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LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field worker's name Namie Lee Burns.

This report made on (date) April 23, 1937

1. This legend was secured from (name) Levi Ketcher
Address 620 B. SE. Miami, Oklahoma
This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,
If Indian, give tribe Full-blood Cherokee
2. Origin and history of legend or story Memory
3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 8

Nannie Lee Burns
Field Worker
April 23, 1937.

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Interview with Levi Ketcher (Cherokee)
620 B. SE. Miami, Oklahoma.
Born August 2, 1872.
Father-Tonnette
Mother-Sallie.

Levi Ketcher was born August 2, 1872, two and a half miles south of Grove, Oklahoma. Highway # 10 now passes through the old home site.

My parents came when quite young from North Carolina and traveled the "Trail of Tears". My father's name was Tonnette and my mother's name was Sallie. Donnie Ratler was my grandmother and Tom Ratler my grandfather.

EARLY HOME

Our early home was a one room 14 x 16 log house covered with clapboards and the cracks chinked with home made plaster, made by burning the lime rock mixing with river sand and crab grass. We had a log barn built the same way ^{and} some brush covered sheds. When my father began, this was wild country and he had to cut trees, clear patches and for fences we had rails built worm fashion. We only fenced the fields and the cows and horses were turned out. We seldom had any hogs at first ~~as~~ wild hogs were plentiful. Mostly spring water but when not,, we dug a well. We had fire

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places for heat and to cook. Things cooked in iron pots or by covering with hot ashes and coals of fire. We had doors but no windows. Instead of windows we had squares which had a little door which we pushed back when hot. No lights and our first light, except the fire, was sycamore balls soaked in grease which burn for a long time. Next light was, take rags plat maybe four plats and put in a can of grease. No matches, fire made from flint (You see flint?).

A FULL BLOOD'S STORY

You make sponge from the heart of the redoak tree or maybe cotton. Rub rock together-little spark drop on sponge or cotton, make fire. Furniture all made home. No chairs-you split log skin off bark, put pieces of wood so long (here he measured possibly fifteen or eighteen inches), four of these in bottom, you have chair. Floors made the same way; you split log about so big and put split side up; dried pumpkin in rings hung on pegs to walls and rafters.

FARMING.

We killed trees, cut sprouts, cleared first little patch, then more, fenced with rails made in winter;

ploughed with one horse to home-made plough. Plough made from body of tree where branch forks. Hoe corn through hot days. Wheat cradled by hand, put on platform three or four feet high, failed with long poles. Wheat fall through, women take wheat and clean so clean. let wind blow dirt away. We raised lots of sweet potatoes, corn-Indian corn. Make corn meal at home. Sometimes when corn soft rub over rough surface, sometimes pound it on rock in hole. Make hominy of the corn, also Bean-bread. Ever eat any bean bread? "No, how do you make it?" Cook beans done, a small cornfield bean, mix meal with water till it stiff, then mix in the beans, no mash them, and bake. Good when baked in fire. We made wagons, wheels made of oak, chain harness. You know what use for grease? "No", you take rasin that drips out of pine wood. "Did you have oxen?" No many oxen, horses. We dried corn in summer; also apples; gathered dry beans. Had a few apple and cherry trees.

WILD GAME

No have to raise meat then. You take gun or bow and arrow when you want meat. Kill deer, turkey, wild hog, shoot squirrel with arrow. Skin deer, tan hide,

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dry meat. "What were the wild hogs like?" Think they just got away from folks . Raised and grew up in woods so got wild, lived good on mast".

FISHING.

In summer time, we made in and get them. Sometimes we gig them. Sometimes go fishing at night, then we take and make pine torch set in end of boat;, it make bright light;, you see fish. You gig him; sometimes they fight. If you want more light, you have more torch. It burn long time.

Ever eat eel? "No, only once and didn't like it. " Tell you how to cook them. You skin them, then soak them in grease, then fry them, and they not be strong.

Sometimes we go and dig maybe two sacks full of buck-eye roots. Skin the roots, take and pound the skin till soft and the water dripping out, put back in sack. Then go to the water, hold sack and dip it into the water. Do this lots of times. The juice make the fish drunk he came to top of water, sometime jump clear out on bank. This bad way as it kill all the fish, but in a few days there will be plenty more. Sometimes, we make long rope of branches and men on horses take hold ends and ride the

banks, pulling this down the stream. At end of water you take what you want and let the rest go.

MEDICINE

"What did you do when you got sick--did you have any Medicine Men?" No, some of the women went to the woods and got roots or gathered things or got bark from some tree and made own medicine.

TRANSPORTATION.

"How did you go places?" Mostly walk. Sometimes when you have to go to mill and take load, drive wagon, but it so much farther way you have to take horse. Walk four, five and six mile to school.

"Where did you go to school?" Stayed at my Grandm^{er} mother's on Whitewater. Go few months at time. Not much schools. I was eight or nine years old before I went to school.

CLOTHES.

