

HARE, De WITT

INTERVIEW

#8537 338

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

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Field Worker's name Anelia F. Harris
 This report made on (date) September 17, 1937
417 West 10th, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

1. Name DeWitt Hare
 2. Post Office Address Oklahoma City (Marty, South Dakota)
 3. Residence address (or location) 121 West 2nd
 4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 5 Year 1876
 5. Place of birth Marty, South Dakota

6. Name of Father Moses Hare Place of birth South Dakota Territory.
 Other information about father Farmer; half breed Indian.
 7. Name of Mother Margaret Hare Place of birth Wyoming Territory.
 Other information about mother Full blood Waguhi Sioux Indian.

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 11.

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Interview with DeWitt Hare
Oklahoma City.

Interviewer - Amelia F. Harris
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149
September 17, 1937

My father was a descendant and chief of three different tribes the Shawnee, Omaha at Mandam, and Sioux in Sisseton, South Dakota. However, we were classed as the Sioux Indians.

Mother was a descendant of Big Chief Moto waguhia meaning "Conquering Bear."

Some of our tribesman came to the Indian Territory, but were so unhappy and grieved so much, that the Government permitted them to return to the reservation in South Dakota.

During my father's regime there was absolute peace among the Indians. White people traveled over the Oregon Trail but there was never any disturbance, until one day some Mormons were traveling over the trail. They had an old sore footed cow, too worn out to travel any further. They left her by the side of the road.

There were two young Sioux Indian boys who came down

to visit the three camps. They saw this old cow lying by the roadside and thoughtlessly killed it.

The next day the Morgans came back for the cow and saw that some one had killed it. They went back to Fort Lorraine and reported to Lieutenant Gratin that the Indians had killed their cow. With thirty-one men and an interpreter he came out to the camps, and demanded the persons who killed the cow.

In the meantime, the boys becoming scared of what they had done, had gone back home. The chief told Lieutenant Gratin he didn't know where the boys were, but that he would pay for all damages but they wouldn't accept any pay, insisted on the delivery of the boys. The chief insisted he didn't know where the boys were and kept raising the price of a settlement until it reached twenty-five head of horses and some money. Still the Lieutenant refused, and he had his interpreter to tell Chief Conquering Bear that he would shoot him if he didn't deliver the

boys to him. The chief said, they are not here, I have offered to pay, I can't do more, you will have to shoot me, and the Lieutenant killed the chief.

This so incensed the three tribes of Indians who were in their tepees, that they all seemed to rise at once in a body and ^{they} surrounded Lieutenant and his thirty-one men. In less than an hour the Indians had killed every man. The interpreter pleaded for his life, but they killed him too.

These Indians never forgot the death of their beloved chief, and were often on the war path after that.

Red Cloud was next in line as chief of the Oglalah Sioux. Spotted Tail became chief of the Bruleah Sioux who established their identity from the day of Chief Conquering Bear's murder. They didn't try to keep down the strife between the Indians and white man. The loss of my grandfather

over a cow was not easily forgotten.

I am registered as a three-quarter $\frac{1}{2}$ Yankston Sioux. Mother died when I was five years old, and I was placed in St. Pauls Protestant Episcopal Mission School for one year. Father brought me home and I attended the public school at Tyndall, South Dakota, one term.

The United States Indian Agency demanded that I be placed in the Yankston Agency Boarding School for Government wards. They threatened to stop the issue of rations, horses, wagon and harness. Father needed these things, so what price, I went. They taught school work in the morning, and manual labor in the field and garden in the afternoon. Others learned to do carpenter work from one to five thirty. Then we cleaned up for supper. I never had much regard for the government school. The officials are cold blooded, and look upon the Indian as an animal, a little superior to the dog. Just anything

was good enough for the Indians. The wards of the government are like the proverbial "children of Israel," still in bondage.

