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BELL, JENNIE. INTERVIEW

13206

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

BELL, JENNIE.

INTERVIEW.

13206.

Field Worker's name Jesse S. Bell.

This report made on (date) March 15, 1938. 1938

1. Name Jennie Bell.

2. Post Office Address Westville, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 4 miles west of Westville.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 16 Year 1875.

5. Place of birth Goingsnake District.

Indian Territory.

6. Name of Father Chewuska Fodder. Place of birth Georgia.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Betty Corntassel. Place of birth Goingsnake

Other information about mother District, Indian Territory.

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 _____

BELL, JENNIE.

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Jesse S. Bell,
Investigator,
March 15, 1938.

An Interview With Jennie Bell,
Westville, Oklahoma.

Jennie Bell, a full-blood Cherokee Indian, the tenth child of "Chuweska Fodder", tells the history of her own people. Her grandfather emigrated from Georgia or North Carolina; his name was "Corntassel"; he was an old settler. He raised ten children; his first wife died in Georgia, then he remarried. Grandfather "Corntassel" served in the Creek Indian War at the age of nineteen. He was a blacksmith by trade, one of the old fashioned lubber blowers. His boys followed the trade of blacksmithing until the last one died. Grandfather "Corntassel" lived to be one hundred and seventeen years old and died some fifty-five years ago, at the present time he has five generations of descendants alive.

In his early life back in Georgia the men hunted wild game in the Alleghany Mountains to provide food. They went in companies and camped for several weeks at a time. They collected large amount of pelts to trade at fur posts or to tan for home use to make moccasins or bow strings, as bows

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and arrows were used for weapons in those days and some used blow guns made of large cane about two inches in diameter hollowed out about five to eight feet long. They used small arrows about twelve inches long with which they would kill small game such as birds, squirrels and rabbits at close range. . . They used the flint rock to start fires as matches were unknown. They collected sponge out of timber and dried it and when flint sparks would catch fire it never went out. There was little education in the life of "Corntassel" as ^{there} were no schools and no churches.

FOOD.

They made their own bread by pounding the corn in wooden mortars and they parched corn for coffee and made ca-no-han (hominy). They also pounded hickory nuts into mash, then would strain this into hominy and cook it together and they called it Ca-nu-chá. They killed some buffalo, deer, bear and other game. They dressed the meat, hung it up and sun dried it and they had wooden bowls, wooden spoons, wooden forks,

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Chuweska Fodder , Jennie Bell's father, was born in Georgia but was removed into Indian Territory during the drive and served in the Northern Army during the Civil War. He united in marriage to Betty Corntassel, daughter of Grandpa Corntassel and to this union were born thirteen children, and others were born who died in infancy.

DURING THE DRIVE.

The Indians were gathered or rounded up in the fall of the year and were started west by Federal troops. On their journey they suffered many hardships by cold winter weather. Some traveled by foot, others by oxteam in wagons. They were many produce stands on "The Trail of Tears", on the journey. The Government provided food for the journey namely, flour, coffee, lard and sugar, and the Indians would trade some of these groceries to the owners of the produce stands for hogs head, hog liver, or fresh cabbage and other vegetables.

When they reached the Indian Territory there was time enough left before winter to make small gardens and to build homes during the remainder of the year. The

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United States Government provided enough food for each family after they were released and gave them one cow to each family for beef or for milch cows, Some killed their cows and ate them, others kept their cows for increasing the herd. They were provided with garden seed and seed corn--some Indians prospered, others did not. There were no schools in the early days of the emigrants. The Cherokee Indians held their meetings from house to house.

INDIAN CLAN..

The Cherokees formed clans and each clan had a name such as, Bear, Wolf, Eagle, Buffalo, Tiger, etc. For occupation they farmed large tracts of lands raising wheat, corn, oats and some raised tobacco. They all banded together and would have community workings on one farm one day and on another farm the next day. They plowed corn, hoed corn, harvested wheat, split rails, built rail fences and cleared new ground and raised houses of logs. There was a continual round of community affairs among the Cherokees.

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TRIBAL AFFAIRS.

The Cherokees finally came to organize their own government, electing the council and electing the Chief. They had their own laws and had whipping posts for the civil cases and gallows for the criminals.

PARTIES.

The Cherokees were divided into parties; one was known as the Downing Party and the other as the National Party. There was strong sentiment by both parties during the election time which caused fights among men and women. They have made great changes from tribal days up to the present time. Many white people and Indians alike would like to live over the Tribal law times again; those were the good and easy times.