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KELLEY, AGNES. INTERVIEW.
BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field Worker's name Grace Kelley.

This report made on (date) August 19, 1937. 1937

1. Name Agnes Kelley.

2. Post Office Address Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Across from Linsey Ice Cream Plant.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1875.

5. Place of birth Northwest of Okmulgee, Checote homestead.

6. Name of Father ¹⁸⁷⁵ Sam Checote Place of birth _____

Other information about father Chief of Creeks for thirty years.

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

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 13.

Grace Kelley,
Interviewer.
August 19, 1937.

An Interview With Agnes Kelley,
Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

CIVIL WAR STORIES.

My mother's people went East to Tennessee. The ones who had negro slaves went South and fought with the Confederates. The ones who were poor and had no slaves took sides with the North. But the women and children on both sides had a hard time. There was a big bunch who went together, I think some had wagons but the most of them had to walk in the snow. Somehow they got mixed up and lost my uncle who was about seven and they didn't know what became of him until after the war. When they were coming back, on the other side of the Arkansas River, they found him in a wagon belonging to the Union Soldiers who had taken care of him all that time.

My uncle, Cha Hay Kee Jackson, was a Republican Northern soldier. When he came back to stay they settled on the Grand River between Muskogee and Fort Gibson where he ran a ferry. Some say Jackson Barnett ran that ferry but they don't know for it was not he. My uncle Jackson died and is buried in

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the National Cemetery there at Fort Gibson. After the war was over the Government took care of the ones who took sides with it.

My father, Sam Checote, was a captain on the Southern side, but he had another wife then; when she died he married my mother. During that time the Indians had to make their own clothing as they had their own spinning wheels. The ones who took sides with the Confederates went to the Red River; it was hot there and nobody took care of them. They ate sand plums, squirrels and some of them had corn which was parched and pounded and made into coffee; there are herbs and roots that the Indians knew how to prepare for food. They didn't depend on buying from a store even before the war started. Some, a lot, of them took smallpox and got sick and died. Nobody ever took care of the ones who went South either during nor after the war was over.

INDIANS DIDN'T COUNT AGE.

The nearest I can count it, I am sixty-two years old but I don't know for in the old days the baby was born and there was no record, and they never thought of how long ago the birth took place. No old Indian knows how old she is except

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what she can remember about what happened, and just guess about it.

GREEN PEACH WAR, BY SAM CHECOTE'S DAUGHTER.

I was eight or nine years old. We lived on the home-place northwest of Okmulgee, and were sitting on the porch. A whole lot of people came riding up on horses, I suppose they were Isparhechar's soldiers. One of them gave Daddy a letter and he gave it to one of his Light Horsemen to read to him. Then he wrote an answer and sent it back by these people. Then he came to town and stayed all night at the Council House where he had soldiers to protect him. Both sides had Light Horsemen. Daddy was a Democrat as he served on the Southern side. Isparhechar was a Republican who had been on the Northern side. They both had scouts out to see if the other side was near. Daddy stayed at the Council House during the day and at home at night except when some of Isparhechar's men were near. That was a good bit of the time. You might say he came home once in a while.

Sam Checote, daddy, was the Chief for so long, thirty years, they wanted someone else for a Chief and Isparhechar wanted that place.

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Some of the Isparhechar people said they went clear to the Rocky Mountains; the clouds were so low, not like they are around here. They had nothing to eat so they got enough of war and came back.

I don't think there were many battles nor many killed but I don't know about that. I couldn't say that I knew of a person being killed.

After they made peace they found out that they were close kinfolk. They didn't know it before the war. Daddy was a Tiger, and Isparhechar was a Tiger too, so Daddy and Isparhechar were Tiger Clan Kin.

ALLOTMENT.

In the Spring of 1899, I was working for Mrs. Meyers here in Okmulgee and one evening, I went home. They had just come home from Muskogee where they had gone to get some land. The old man, Sam Checots, picked out and fixed it (allotted) for me. My place was on top of the mountain northwest of Okmulgee and it was such poor land that I couldn't make a living on it in any way. After my marriage my husband exchanged it for some better land. Some people picked out land where they could rent it out to people like the Parkesons for pasture land.

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SNAKE UPRISING.

Mollie Davis is Chitto Harjo's sister and lives in Checotah. She is a rich woman but old. I think he must be dead or he would have come back here before now though nobody knows whether or not he is dead unless it is his sister.

I had an uncle in that uprising but I don't know too much about it. They scattered out and slept in the woods. Some say that a limb fell on my uncle and killed him but nobody knows. He never came home so he must be dead.

I saw their camp from a distance but wasn't close to it. There were quite a few camped there at the Hickory Ground Town. Chitto Harjo didn't charge anybody for joining him, it was just the ones who didn't want to allot who joined in the uprising. They were called Snakes after Chitto Harjo and are a very peculiar people. They won't talk to you for they do not speak to each other. If I, or another Indian that they know, meets one and speaks to him, or her, the other Snake Indian might speak but is not likely to. He would just look at you and go on. Indians are funny that way.

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NEW TOWN CHURCH.

Daddy was a Methodist Preacher and he had prayer and camp meetings at his own house as they had no church house. I don't know what year that was but it was a very long time ago.

Then they built a log church house below our house but it burned down.

This church building is the third house built. When it was built it was supposed to be called "Checote Chapel" but they changed it to New Town and I couldn't tell you what that means. There are eleven camp houses which belong to different members. These are for homes during meetings but they have other homes away from there. They are building a big arbor now and the meetings won't be over before the middle of September.

CHECOTE CEMETERY!

Sam Checote is not buried alone. He is buried just west of his home. The rest of the family is buried there except Jackson who is buried at Fort Gibson. The city of Okmulgee owns the ground now but it is in poor condition, not being



kept up by the relations for they feel it belongs to someone else. The cemetery is not kept up by the city either.