That year Father married again. I was taken home at the closing of school. My step-mother made it very unpleasant for me, but not for long. My father died that Fall and I went to live with Grandma Here. She would not allow me to go to school, and insisted that I adopt the tribal custom of dress which was a blanket, breech clout, leggings and moccasins and let my hair grow long. I was instructed in Indian folk lore, customs, tradition, legends, Indian craft and art. I rode bare back on my horse and hunted wild animals with my bow and arrow.

This was a very thrilling life, but I was not satisfied. My parents wanted me to be educated, and when I was twenty, I left Grandmother and, of my own accord, discarded the Indian garb, put on white

man's clothes, had my hair cut off, and entered the Santee Normal Training School, operated by the American Missionary Association. It was located at Santee, Nebraska. I was determined to learn. I had almost forgotten everything that I had learned in previous schools and had to start from the first grade.

I finished the eighth grade work here (as high as they went) in four years. I then went to a Preparation School at Grand Junction, Colorado. I graduated here and went to Huron College, South Dakota. I graduated here from the School of Commerce; this was in 1905.

I accepted a position as stenographer with L. M. Goble, an attorney, for one year. I was offered better wages as stenographer for George Custer, one of the greatest criminal lawyers in South Dakota. I was only with him one year, when I resigned, and accepted the appointment as deputy court clerk at Wheeler,

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South Dakota. I filled this position very creditably and was solicited by both the Democratic and Republican parties to run for this office. I declined and accepted a position with Tripp-Dillion and Cooley at Yankston, South Dakota. This was one of the largest and strongest corporation firms in South Dakota. They were big men, and I was proud to be associated with them. Bartlett Tripp was an ambassador to Austria under Cleveland's administration. Honorable Charles Dillion was a congressman from the first South Dakota district. Later, he became a member of the South Dakota Supreme Court. Robert Cooley was the real brains of the corporation. He compiled all briefs and petitions for the firm. I was stenographer for this firm eight years. They were fine upright men. I was always treated as their equal, and was an invited guest in their homes many times. After being used to out door life, eleven years of confinement impaired my health. I had to resign, and go to Colorado. I remained there for

three years, and thought I had entirely recovered. I then went to Sioux City, Iowa, and accepted a stenographic position with the Banker's Reserve Life Insurance Company. I stayed with them seven months.

My health failed again and I went back to South Dakota, my home. But I couldn't be idle, and became associated with the State Prohibition Headquarters as lecturer among my people, the Sioux Indians. This was nearly all out door work, and I got practically well. They sent me all over the state as a prohibition lecturer. I am proud to say that I am one Indian who never touched "fire water" in any form and never used tobacco in any way.

I attribute this to an incident which happened when I was six years old. Father and I were down town, and I saw a drunken Indian staggering around. He stopped in front of a store and knocked the window lights out with his fist. He cut his hands and arms and was bloody. Then the officers came and took him

away. All this frightened me so. Then Father said to me, "Son, you see what liquor does to you, it's the greatest evil that ever befell our people. I want you to promise me that whatever you do in life, don't touch liquor." I made the promise, which I have religiously kept.

I was a delegate to the National Prohibition Convention at St. Paul, Minnesota. Here I formed the acquaintance of the noted Carrie Nation. We became quite good friends and had many interesting talks. I was Sergeant of Arms at this convention. I am the only Indian to have held this position. I intend to make Oklahoma my future home. I like it, and will devote my time to lecturing and writing. The Indians are more progressive here than any where in the United States. Oklahoma is rich in opportunities for the progressive Indian, and I intend to try to garner some of them for my self.

The Sioux Indians living habits are very similar to those of the Cheyennes here. We used to bury our

dead in tree tops. If there weren't any trees, we built a scaffold and placed the bodies up on this. The reason for burying them up high was to keep "varmints" away from the body.

We didn't have a marriage ceremony. We did court our wives, and with their consent and that of their parents we took them to our home. It was a common law marriage that is all.