



BIOGRAPHY FORM  
 WOMAN'S PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Amelia F. Harris

This report made on (date) September 23, 1937

1. Name Josephine Urray Lattimer

2. Post Office Address Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 519 South Walker

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

5. Place of birth Robuck Lake, Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory

6. Name of Father Phillip Urray Place of birth Georgia

Other information about father Enlisted with Stand Watie's

7. Name of Mother Malinda Robuck Place of birth Brigade Indian Territory

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

LATTIMER, JOSEPHINE USRAY INTERVIEW.

#8588

An Interview with Josephine Ugray Lattimer, Oklahoma City  
By - Amelia F. Ferris, Field Worker.  
September 23, 1937.

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James Ugray, who became my father after the war, was the youngest son of Phillip Ugray and Palayah Homer Ugray. (Palayah means woman with long hair). He enlisted with the Stand Watie brigade and remained until the close of the war.

My father was in very close quarters at the battle of the Verdigris. With rain and mud and a bad wound in the ankle, he was almost exhausted from hobbling along trying to catch up with the rest of his regiment. He crouched down behind some tall brushes for a brief rest, when, glancing out through the shrubs, he spied a blue coated soldier galloping along on a big gray mule. My father cautiously took aim and as the Union Soldier drew nearer, father shot and killed him. He caught the mule, stripped the soldier of his blue coat, weapons, and ammunition, climbed upon the mule and rode back to his company. After the close of the war, father rode the mule back home.

In 1866, Mr. James Usray and Miss Josephine, daughter of William Robuck, were married and established their home on Robuck Lake near Usray Creek. This lake is in the Choctaw Nation.

Their first home was a half dugout until my father hewed logs and built a two-room, log house with a sandstone chimney. They used water from a spring. My father built a milk trough where the water overflowed from the spring where the milk and butter were kept sweet and cold.

The Indian law permitted any Choctaw to take up as much land as he could fence or plow around, so my father plowed around five hundred acres. At first, he rented a hundred and fifty acres to a negro family who planted it all in cotton and corn. Then my father sowed fifty acres in feed stuff and fifty acres in corn and they made a wonderful crop the first year they were married.

My parents were very ambitious; they wanted to work and acquire wealth for the future and while my father was working hard in the field, my mother taught school at Good-

land, and both saved and economized in every way possible. They accumulated enough money to buy their first herd of stock. They bought twenty-five head of heifers, five brood mares and six brood sows.

Their brand was the reversed S. The next year the heifers all brought calves, the mares had mule colts and the sows increased to sixty-two head.

They formed the habit of feeding their stock one-half ear of corn or a little cotton seed every day during the winter.

There was a big walnut grove in the pasture where the salt licks were and this is the place where my father fed the stock. He kept track of his stock and as the stock industry grew, my father built a ranch house near this walnut grove.

The cowboys used to stay here in the spring and when the steers were fat the boys would drive them over the old Texas Trail and into Kansas and Missouri to market.

By this time, four daughters had been born to my

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parents. Mother had to stop teaching and rear her family.

When we were old enough we were sent to New Hope Academy. I then went to Athenaeum College for girls at Columbia, Tennessee. My expenses were paid by the Government. I also passed the examination required by law for a five year certificate to teach.

I finished my literary course at this college in three years and the following term I went to Oak Cliff College in Dallas, Texas, and took a course in Home Economics, Art, and Interior Decorating.

I spent the greater part of my time in summer on Ro - buck Lake fishing. I caught fish that weighed from fifteen to twenty-five pounds. We usually had a fullblood Choctaw girl living with us. These Choctaw girls wanted to learn to speak English and go to school too.

When I was twelve years old we had three Indian girls living with us; Luxia, Twysie and Malissa Homer. Each girl had a part in the house work but we had plenty of time for sports and Luxia was my playmate then. If we were not fish-

ing, we would gather turtle eggs out of the sand. There would often be twenty-five eggs in a nest; we cooked and ate these eggs.

