandfather and three girls and one boy were brought over in a ship to the southern coast of Texas and sold as slaves, an Indian getting my grandmother when she was quite a young girl.

As she grew up my grandfather liked her and wanted her for his squaw. She was bought for him by his father and they had a long ceremony under the Council Tree and she was declared free so that she could marry into the Choctaw Tribe. I have had the tree pointed out to me a lot of times. It was a big bois d'arc tree with long

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strong limbs and was always kept trimmed up from little lower limbs. All the hanging was done on this tree, and it seems to me we had a hanging real often when we were young.

Death was the penalty for nearly everything that was wrong and hanging was the way a man was always killed unless his head was cut off on a big block.

If an Indian killed another Indian, he was never asked why the killing was done and if there was a dead Indian found some one was brought before the Old Man of the tribe and his head was chopped off on the chopping block. Some times an Indian was punished with lashes with a cat o' nine tails; that is, if he had not done very wrong, just told a little lie or stole a hide or some little thing like that.

My great grandpap was a coxman but my pappy had a little shop. He made all kind of things out of iron and wood. Pap made chairs, beds, tables, bowls, forks, and spoons all out of wood. He also made wagon wheels and beds. He really made the whole wagon for he made all the parts. He made all kinds of wooden yokes for oxen and for people too. You know Indians carry a lot

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things on horses that you have to have a yoke to put them on and women have a kind of yoke to put across their shoulders to help carry burdens.

Wooden buckets were the only kind of bucket we had.

We had wooden tubs and pappy made them all.

HOUSES.

All the houses that I can remember were made of logs with wooden shutters and doors hung with wooden hinges and fastened with wooden latches. The houses were covered with wooden boards. I had a brother who could rive more boards out of a block of wood than any one and could make the boards smoother and thinner.

There was a spring creek that ran through the village from which we all got our water. The bed of the streams was gravelly and we would dig a well like a hole down a little way and the water would boil up so clear and cold. I wish I had a drink of that water now.

SCHOOLS.

We did not have a church house but we did have a log schoolhouse. My first teacher was a lady and we had a blue backed speller that we learned to spell and read out

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of too. Our seats were split open logs with round legs set into them. They had no backs. We always stood up to recite. The teacher had a great brass hand-bell that she would ring and call books. We always took our dinner. Books "took up" right after sun-up and sometimes it was sun-down when we got home. We got drinking water from a spring about a half mile away. We had spelling matches every Friday and sometimes Friday night when all the neighborhood was invited. Every morning school was opened with jubilee songs and then we repeated the Lord's Prayer. On Friday morning we would sometimes have hymns. Sometimes a man would be passing our way and would stop and preach but not often.

We had lots of picnics when everyone came. The night before a picnic, under the trees where it was to be, the men would bring big iron pots and fill them full of water and when this water was hot they would put in whole hams of cured meat or a quarter of dried meat and mashed corn hominy. This would cook all night and savory herbs would sometimes be added. We always used red pepper but not as much as some people used. My, it would be good. It would be done by twelve o'clock next day and how we

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would eat! Everybody would have a tin plate and wooden fork or spoon and we would go to the pot and help ourselves all the rest of the day, sometimes not going home until after dark.

The young bucks played a kind of ball.

We would tie a horse's tail to our belts in the back and would knock and catch the ball with sticks that were cut a little curved like spoons. Then, in the afternoon every one would dance; the fiddle and the banjo besides the drums made the music.

We would sing "Yip! Yip! Yo! Take my mine; I take yours! Here we go to town! Round and round! Yip! Yip! Y! Y! Run around all'. Here we come! Here we go!"

Then we would all take our partners and treat them to sardines and sometimes would have a kind of drink made sometimes from persimmons, sometimes from fruit.

I don't know how the old women made it but it was good.

We bought our wives and I can't remember the Indian ceremony for by the time I can remember the White Father made us have a Civil ceremony. I can't remember but one burying but the white people did it. When my old

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grandmother died the women wrapped her in blankets that she had made and took her at night and put her in a hole in the ground. They carried torches and only women could go and I don't know what the chant said but some of the words were "Sister gone; we won't see her no more". The women would lift their arms and point in all the different directions and say, "We don't know where but she gone out there. She safe, she there, where we see her no more. Dear sister she gone".

CLOTHES.

My mother spun all the thread and she wove and knit all our clothes, socks, gloves and sweaters except the clothes we made out of skins. We got such a good price for all skins that we Indians nearly quit dressing in them when I was a young man. Very few weeks passed in the fall that we did not make \$40.00 a week and more selling skins.

We made all our traps. We would find the logs where the varmints crossed to eat or to get water and we would bore holes in the log, putting spikes in the holes and "Mr. Varmint" would step in one of these holes, and spike would hold him till morning when we would knock him in

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the head with a club. We would catch wild cats, badgers and beavers. We could get \$5.00 for a badger hide, \$15.00 for a beaver. A beaver out was striped round the head and all the rest was black. We would get \$15.00 for a blue gray wolf.

We made traps for wolves and baited them with calf liver or sardines. Sardines were best. We would eat coons, possums and rabbits. We would smoke the rabbits out of their holes.

All cooking was done out doors or on a fireplace.

Mother had iron skillets with lids for bread and sweet bread. Corn pone was cooked in the ashes and most of the meat was hung in front of the fire on a wire and as it cooked and turned it was swabbed with a sauce made from vinegar, salt, red pepper and garden herbs of different kinds, as well as with leaves from the trees that Mother knew when to gather and dry.

We barbecued whole hogs and cows sometimes and one would last several days and sometimes a week.

Pappy didn't try to farm but always traded work or pelts for what was needed, that is, wool, corn, wheat or cotton.

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We were all taught how to fell a tree; we were taught how to make it fall just where we wanted it to fall. We were taught how to tan hides and cure pelts. The women tended to the weaving and spinning. My grandmother always took her clothes to the spring and beat them on a rock with a wooden paddle but Mother used a wooden washboard and a wooden tub and Pappy made lots of syrup for the neighbors for toll. Some years he would have enough syrup to do us four or five years and it would all turn to sugar if he could not sell it. We used syrup a lot of times to swab our baking meat.

Mother dyed all her wool and cotton thread any color she wanted from barks and roots. We used the bark of the bois d'arc tree for yellow; poke berries for red; walnut and pecan for brown.

Spoons and bowls were made from walnut wood.

We had a wooden mortar and pestle for beating up our corn.

My grandfather was a medicine man. He used barks and roots for all medicine. He used black snake root for locked bowels; blackberry root for flux; yellow top weed for fever;

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a wild jimson weed poultice round the head for head trouble. For a snake bite he told us to catch a young chicken alive, split it open and bind it to the bite and bind the limb above the bite until the poison was all drawn out. The chicken will come off green where it has absorbed the poison. I had a cousin who was bitten in the calf of the leg and he was treated that way and got well.

We were taught how to tell the time of day by the shadow of trees or by looking at the sun. We could tell how tall a tree was by measuring its shadow. Pappy taught us all the lore he knew and one brother became a cooper and could make barrels and wooden things of that kind as good as Pappy could, but none of us followed his trade or could do all the things that he could do so well. We all had land given us by the government but fiddled it away drinking and gambling. My pappy did not drink and I wish I didn't.