

KILBY, H. T.

INTERVIEW

9942

17

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

Field Worker's name Robert H. Boatman

This report made on (date) February 10, 1938

1. Name H. T. Kilby

2. Post Office Address Blanchard

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month September Day 23, Year 1880

5. Place of birth Wilkes County, North Carolina

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

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 3.

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Robert H. Boatman
Investigator
February 10, 1938

Interview with H. T. Kilby
Blanchard, Oklahoma

EARLY INDIAN RESERVATIONS

I was born September 23, 1880, in Wilkes County, North Carolina. In 1889 I came to the Territory and settled near Cordell in the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation. Here I learned a good deal about the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. The Indians had many quaint customs. Illness was something they did not understand, thinking that it was caused by evil spirits.

These Indians made a sick person the center of many strange performances. First the Medicine Man was called in to chant and dance in the hope of driving the evil spirit away by magic. If the patient failed to improve the whole tribe would lend a hand and stage the Sick Dance. All the members would gather at the patient's home outside of which a big circle had been cleared off. In the center a pole with a cross-bar was erected upon which were hung all sorts of trinkets such as beads, feathers, bear claws or deer skins. Women would cook sacred food, a fire would be lighted,

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#9942

2

tom-toms would start throbbing and the patient would be brought out to observe this marvelous scene. The Indians' idea was to get the patient's mind off of his illness.

This ceremony lasted all night and far into the next day, providing the patient held out that long. At the end of the ceremony the patient was pretty sure to be cured or dead of excitement.

Death was a sad and mysterious thing to the Indians. When death came it was time for mourning and grieving for other members of the tribe. In some tribes it was customary for the survivors to cut their hair off close to their heads in token of their grief. Some of the Indians would gash their bodies while others would go to the extremes of cutting two or three of their fingers off to the first joint. This was done to cause the living to remember the dead.

In case it was a husband who had died, the wife was compelled to go to the grave and build a fire at sunset that was kept burning until sunrise. This was kept for a time from two days to two months, according

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#9942'

3

to the time the tribe believed it took a spirit to reach the Happy Hunting Grounds.

These Indians were very civilized. They lived in camps up and down the river and had permanent villages. They leased some of their land to white people.

I was in the mercantile business for seven years at Herring. Here I saw an old saying proven true. "An Indian never forgets a kindness nor an insult." There were no railroads here at that time and the country was wild and lonesome. After leaving Herring I came to what is now McClain County and have been here ever since and I expect to remain here.