

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

183

HANLEY, AMINDA LATTA. SECOND INTERVIEW 9636.

Field Worker's name Linnaeus B. Ranch.

This report made on (date) January 5, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Aminda Latta Hanley.

2. Post Office Address Fargo, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1869.

5. Place of birth Park Hill Mission, Cherokee Nation.

6. Name of Father Latta Place of birth Alabama.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Harriet A. Sheldon Place of birth Utica, New York.

Other information about mother Early day teacher in Park Hill

Mission school.

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 8.

HANLEY, AMINDA LATTA. SECOND INTERVIEW. 9636.

Linnaeus B. Ranck,
Field Worker.
January 3, 1937.

Interview with Mrs. Aminda Latta Hanley.
Fargo, Oklahoma.
Born 1869.
Father-Latta
Mother-Harriet A. Sheldon

Mrs. Hanley's mother was Miss Harriet A. Sheldon who came from Utica, New York, to old Park Hill Mission in the Cherokee Nation in the year 1856. Miss Sheldon taught in the Mission school for a number of years. Before the Civil War started Miss Sheldon married a Southerner of the name of Latta who was then employed on the large farm of Colonel George Murrell, the son-in-law of the distinguished John Ross, long-time Principal Chief of the Cherokees. The holdings and enterprises of Colonel Murrell were situated close to Park Hill. Mr. Latta, a native of Alabama, was Colonel Murrell's slave driver. When Mr. Latta and Miss Sheldon were married at Park Hill Miss Sheldon's parents renounced and disowned her because she had married a "Southern Slave driver." Mr. Latta served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War and for over two years during that period knew nothing of

HANLEY, AMINDA LATTA. SECOND INTERVIEW. 9636.

- 2 -

Mrs. Latta's condition, fate or whereabouts. In the midst of the conflict Mrs. Latta took her small children and returned to her people in New York at the pressing instance and with the aid of friends of the family. Mr. Latta, Mrs. Hanley's father, returned to Park Hill after the War closed and through old friends learned where his wife and children were and in the course of time the family was re-united and lived in the spacious Murrell home near Park Hill.

The Pin Indian Society was a secret order of Cherokees and Chickasaws only, which originated in the Cherokee Nation during and incident to the Civil War. Membership in this society or secret order was limited to those Cherokees who were not less than quarter-blood Indian and who were supposedly of the old Ridge and Boudinot faction of the Cherokee tribe. During the Civil War the Pin Indians professed to be Union loyalists, in fact, and in the light of their operations they were a well organized band of ruthless brigands and plunderers imposing their outrageous depredations upon any and all

HANLEY, AMINDA LATTA. SECOND INTERVIEW 9636.

- 3 -

who happened to be assailable within their range of lawless activities. The Pins would invade the homes of helpless women and children and forcibly appropriate anything of value or use which their fancy or desire happened to suggest. They would ask their intended victims if they were Union or Confederate sympathizers and it mattered not what the answer was. If the person expressed loyalty to the North the Pins wrought vengeance in looting and robbing; and if allegiance to the south was indicated the Pin Indians' treatment of the victim was the same. They robbed, stole and looted promiscuously and murdered deliberately when it appeared expedient to them. Those whom the Pin Indians regarded as enemies, if apprehended, usually suffered torture or death or both. Mrs. Latta told of a man of the name of Meggs who hid in the chimney of the smokehouse on the old Murrell farm for two days in order to escape capture by the Pins who even carried their operations into Arkansas.

The Pin secret society was perpetuated after the Civil War and became a contending factor in post Civil War politics

HANLEY, AMINDA LATTA. SECOND INTERVIEW.

9636.

- 4 -

in the Cherokee Nation, and the organization in some respects was much like the KuKlux Klan. In the years that followed after the War there developed two major political factions in the Cherokee Nation, one was known as the Ross faction, the other as the Downing faction. The Pin Indians all were Downing men and it seems that political bitterness and animosity, particularly with respect to the society of Pin Indians, was still a potential disturbing influence in the lives of the Cherokees as late as the middle or late 80's.

