

MERRICK, JOE F.

INTERVIEW

#7802

189

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

MERRICK, JOE F.

INTERVIEW.

7802.

Field Worker's name Grace Kelley.This report made on (date) October 12, 1937.

1. Name Joe F. Merrick.
2. Post Office Address Henryetta, Route 1, Box 253
3. Residence address (or location) Up: NINTA street. Hugh Henry Hill.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month _____ Day _____ Year 1862.
5. Place of birth Washington County, Illinois.

6. Name of Father Thomas M. Merrick Place of birth Missouri.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Dorthey Whitesides. Place of birth Illinois.

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 13.

MERRICK, JOE F.

INTERVIEW.

7802.

Grace Kelley,
Investigator,
Oct. 12, 1937.

An Interview With Joe F. Merrick,
Route 1, Box 253, Henryetta, Okla.

We lived eighteen miles from the Indian Territory line. My cousin, Albert Whitesides, hauled Government supplies to the Osage Indians so we decided to go deer hunting down there. We had a team of mules and a covered wagon and went forty miles from nowhere or four miles south of the Osage Agency on the Arkansas River. I was twenty-two years old and had lived in Illinois until just a little while before that and there were no Indians nor game there at that time. We killed so many turkeys, some deer, two coyote and one black wolf. One night I took sick - I guess I had eaten too much meat - and bloated up and cramped. Well, we had no medicine and there was no doctor to get, so my cousin heated some lard as hot as I could stand it and made me drink it. I got all right.

The Government furnished the Osages their clothes and had log houses built for them. They kept their ponies in the houses and lived in elm bark wigwams..

I smoked the peace pipe with Gray Wolf. Albert had never smoked. I was scared for that was the strongest

MERRICK, JOE F.

INTERVIEW.

7802.

-2-

tobacco I had ever tasted but he told me one of us would have to smoke with them or they would think we were thieves and watch us until we might as well go home. The pipe was a big round affair which sat in the center of a bunch of Indians; it was of clay and held a pound or two of tobacco. There were about twelve stems to it and everyone smoked at the same time.

Johannie Bird had the commissary at the Osage Agency and we went there after some shells on Sunday. The Osages were not allowed to trade on Sunday but had to go to church and Sunday School.

They had their clothes which the Government had furnished them but they didn't like them. They wore their blankets except when they were going to church. The Osage was dark like a negro but had pretty straight black hair, not a bit of kink to it.

ALBERT WHITESIDES, FREIGHTER.

Albert Whitesides had a red wagon and four mules and came alone clear through to Muskogee. He went to Ponca City or where ever the goods were billed to from Arkansas City. Some of the commissaries were owned by white men.

-3-

He never had any trouble with Indians or robbers that I know of and he went alone. The last time I heard from him he was at Cripple Creek, Colorado, and he couldn't get it into his mind where Henryetta was. He knew where Okmulgee and Muskogee and places like that were but none of the newer towns.

HOW I MOVED TO THE INDIAN TERRITORY.

I was a miner and had another cousin at Henryetta who kept writing for me to come down here to the new country. I had had a taste of the new country and had heard more so I didn't want to come but my wife wanted to as she didn't know anything except what he was writing. One day when I came home from work there was another letter from him and we decided to make the change. As she had a baby four days old and four others like stair-steps I was to go down and see what I thought and get a house for her. She sold the place before I got here and sent me the papers to sign.

When I got to Henryetta it was just a wide place in the road. You couldn't hardly get up Main or Trudgeon

-4-

Streets for the boulders. The bus held six passengers. It almost turned over when Wood Peague, the driver, tried to pass a boulder about eight feet thick and twelve feet long on Main Street. This bus had a round top and two seats; it couldn't make the hill at all as it would turn over.

The St. Elmo Hotel was called the Bock Hotel then, (It is Dr. G. Y. McKenney's Clinic now), and it was the only hotel. The Government had found coal here and men from everywhere were trying to lease the ground to start the mines. There were twenty-two of us staying at the hotel and every room was full besides the cots which filled the hall. When I got the letter that my wife had started there was not a room in the hotel and I hadn't found a house.