NEW TOWN CEMETERY.

Southwest of the church on the west side of the road in the woods is the New Town burial ground. Mrs. Haynes had some graves there and some of the church members bought ground there for their graves. Then, when she died her children got it and the church bought a large place from them so the whole thing belongs to the church. It is kept in good condition.

BAPTIST CEMETERY.

On the other side of Preston, three miles west, there is a burial ground that was bought by some Baptists. Albert Stake started a church so the members bought the ground to bury their dead in. He quit preaching in 1926 but they are still burying there. I imagine the taxes have taken it by now though.

PAYMENT.

Our last payment was in 1905, fourteen dollars in money to each person no matter what age. The little baby got his

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money the same as the old man. The other one was twenty-nine dollars in 1891. The stores let us have credit until we got our money for they knew that they would be paid when we got it, and they knew the Government was going to pay us.

RIBBON DANCE (CONCHARTY AND CUSSETAH)

This is on the fourth day while they are taking medicine. That night they have to take a bath in Deep Fork River before the stars come out. These different colored ribbons were hanging clear to the ground from their heads. I've only seen a very few. The ones who belong to the churches can't go for they don't believe in dances, so as most of the women belong to some church they don't have many Ribbon Dances and when they do the crowd is so big that you can't get close enough to see them.

CHIEF'S MESSAGE.

The Chief or King sends a little bunch of sticks to each of his men. Every day the man will throw one stick away until the last stick is thrown away. When he throws the last stick away he has to go to his town or pay five dollars. He has to go to his wife's town and then to his own town but they don't have their meetings at the same time.

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INDIAN SQUARE NAME. ☞

All men are given an Indian name by their King. (At first Agnes Kelley said, "Square names are for ones who dance.") They used to use their Indian or Creek name all the time but when the white men came they couldn't speak the Creek name. I think they gave the Indians their white names. The negro took the name of his master is how they got their name. One of my daddy's slaves lived north of Boynton and was named Checote. He was very feeble the last time he came to church so I believe he must be dead.

INDIAN MOTHERS MOST INTERESTED IN SCHOOL.

I went to Nuyaka Mission in 1893 when Mrs. Moore was a teacher and when John Robe was the Superintendent, too. I got to the fourth grade but mother died in 1895 so I quit school at the age of fifteen. Mrs. Moore died two years ago and John Robe died the first part of this year.

I liked to go to school but schools were different than they are now. They taught us to patch, darn, help in the kitchen. There was a cook and seamstress who showed us how to cook and sew. There was a washerwoman who washed

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for the boys but we did our own washing. When she was gone we did that work and got paid for it. The way I got most of my clothes was by washing for the boys.

There were two buildings for the girls, twenty girls to each building. The boys had another building separate from ours. We couldn't play together except when we had parties on Thanksgiving and Christmas. We had a good time then.

The boys did the work in their building and worked in the fields and outdoors.

CREEK MEDICINE.

The women of ^{the older generation} had their own house to stay in at menstruation time. They were careful not to use their men's dishes, chairs, beds, nor to drink out of the same bucket. It was so much trouble that they had their own dishes which were used only at that time. They had to get their own bucket of water to drink out of. The young people have quit that, most of them have, for it was too much trouble and they think it is foolish. But the older ones did it to keep the men "clean".

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The older Indian women had an easier time at the birth of babies because they took Indian Medicine before and after the baby came. I've known women who never went to bed at all but some of them went to bed after the birth in their own house. After a mother got well she took a bath in medicine to cleanse her and would ^{have} her own bucket, dishes, etc.

CREEK WIDOWHOOD.

When a man died his widow was put in a little house, with her hair let down, and kept there for four months. She wasn't cleaned up nor was her hair combed in that time. Her husband's people took care of her. After that time they took her out and cleaned her up. ("After she was through with her grieving" Agnes Kelley said). When it was time for her to marry, his kinfolk picked her a husband from his kinfolk. If the wife died his wife's kinfolk picked him a wife from her kinfolk.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.

Lots just live together; a very few, which means the church members, get married by a preacher. There would be

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three wives to one husband until here lately. I know some men who have two wives now. In 1895 I knew a woman at Broken Arrow who had two husbands; neither seemed to mind. They are dead now. When a man wants a divorce he just quits and goes to live with some other woman. (I know a woman in Henryetta who doesn't know her father for he had several wives and her mother had so many husbands. I don't think she would tell that to me though).

Some Indians started living together and made good homes, lived together as long as they lived. It was the only way of marriage they knew and meant as much as if they had had a preacher say some words to them.

INDIAN DOCTORS.

I had a trouble with my breast and foot; they swelled and turned as black as a negro. I went to two good white doctors and they didn't help me for four years but said it was cancer and ulcer respectively. I was so worried and getting worse. My daughter suggested we get the Greek Indian doctor, who was so good. The white doctors charge such a large amount that I couldn't get them like I should.

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The Indian doctor doesn't charge at all. You just pay him what you are able and want to pay. I got Sevon Miller. Barley Wolf is his daughter and lives in Okmulgee. He made medicine and said it is no cancer but as it has been bad so long it will take a little while to cure it; three or four treatments. He takes some herbs, sings a song, mixes with the little cane and blows on the medicine four times. These medicines, songs and ways he learned from an older Medicine Man. He makes a lot of medicine and stays in town a lot.

Sevon lives three or one and a half miles on the West side of Pierce Switch on the other side of Tecumseh. He has a store and you have to have a ticket with a number. You have to wait until your number is called before you can go in for there is such a crowd. Then you come home and go back for the next treatment.

The Medicine Man can see the person who is causing your sickness in the medicine that he blows in. This medicine is a liquid.