I caught lots of big bull frogs on a hook baited with a red flannel string; these frogs would snap at the red flannel string almost as soon as we put it into the lake. We enjoyed eating the frogs' hind legs.

Luxia's duty was to watch a small corn patch near the house and keep the crows out of it. Twysie's and Malissa's duties were to make all kinds of Indian dishes. Most of them were made in a mortar and broken with a pestle. This mortar is usually made from a hickory tree.

The Indians would select a tree about two feet in thickness and saw it off to the height of three feet. Then one end was hollowed out within three inches of the outer edge and was hollowed out to a depth of fifteen inches. We would put the corn, out of which we made different dishes, into this hollow place. The pestle was made from a small tree about six inches wide and this they used to beat corn with. The pestle was usually about six to ten inches long. Then this stick was sawed to a depth of about two inches all the way around leaving the

center about two inches thick and when the outer part was chopped off the two inner parts would form the handle. The whole thing was scraped with glass until smooth. These mortars would last for years.

One of our favorite dishes was hickory nut hominy. This was prepared by placing corn in the mortar, sprinkle with a little water and beat it with the pestle until the husks came off the corn. Then, the corn was taken out, placed in a big sieve and shaken up in the wind. This was done in order to blow all the husks out. When this was done, the corn was returned to the mortar, the corn was cracked, then it was ready for cooking. It was placed in an iron pot with hickory nut kernels and cooked until done and seasoned well. It made a very palatable dish. Pashofa was made in a similar way, using hog meat instead of hickory nuts. We were never without some Indian dish brewing in the fireplace and we were never without honey as grandfather had an apiary.

One of the most interesting amusements we had was Indian ball games. This game was played with a small ball about an inch and a half in diameter. These balls were made of twine or string rolled tightly and hard, covered with rawhide stitched on very smooth and round. Two goals were erected and to score a point a player had to hit the goal with the ball. Each player used two short



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sticks with rawhide spoons or small cups on the ends. These spoons or cups were large enough to hold the balls. Sometimes these games were very rough and the players thought nothing of knocking each other down or of hitting each other over the head with their sticks.

All Indian children learned to swim and hunt, although hunting was never a sport with us. We killed game for food only.

I saw one Indian man shot for committing murder. He was permitted to go home and was told to return at a certain date, and on the day set for the execution he and his family were there. Their faces showed no sign of emotion except for a strained expression on his mother's face, as she lovingly brushed his coat. When the last minute came the condemned man shook hands with his relations, walked to a tree, bared his breast and faced the boyhood friend whom he chose to fire the fatal shot.

After I was graduated from school I returned to our home at Goodland, now known as Hugo, and taught the first day school for Indians in that town. I rented a vacant house from Joel Spring and converted it into a school house. The seats were long, pine benches and there were no desks. I had a long table made around which the older children sat. The younger children held their books and slates in their laps.

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I taught McGuffey's Latest System, cardboard style. A piece of cardboard was hung on the wall with a picture and a description of each lesson. I received \$75.00 per month as my salary from the Choctaw National Government.

The next year I married O. S. Lattimer from Lamar County, Texas, and he built our home five miles west of Goodland, now known as Farney, and he also built one large room for a school in our back yard. I named it the Wigwam School and taught school here for three years. This was in 1900.

One important event of territorial days was the appointment of the Dawes Commission. This Commission was composed of Mr. Dawes, Mr. Kidd and Mr. McKennon. This Commission was established for the benefit of the Five Civilized Tribes. It was proposed that the members of the Five Civilized Tribes should give up their tribal lands and take individual allotments. This action was not left to the vote of the Indian. Our tribe, however, signed the agreement and they took 2,000 acres of land away from me and allotted to me 160 acres of Grade A land. I took my allotment where we built the little school house.

Mr. Lattimer and two of our daughters took their allotment in Garvin County, five miles east of Pauls Valley.