During the early or middle 80's/^a drunken brawl developed in Tablequah one afternoon to the climax of which Mrs. Hanley was an eye witness. The city marshal of Tablequah at the time was a Cherokee of the name of Poorbear. Marshal Poorbear endeavored to quiet a particularly disorderly young mixed-blood Cherokee of the name of Jim Buchannan; whose mother was a sister of the mother of the late Will Rogers. Jim Buchannan engaged in an angry argument with Marshal Poorbear and finally, because of urging on the part of several older Cherokees present, Jim

HANLEY, AMANDA LATTA. SECOND INTERVIEW. 9636.

- 5 -

Buchanan shot and killed the marshal on the scene of the controversy, then fled immediately and kept himself in hiding. Poorbear was a member of the Pin secret order and the fact of his being so rashly murdered by Buchanan inflamed the society membership to the point of wishing to retaliate in kind by murdering young Buchanan. They armed themselves and in bands searched and hunted for the offending youth. Buchanan succeeded in dodging and avoiding his Pin pursuers for several weeks by hiding in the rough and dense woodlands of the adjacent country, subsisting mainly the while on wild fruits and nuts. The parents of young Buchanan and Mr. and Mrs. Latta had been neighbors and were good friends and Buchanan had been a pupil of Mrs. Latta, Mrs. Hanley's mother, in the Park Hill Mission school. Exhausted, desperate and in rags, Jim came to Mr. Latta's door before daylight one morning and begged to be admitted. Mr. Latta was not in favor of admitting and sheltering him; Mrs. Latta took compassion on the youth, her former pupil, and had him admitted to their home. Buchanan told his benefactors, Mr. and Mrs. Latta, that he

HANLEY, AMINDA LATTA. SECOND INTERVIEW.

9636.

- 6 -

could hope to avoid capture but little longer and since capture meant being shot on the spot if apprehended he implored the Lattas to provide for him secret and safe hiding about their home for a few days and in the meantime he would try to secure sufficient aid from his relatives in the neighborhood to enable him to go to relatives in Georgia. Mrs. Latta hid the young man safely away in a small, dark attic in her home which was difficult of access and she cautiously took food to him daily. In the meantime the assistance of a certain white man^{was} arranged for who secretly contacted Buchannans relatives in the community who made up a fund of \$250.00 to help young Jim get beyond reach of the incensed Pin Indians. This white man bought clothes for the young man and planned for his secret departure under cover of darkness and Jim Buchanan was hustled out of the country secretly one night via Fort Smith, Arkansas. In the course of his flight that night his escort was stopped by a suspicious Pin Indian of the name of Barefoot. Jim's aide, however, satisfied Barefoot that his midnight mission was perfectly legitimate and

HANLEY, AMINDA LATTA. SECOND INTERVIEW.

9636.

- 7 -

regular and the two men went on their way unharmed and with the fact unknown to the Pin Indian, that the very man he was looking for had so cleverly eluded him. While Buchanan was in hiding in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Latta some Pin Indians came there hunting for him, and except for the confidence the Cherokees had in their former Mission teacher, Mrs. Harriet Sheldon Latta, Jim Buchanan would have been found and captured at this time.

A venerable Cherokee minister of the name of Stephen Foreman was pastor of the church for several years that Mr. and Mrs. Latta, parents of Mrs. Hanley regularly attended and at least half of this church's congregation were Cherokees. The Reverend Foreman always spoke English when preaching his sermons and beside him at this time sat an interpreter who repeated, usually but a sentence or two at a time, the sermon in the Cherokee language for the benefit of the Indians in the congregation who could not understand English. This arrangement caused endless pauses in the course of Reverend Foreman's sermon and made the church service very trying and tiring to the children, including Mrs. Hanley, who was then

HANLEY, AMINDA LATTA. SECOND INTERVIEW.

9836.

- 8 -

only a small-like girl. The large majority of the Cherokee citizens had already used the amount of their respective annuities by the time the money was payable and they kept so much in debt to the merchants of the Cherokee Nation that on the day of annuity payments the creditors of the Cherokees were always present with their claims against the Indians and in most instances the full amount of the annuity payment went directly to the creditors of the citizens upon proper proof of the claim of the creditors.