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BELMARD, WILLIAM.

INTERVIEW

10358

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

**BELLMARD, WILLIAM.**

**INTERVIEW.**

**10358.**

Field Worker's name Robert W. Smith.

This report made on (date) March 10, 1938. 193

1. Name William Bellmard.

2. Post Office Address Newkirk, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Same.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 4 Year 1871.

5. Place of birth Kansas.

6. Name of Father Joseph Bellmard. Place of birth Canada.

7. Name of Mother Susan Pappan Bellmard. Place of birth unknown.

Other information about mother Was member of Kaw tribe of Indians.

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

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Robert W. Small,  
Investigator,  
March 10, 1938.

Interview With William Bellmard,  
Newkirk, Oklahoma.

I was born June 4, 1871, in Kansas. My father was a French-Canadian and my mother was of Kaw Indian blood.

In 1873 about seven hundred Kaw Indians were moved from Kansas to a reservation a few miles east of the present site of Newkirk, Oklahoma. This reservation comprised an area about fourteen by sixteen square miles along the Arkansas River, where plenty of wood and water were available and considerable wild game was to be found in the country. The Kaws held this land in common until 1902 when individual allotments were made. At this time only 247 persons were allotted lands in the Kaw tribe, and their average allotment was about 400 acres or slightly more to each allottee.

When the tribe was brought to this reservation, the Government established an Agency at Washington, where rations of beef and other food were issued to them, also

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some clothing and cooking and farming utensils. The Government also established a school at Washunga for the benefit of the Indians. Some Indians of other tribes also attended this school. Board and clothing for all Indian pupils were furnished by the Government, as well as medical attention and a general beneficial supervision.

Some of the Kaw tribe lived in log houses built for them by the Government and some lived in dugouts and tepees.

The Kaws did not farm much. Some had small patches of corn and garden vegetables and they raised some sweet corn which they dried for food and was a food much relished by them.

In the early period after settling on this reservation, the Indians often would go on buffalo hunts, usually about twenty-five to forty men, women and children would make up a hunting party. They traveled in wagons and on ponies and would go a distance of seventy-five to one hundred miles west of their reservation to find buffalo, which they killed with rifles of the muzzle-loading type.

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Some hunted with bow and arrows. When a buffalo was killed they would skin the animal and jerk the meat to dry and preserve for future use. This jerking process was done by cutting a narrow strip of meat until a hand hold could be obtained, then the meat was pulled off in strips and hang up to dry. On one of these hunting trips an Indian woman gave birth to a baby boy and he is now living in the Kaw country southeast of Newkirk, Oklahoma.

The Indians made most of their saddles for their use in riding ponies. These saddles were built with a slight elevation in front and rear and nothing whatever in the seat or central part of saddle. Sometimes certain kinds of bones were used in forming the front part of saddle which were tied or held in place by leather strips, usually buckskin platted. Saddle stirrups were either bought or sometimes made from some suitable substance.

There were considerable wild turkey, deer and other game on and near the reservation when the tribe came here.

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Lots of fish could be found in the Arkansas River but the full blood Indian did not fish much. Some of the mixed breed fished quite a lot.

My father owned an old muzzle-loading army musket rifle that would shoot a lead ball, shot or lead slugs, and was very effective in killing game.

About once a month the tribe would hold a dance and feast for a week or go to some other tribe when such occasions were held by them. About once a year they would hold what they called a Give-a-Way meeting on which occasions some visiting tribe would be given some ponies, blankets and other useful presents.

One time I accompanied a bunch of tribesmen to the Quapaw reservation where we had been invited to a feast, and we were given forty-six head of ponies which we drove back to our reservation. These Give-a-Way meetings were held by different tribes as a token of their friendship for other tribes and was a part of their religion. The Indian thought to be good and generous was the best way to exemplify their religion, or in other words, it was

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the main part of their religion to help others, especially those who were in direst need or circumstances.

The Kaw Indians made lots of bead work and fancy ornaments of various kinds from beads, leather, etc. They tanned the deer skins and made buckskin moccasins and other wearing apparel.

The early tribesmen had their medicine men who attended the sick and gave medicine made of herbs gathered in the country.

In early times, the tribe cooked their food on an open fire which usually was made by digging a hole in the earth and filling it with wood to make a fire and to confine the coals and hot embers in a small space. Some had Dutch ovens that were used in cooking some foods. Coffee was made in an iron kettle and drank without any cream or sugar.

The early Indians wore breech cloths, moccasins and blankets as their only clothing. Their hair was braided in long strands and frequently ornaments of various kind of designs of beadwork were worn on their person, bead bracelets, etc.

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The early Indians raised a few ponies but no other kinds of stock.

The Kaw tribe was governed by a council of from five to seven members and a chief. The laws of the tribe never exacted the death penalty for any crime, but some crimes committed resulted in the perpetrator being disciplined or the more severe penalty of ostracism from tribal feasts and general disregard by his followers.

The Kaw tribe in early times buried their dead in various ways, some would be buried in a sitting posture, some infants were buried in the trees. The favorite pony of a deceased tribesman was also killed and his personal effects were buried with him, all to be used by him when he arrived at the distant happy hunting grounds.

My father and mother are buried in the tribal cemetery at Washunga.