

HOLLINGSWORTH, SARAH.

INTERVIEW

7830

329

Field Worker, Nannie Lee Burns,
October 15, 1937.

Interview with Mrs. Sarah Hollingsworth.
Miami, Oklahoma.

My father was Henry Jones and my mother was Matilda Kent. They were born in Tennessee where they grew up and were married and came in an early day to Iowa.

I, Sarah Jones, was born in Keokuk County, Iowa, October 28, 1853.

When I was two years old, my parents moved to Grundy County, Missouri, and here we lived for four years. I was too small to know anything of the Civil War days and can remember only things that I have been told and the blurred recollections that I have are of no important events. Of course, I have heard my parents tell of the local happenings and of the stealing and burning of property during Civil War days.

After living here for four years, we moved and settled fifteen miles east of Carthage, Missouri. Here we lived on a farm. My parents were poor folks and we children had to work so I did not go to school as much as I wanted

-2-

to but went three six-month terms and had made arrangements to go to Emporia, Kansas, to school and had arranged for my tuition and board and had started to school there when I was sixteen.

My parents moved to the Indian Territory and Mother wrote me that she was so lonesome that I came home, intending to return to school. I even left my trunk at Emporia but Mother was so lonesome and there was so much work here that I never returned for my trunk and clothes.

Life in the Indian Territory.

My father had only one team of horses but he had three yoke of oxen. I had three brothers and three sisters and after we came here they had little chance to go to school as the Mission Schools at both Wyandotte and Ottawa admitted only Indian children. The only opportunity for the white children to attend school was when some family or several families would hire someone to teach a subscription school for a few weeks or months.

One of the first of these schools was taught by Mrs. Annie King at her home. Her husband, Joseph King, built her a little room in their yard and she taught their

children and the children of the neighbors who would attend.

I began to spin and weave when I was a very small girl. We had to make our own cloth for all of our clothes, bedding and household uses.

Daddy built Mother's loom and we "took in" weaving. Our first home was one mile west of Ottawa, within a few miles of where I now live, but we have lived in the Peoria Nation some and I have lived for a short time occasionally in Miami.

Two of the best boys whom I knew were Solomon Clay and Joe Holmes, two Ottawa boys. Dan was Solomon's younger brother; he grew up a good neighbor boy.

Sol, when he was grown, went to Texas and worked on the cattle ranches.

We had our neighborhood dances and singings but it was not until the Friend's Church was built at Ottawa that we had regular church and Sunday School outside of the Missions, held mostly at the schools. These services were not attended very much. The Ottawa Church was built in 1891.

What we had to buy, we had to go either to Seneca, Missouri, or to Baxter Springs, Kansas, and in those days

-4-

we had really no roads here except the Military Road to Baxter Springs and by-roads leading out in the different directions from that. The roads were not worked and the streams had no bridges and if a place in the road got too bad to pull through, you just made a new road around the bad place. My parents had to go in the wagon and the traveling was so slow that it was a long hard day's drive to Baxter Springs, and back; sometimes they would stay over-night and come home the next day and if they did so they camped over-night.

Pooler's Ferry.

At the Military Crossing on the Neosho River east and a little south of Miami, Moses Pooler, an Ottawa, had a ferry and he added, after establishing the ferry, a little store and post office and later a blacksmith shop. The Government stage hands and the passengers traveling between Baxter Springs and Fort Gibson on the south ate dinner here each day. There was a stage each way every day. The last driver was Lewis Moore. The store and blacksmith shop were built after we came here. Here the drivers changed horses each day and there was a horse

-5-

shed where the horses and mules used for driving were kept over-night.

One of the memories that I have of the ferry is that of an old colored man who helped with the ferry and when he was not working you would hear music from his hut. He took care of an old black mule, too.

At this time the ferry was run by Sub Oak, a full blood Ottawa Indian.

Jason Stilley lived at the old ferry.

Laxy Tom Hudson, as he was called, was so lazy that he would wait for the apples to fall off the trees rather than to make any effort to get them off.

Cattle.

A man's financial standing was measured somewhat by the cattle and stock that he had around him in those days.

Most of this part of the county in those days was covered with tall, blue-stem grass, in some places as high as your head and each summer you would find herds of cattle all over the country. It was dangerous to start any great distance on foot because of the cattle.

-6-

Cattle were driven from the south and from Texas through here along the Military Road or Trail to Baxter Springs, Kansas, which was the nearest shipping point. The cattlemen would start in the early summer and graze their cattle along the way, often not reaching Baxter Springs till late in the fall or early in the winter. In this way they did not have to feed the cattle. Another thing that was noticeable about the travel along the Military Road was that the cattle were always being moved north and the people who traveled along the road were going south. You

would see a string of covered wagons always going south. For protection several families usually went together.

Dick Williams, the father of Charlie and Lon, always had a drove of cattle but he ranged on the other side of the river from us. Frank Connor also had some cattle and he ranged east of the Williams cattle and south of us across the river.

