

WEASEL, MARY C. INTERVIEW 8354

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

Field Worker's name Anna R. Barry.

This report made on (date) August 24, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mary C. Weasel.
2. Post-Office Address El Reno, Oklahoma.
3. Residence address (or location) 400 North Choctaw Street.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June — Day 19 Year 1851.
5. Place of birth Delaware County, Ohio.
6. Name of Father Samuel Perry. Place of birth Cincinnati, Ohio.
Other information about father _____
7. Name of Mother Elizabeth Perry. Place of birth Dayton, Ohio.
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 6.

Anna R. Barry,
Field Worker.

A BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH.

From a personal interview with the
subject, Mrs. Mary C. Weasel, El Reno.

I was born in Delaware County, Ohio, June 19, 1851. My mother died when I was three years old, and I went to live with my aunt, who lived a short distance from my father's home. I can remember when I was a child about six years of age.

One morning about ten o'clock, some one gave our door a rattle. My aunt went to the door. There stood an Indian woman. How frightened I was. I stood close to my aunt, part of the time hiding under her large tie apron. The woman couldn't speak English. She made signs that she wanted some corn meal. When she came in our yard, she placed her baby, which was about nine months old, on the ground under a shade tree in the yard. As my aunt started to the door with the cornmeal, she gave a loud scream. We saw a wild hog carrying off the baby. We ran out after the hog, but it was soon lost in the bushes. My uncle got on a horse, and tried to follow it, but we never could find the child. Of course

-2-

it was eaten by the hog. I shall never forget the look on the Indian woman's face, when she saw the hog. She ran out in the yard, fell down upon the ground, and began to give the most terrible moans and groans. She then took a large knife from a belt she wore and started slashing herself. The Indians in a nearby camp had heard her cries, and came rushing toward our house. My aunt felt very afraid, they looked so savage. She had a hard time getting them to understand what had become of the child, as they thought we had harmed it. The Indians then carried the woman back to camp. This happened in about 1857. I don't know of what tribe the Indians were.

At the age of fourteen, my father sent me to a school for girls in Cincinnati, Ohio. I stayed at this school until I was nineteen.

In 1871, I married. We had two boys, one nine years old and one twelve. When we separated in 1883, my husband took our oldest son, and I the youngest.

In 1883, or 1884, I came to the Indian Territory on a stage coach. We came to Caldwell, Kansas, then on to

-3-

Darlington. I worked as a cook for agent J. D. Miles, receiving \$40.00 per month for my work, and our board and room. When I first came, Darlington boasted one brick building, a school, and an old stone building, which served as the commissary.

Fort Reno was established a few years before I came to Indian territory as a protection for the Darlington agency on the North Canadian from the uprisings of the Cheyennes and Arapahoes. A number of times agent Miles sent word to Fort Reno and Fort Sill for military aid. The Cheyennes were watched more than the Arapahoes. When I first came to Darlington there were about fifteen hundred Indians camped in and around there. Sometimes they became angry and in an ugly mood because of the shortness of rations. If the young braves rode into the agency and their demands for additional rations were refused, they were angry.

My son and I often went down to the North Canadian River. It delighted him to see the squaws carry the Indian bucks on their backs across the river. A squaw would take off her moccasins and get up close to the bank. The

-4-

buck would get on her back and she would slowly take him across. I often watched the squaws as they carried a bucket of water in each hand and a baby on their back. At the beef issues, I have seen a squaw throw a quarter of beef upon her horse's back, then climb upon the horse, sit upon the meat, and ride toward camp.

One way they had of cooking their meat, was to dig a hole in the ground about two feet deep and about three feet wide. They would build a fire in this hole, then let the fire die down until nothing was left but the coals. They put big chunks of meat on these coals, turning them over and over, with large forked sticks. They usually covered this meat with a mud made of ashes and water to prevent it from burning. The Indians liked their meat very rare.

The Indians in these early days buried their dead on what was known as a crow scaffold. This burial took place above the ground to protect the body from wolves and coyotes. The Indians set up four forked poles across from one to the other in order to make a platform. The dead body was wrapped in a buffalo skin

or heavy, thick canvas. I never did find out how they got the bod. upon the platform, but I have passed by many of these burial spots. The body would be tied down to these poles with large ropes. The children were usually buried in trees. I once passed a tree on the North Canadian River, and was told an Indian baby was buried there. Brush and sticks had been placed in the fork of a limb, it resembled a crows nest, but we could plainly see the blankets in which the child was wrapped. Another way the Indians buried their dead was to place a long pole from one tree to another, and hang a corpse by the feet and head to this pole.

Before these Indians adopted white men's weapons they used bows and arrows, war clubs and knives. They depended mostly upon fish and game for food; they cultivated some vegetables, maize and corn.

During cold weather they wore shirts and leggings as well as moccasins. But during the summer the men stripped to a breech clout and moccasins. The women wore calico dresses and moccasins.

When an Indian family or families were without shelter the men of the camp or village erected a hut or

tepee for them. If a hunter failed to secure game, others shared their kill with him. If his crop failed, maize and other food were supplied from the more fortunate members of the tribe. An Indian could enter any house at any time and seat himself, and without a word being spoken, food would be placed before him.

In 1890, I married Charles Weasel, who had staked a claim in 1889. I had never lived on a farm, so we sold our claim, bought two lots at Choctaw Street in El Reno and built a four room house. It is forty-five years old, and I am still living in it, but alone now. Mr. Weasel passed away seven years ago.