John and Scott Morse had built three two room houses, putting them up on anyone's land but not theirs, and renting them for five dollars a month. I had the promise of one as soon as it was finished. When I went to see if it would do to move in, there was a woman in there canvassing and papering it. When I asked her what she was doing she said they said if she would paper the house she could

MERRICK, JOE F.

INTERVIEW.

7802.

-5-

move in and the first came was the first served. I said that that sure left me in a fix as I had a wife and five kids on the way and there was no place at the hotel for them. She told me that Tom Griffin was dissatisfied^{as} there were so many negroes and Indians here and if he could sell his furniture he wanted to go back to Arkansas. Well, I needed some furniture so I went over to see him. His wife showed me where he was helping another neighbor who was packing up to leave. When he came out I asked him if he wanted to sell his furniture as I wanted to buy it if he'd give me possession of the house. We went back to the house and I took a day book and pencil and marked down the price of each article as we came to it. When we got to the back I noticed the rain barrel was empty so I put a dollar thirty-five down as he asked a dollar for the barrel and he said he would get it filled. We totaled the bill, I got the money out and paid him and told him he could stay in one corner until they could leave for Arkansas. Then I told old man Poague where I wanted my things taken and left for Sapulpa to meet my family. They had been on the train all day and night and

MERRICK, JOE F.

INTERVIEW.

7802.

-6-

were tired and the children were crying. I think I can truthfully say that my wife was glad to see me.

That same day we had an awful sand storm, it just covered everything. Where the children walked they made tracks on the floor. When the baby was picked up, the outline was left clean where it had lain and the rest of the bed was covered with dust. We had lots of sand storms and they almost drove my wife crazy.

The next morning an organ grinder came by and our boy, John, followed him a long time and every once in a while he would come back for another nickel for the monkey.

Christmas Eve we went to town to get our Christmas shopping done. We met twelve Indians, four women and eight children, coming into town to do their shopping. They were barefooted and had feathers in their hair. At first my wife was afraid to meet them until I told her their business was the same as ours. Then she worried about their going barefoot as winter was coming on. The winters were so much milder here than I had been used to that I never put a coat on for two years after I came

MERRICK, JOE F.

INTERVIEW.

7802.

-7-

here. It took me that long to wear out the clothes that had been bought for the colder climate.

The day we did our Christmas shopping, three deer were killed just east of town.

J. R. Morgan, the brother of C. C. Morgan, had a store on Third and Main which was the first Indian trading place at Henryetta. Barclay Morgan married the daughter of C. C. Morgan but these Morgans were no relation of his.

Diamond and Whinery had a store on Fourth and Main that was built out of native lumber.

G. J. Harrison had a little store where the negroes and Indians congregated at cotton picking time.

Jim Hawes and his father had a harness shop on Fifth Street just back of the Judy Drug Store now. They were expert leather workers and I gave him twenty-six dollars for a one-horse harness, not including the lines or collar.

REAL ESTATE.

Merrick Street and Cummings Street were named for Lona Cummings Merrick, my cousin's wife. She was an

MERRICK, JOE F.

INTERVIEW.

7802.

-8-

interpreter for the Five Civilized Tribes and a smart woman. About the smartest was marrying a lawyer. At first no deeds could be given when the land was sold, just bonds. Sometimes people would buy a place and then find out that the person who sold it didn't own it nor any other land. Her husband got the restrictions removed from her land first and had it surveyed into lots. Her lots were easier to sell at a better price as she could give a Warranty deed and the others couldn't. Our home is on her allotment and we've lived here since 1904.

OLDEST LIVING HORSE.

Cricket is an Indian Paint pony, born in the Osage Nation in 1897. That makes her forty years old. Her owner was Max Weston who was a Kansas man before he came to the Indian Territory. He sold her to the Bruton and Phillips Livery stable at Henryetta in 1902. (It was on Second Street between Main and Trudgeon and they had twenty ponies at that time). I bought her in 1904 so our six year old boy John could bring the groceries from town. None of the stores would deliver on the Hugh Henry Hill as there were no good roads.

MERRICK, JOE F.

INTERVIEW.

7802.

-9-

The dark parts or spots were a chestnut sorrel when she was young but she is almost white now. All my children and grandchildren have learned to ride on her and if one fell off she always would just stand until someone came along to help him back on her.