Tom Griffiths and Al Dively ranged closest to us. They would buy their cattle in Arkansas and Texas and bring them here in the spring and keep them here till ready to ship. In the north part of the county Nailer had his range in the west part and Goodner was more nearly north of us.

Most of the people here had smaller numbers of cattle and the boys of the families had to look after the cattle to keep them from getting into the larger herds so almost every young man got the idea that he was a cowboy.

Law and Police.

We really had no law then, except that the people were looked after by men called "Indian Police." A number of the men living here belonged to it or served at various times as Indian policemen.

Among them were: Mose Pooler, an Ottawa; Alfred Mudeater, a Wyandotte; Dave Geboe, an Ottawa; J. S. Dawson, a Wyandotte; James Cotter, a Wyandotte; and others whose names I do not just now recall.

Whenever there were any differences or disturbances among the Indians, a member of the Indian Police went out to investigate and if he could not adjust it, the offenders were told to come to the Indian Agency to see the agent. Or if the trouble was between a white settler and an Indian, an Indian policeman went and investigated and negotiated a settlement. They also

-8-

policed the dances and other gatherings and kept order. Every offender was not arrested and thrown in jail as they are now. For instance if some young man became unruly they might take him out and tie him to a tree and leave him there for a while. Everybody got along with his or her neighbors and tried to help.

Doctors.

Doctors were hard to get because they had to come great distances and the roads were so poor that people when they were sick helped each other. Neighbors went to the home of a sick person and did anything that they could do and if the person was very sick the neighbors took turns sitting up nights with the sick men, women or child.

They did not have undertakers in those days and when one died some of the neighbors either went to the nearest town for a coffin or else made it themselves.

The neighbors dug the grave and attended the funeral and one of them if they had a spring hack would haul the body to the cemetery, followed by the relatives and neighbors.

The funeral service was often, for lack of a church, held in the home. The neighbor women made the clothes and the neighbors prepared the body for burial.

-9-

Aunt Jane King.

Aunt Jane Phelps or Aunt Jane King, as we always called her until she grew so old that we began calling her Grandma King, was a midwife and doctored men as well. She was a person much sought after and was always ready and willing to give her services and was the only person that we had to call upon who was near us in those early days.

Aunt Jane was born near the Great Lakes and came with the Ottawas through Ohio, Kansas, to the Indian Territory. She lived to be one hundred and twenty-two years old.

During the last years of her life, her birthday was the occasion of a big celebration by the whole neighborhood.

She was the most active little, old woman that I ever knew. When small her mother had her strapped to a board, she broke the strap and fell and hurt her back but never did anything keep her from being the merriest, liveliest person that you ever met.

At the party on her one hundredth and thirteenth birthday she told the people that it was just a hundred years ago that she had had her first beau.

-10-

At a birthday even later she went on the floor and showed the company how people danced when she was young.

She was an early riser. always, and she always wore a cap on her head and a handkerchief around her neck.

The year before she died she pieced two quilts for her granddaughter and the year she died, she fixed enough rags for forty yards of rag carpet.

The last years of her life she was a cripple having broken a leg and only the summer before she died she walked a half a mile on her crutch to Ottawa to church.

Peoria Nation.

We lived a short time in the Peoria Nation and there we knew something of the Modocs, the Pawnees, and the Nez Percés. The Modocs were settled on the Modoc Reservation in 1873, the year before we moved to the Indian Territory and they were peaceable and tried hard to learn what was expected of them and how to work in this strange country. Many of them died the first year because the climate was so different.

Neither the Poncas or the Nez Percés were kept here very long. They were brought here to punish them and

-11-

after a while they began returning to their people in western Indian Territory, a few at a time, until many were gone and then the rest were taken back. Both of the latter tribes were quartered in the Quapaw country and were looked after by United States soldiers.

The Berry Ferry.

The Berry Ferry was opened by Frank Connor about a half of a mile below the present Connor bridge which spans the Neosho River north and east of Fairland. This ferry was named Berry from Amos Berry, the man who lived just south of the ferry.

There was one other ferry on the Neosho River between the Connor Ferry and the mouth of the Neosho, Audrain Ferry west of Wyandotte.

Wat Jennison.

Wat Jennison drifted into this country with the cattle. He ate his first dinner in this country at my father's house. Within a few weeks after he came he was married to Woolford Robitaille's widow and my father made the remark, "If he will just work as well as he can talk."

-12-

The lady had only a small one-room, log house but her former husband had had the logs ready to build another room so, after they were married, decided to build and in the building instead of laying the logs above each other he stood them on end and they were fastened at the top. He had been raised in the north and did not know how to build log houses.

Marriage.

It was often said to me, "Sarah, why don't you marry an Indian? In spite of this suggestion when I was twenty years old I married my first husband, H. M. Shriver, a white man. My brothers married Indian girls and through ~~then we have lived among the Indians and our interests have~~ always been the same. We had five children, and after Mr. Shriver's death I married again, in fact, I have been married six times altogether and my last husband, Samuel L. Hollingsworth, died only a short time ago.