

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

281

LEWIS, (MRS.) INTERVIEW. 8284

Field Worker's name Robert H. Boatman

This report made on (date) August 19, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Lewis

2. Post Office Address Washington, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) _____

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

5. Place of birth _____

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 _____

LEWIS, (MRS.) INTERVIEW. 8284

Robert H. Boatman
Interviewer
August 19, 1937

Interview with Mrs. Lewis
Washington, Oklahoma

James Francis Marion Prince, my father, was born November 17, 1836, in the state of Arkansas, his parents being Sim and Sarah Prince. He grew up on the farm and in 1863 was married to Mrs. Carolyn Merrick, a war widow. He was physically disabled and could not serve in the war so contented himself with farming. He lived in Arkansas until 1891, when he removed to McAlester.

There were only a very few white people in McAlester then and since my father had learned doctoring he soon gained the friendship and confidence of the Choctaws and mixed-breeds.

Once a man, whose daughter was sick and who lived at some distance from McAlester, started to bring Dr. Prince to visit his daughter. The distance to the man's home was some twelve to fifteen miles and there were no roads; only cow trails. This man got lost and they came up on an Indian hut; this Indian knew the way to McAlester so he saddled up his pony and started with them.

They were riding single file over a trail and were

-2-

passing along close to a high ledge of rock when a velvet tailed rattlesnake struck the Indian on the cheek bone. The Indian stepped out of his saddle and said, "Me dead;" and sure enough in less than ten minutes he was dead. The white men left the Indian and came on the rest of the way. When they started on the return trip they came to the dead Indian lying on the ground and began a search for the snake that had bitten him. They soon found it in a coil on a ledge of rock about ten feet away from the dead body of the Indian. Dr. Prince shot the snake several times and when it was killed they examined it and found that it had twenty-one rattles. They skinned the snake and found that his hide held almost two bushels of wheat bran.

Dr. Prince compounded his own medicines principally from herbs.

Belladonna and May apples were gathered and dried; the roots of the herbs were used; after being dried they were pulverized and mixed and this mixture was used as a purgative. Other herbs were used in the same way only for different diseases.

LEWIS, (MRS.) INTERVIEW.

8284

-3-

Some of these herbs were the ginseng or black snake root, blood root and what is known as the broom weed.

The Choctaw Indians were peculiar people. If a member of a Choctaw family died, he or she was buried in a place close to the family home and all his or her possessions were buried with the dead body and for several days after burial some member of the family would go to the grave each day and lie down across the grave for an hour at a time, and then would punish himself or herself in some way.

Sometimes, one would cut his flesh with a sharp stone or stick. This was the Choctaw way of showing sorrow.

Dr. Prince was called the White Medicine Man and for the last fifteen years of his life was an invalid though he continued his practice of medicine till his death, which came in 1920.

Dr. Prince is buried at Citra in the Choctaw Nation.