Back northwest was prairie and my ^{wife} has put one of the tiniest children, about two years old, on her back and she would ride it around and around on this prairie until the child got tired and then bring it back, and there was no scaring her nor making her jump, She just walked as easy as she could as she seemed to know the baby would fall off if she wasn't careful.

She has five natural gaits and carries anyone. John herded cows with her when he grew up. We used to go jack-rabbit hunting west of Shulter. (We've raised five colts from her). I rode one of her colts and he rode Cricket. The grayhounds would run the rabbits and when they caught one she was always there. We would get eight or ten in a day and stay until the horses and dogs were tired out, then come home.

I got some nice harness from Jim Hawes, which I still have, and we drove her to a buggy. One day she

MERRICK, JOE F.

INTERVIEW.

7802.

-10-

started out forward from the buggy shed instead of backing out as she had done for years, and almost cracked my head. I gave her a whipping which made my wife so angry that the next day she gave the good buggy away and Cricket hasn't been driven to a buggy since. She still has a wild streak in her. When the gate is left open she gets out and goes all around the section and comes back into the lot; if we try to drive her in or catch her the fun starts as she runs like she was scared to death, but if we let her alone she comes back alone.

When my boys were about fourteen years old there was a race track a half mile long on the Campbell place and every Sunday the boys gathered there and raced to see whose horse was the best runner. Cricket has been tied but never has a horse outrun her.

My wife said that when Cricket died she was going to have her skinned and a rug made of the hide. My wife has been dead for nine years and Cricket is still living. She is not for sale unless she lives longer than I do and I don't want her to do that. I buy her a good feed, the Ecco Mule feed which has oats, barley, yellow corn

MERRICK, JOE F.

INTERVIEW.

7802.

-11-

meal, alfalfa, and sorghum in it and ground finer than she could chew it. With the care she gets she may live for several years longer.

OKLAHOMA RUN BROUGHT
FATHER AND SON TOGETHER.

Ed Paget, a cousin, couldn't get along with his step-mother so ran away from home in Kansas and came to the Indian Territory. He was just a boy and small for his age. He worked for three years for Tom Chisholm bringing cattle from Texas to Kansas. They were three months on a trip as they fattened the cattle on the good Territory grass as they went along.

His father was an old Civil War soldier and a lot of them went to the opening of Oklahoma. Ed also went to the Run. He saw some of these soldiers together and one of them looked so much like his father that he watched until he was sure it was. Then he walked up to him and said, "I guess you don't know me". To which his dad replied, "By Crackey, no. And I don't care to". "Well all right, if that's the way you feel about it, but I know you".

MERRICK, JOE F.

INTERVIEW.

7802.

-12-

"Well who are you anyway?"

"What's left of Ed Paget". At that the old man choked up and said . " I remember you as a little scrawny person but coming out to the Indian Territory has been good for you because you have made a good sized man".

Neither of them homesteaded land so when the old man went back to Kansas the boy went with him but he couldn't be satisfied with the Dutch people who were so different from the ones he had been used to so it wasn't long before he came back to the Indian Territory.

REBURYING BUCK BURGESS.

When an Indian dies they still put as many of his things in the coffin as they can get into it. They also furnish good sandwiches and things for him to eat later. Some vandals dug the great rodeo rider, Buck Burgess, up and stole everything of value, even his gold teeth, and left his bones outside the grave. None of the Indians would touch them and they were just going to leave them there. My boy, Edward, dipped the water out of the grave and put his bones back in it. He said they were not white like a white person's but red as cedar.

-13-

SNAKE UPRISING.

I knew Crazy Snake. He wanted this country to stay as the tribes had it. Old man Patty and a bunch went out and nobody knows how many they killed and a lot were brought back as prisoners. They said they had been stealing meat but I don't believe they were any worse than the ones who claimed they were stolen from. I stayed out of it for I didn't think the white folks had any business out there and I thought that surely there would be an indictment and somebody would have to answer for the happenings of that day.

HUGH HENRY.

I knew Hugh Henry well. He looked more like a Mexican than an Indian. He had good horses or he and his boy Jim would have killed themselves as they would get drunk and ride down the hill and up and down Main Street "shooting up the town". I've seen them ruin new tubs which the merchants had outside the stores by riddling them with bullets. He meant no harm though for he was drunk, but he was so tough that nobody interfered with his pleasure.