"Where did you get your clothes?" Grandmother spun the yarn and wove them. Had big loom. "What color were they?" In winter blue. Ever see any jeans? Summer time they had red and black stripes. Know how they colored them (Here Mr. Ketcher laughed and looked away a while

and then continued) She wind thread in long ("You mean hanks") Yes. When she want red she take red oak bark, put in big kettle and boil. When you want black, you take big kettle and build big fire under it of pine, let black smoke settle in kettle, lots of it then you put in the sumacs, boil and this makes black. Sometimes they take the white shuck, tie it in places around the hanks and this leaves white spot in thread. She make us shirts, pants and big coats.

FATHER UNION SOLDIER.

My father, he fight in war. "Do you know where or to what company he belonged?" No, you know lawyer at Vinita, Simms, he got my father's discharge and all my papers. He promised to send them to me but I never got them. It had all that in them--my marriage paper too.

"Did they ever have any battles near where you lived?" Yes, they have fight down on Honey Creek, between two log houses, four miles southeast of Grove and a mile from Butler School house. When I was small we used to pick up bullets around there. They were so big and round. Who were they? I don't know, they were all killed. My father did not get hurt in the war and after he came home he used his gun to hunt with.

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BOAT

Our first boats were two sycamore logs fastened together, then later we put two poles between the logs and put a floor over this. This was a good boat and light. We used a long pole to steer with.

Mother died when I was eight years old and I went to live with my grandmother and about two years later my father died. I had three brothers and a sister but they are all dead now. When I was 16 years old I went to work for Cobb Welch and stayed with him till I married.

MARRIAGE

When I was thirty-seven year old, I married Rowena Blevins, who is now fifty four years old. We have eight children. They are Bert, Cora, Dave, Delores, Viola, Hubert, Dora May and Esteline. We lived on my land and I gave an acre for the school and helped to built it. Our first school house was a log building. I have this little place here but I still have sixty acres; the house burned down and now I have a one-room log and a box room, stable and some orchard.

When I was small, my father used to say, "No keep land.

White man he want it and take it." We are all fenced up now and it no like it used to be. No good hunting, no good fishing. Folks won't let you hunt or fish."

CHURCH BUILDING.

Our first church, a Baptist, was built near the Butler School House. When it was to be built we all gathered and cut and trimmed the logs and at what is a Log Rolling we raised the walls. This was a big one so we had to splice the logs for the sides. It was 16 x 32 feet and covered with clapboards. The square holes left in the sides for windows had doors which covered the openings and could be opened back for light and air. Our seats were logs split and the bark cleaned off and pegs driven into the undersides for legs with no backs. In the summer, we built a brush arbor and moved the seats out of door. For light at first we had the sycamore balls later the braided cloth in cens of grease.

Houses were built in the same way. All the neighbors gathered and helped and often a dance that night. "What did you have for music?" We had a gourd fiddle, ever see one? You take a long handled gourd, cut a round hole ^{in the big end, take out the seeds, cover this} with squirrel hide and the strings are horsehair, fastened at each end. Then you have a bow with horse hair strings

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and you play on this like a fiddle. Later we got to have the fiddle like you see now.

AMUSEMENTS

We had stomp dances, where you build big fire and the men and women dance around the fire to music. Usually on the day the dance is, they have a ball game. They have two sides and the players have long sticks with holes like a cup on the end of the sticks and the object is to get the ball through the goal at the opposite end from where you start without it touching the ground.

I enjoyed most the cornstalk shooting. Sometimes this would last two, three or four days. 350 cornstalks are piled longwise between four posts or stakes. There are two of these piles 100 yards apart. There are four men on a side. With an arrow they shoot standing in front of the stalks at the other pile and their shot counts as many points as their arrow pierces stalks. Sometimes ten points. 100 points meant a game. There is oftentimes much betting on this game, such as horses, your coat, dresses etc. Sometimes they build shed for the players to stand under.

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Here Mrs. Ketcher, who had come out of the house and sat down on the edge of the porch listening to us, said: You have forgotten the "Pigeon roosts." He laughed and said: ever see one? There used to be lots of them. You take pine torch made from pine stump and hold it under tree. Here he pointed to a tree near and said, they are as thick as those leaves. Light blinds them, they can't see and as they fall you hit them with stick so long. Soon get sack full or two sacks. Ready to go home.

It was growing late and we had been talking a long time so I asked him if there were any real old cemeteries near and he said no that his father and mother, with four others, were buried on the old place but that their graves were unmarked. He said he tried to buy the spot from the person who bought his father's farm but that he wouldn't sell it.

CONCLUSION.

Mr. Ketcher is a short, fat jolly Indian and smiles much of the time and enjoys talking (an unusual characteristic), and likes nothing better than to recall old times. They own a poor house and several lots of ground,

where you see always a good garden, and they live in a very humble way.

On leaving, I was invited back anytime and before leaving my attention was called to two other Cherokees who live close to him. I was told that they could tell me many things.