

WILLIAMS, THELMA. INTERVIEW

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Interview with Thelma Williams  
Borger, Texas

Investigator - Carl R. Sherwood  
Indian-Pioneer History, 8-149  
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I was born September 6, 1903, in Muskogee. My mother was Nannie West, Cherokee. My father was Bert Bruce, of German descent. My grandmother was Marguerite Hickey West and my grandfather was John C. West.

When I was four years old my parents moved to the farm at Porum, which was my mother's allotment. When I was six years old my parents moved back to Muskogee, where I attended school at the Convent on South Second Street.

In 1923, I went to work in the telephone office at Boynton, and was transferred from there to the Shidler telephone office. Here I met Mr. Byron Williamson, an oil field driller, and on the 20th of June, 1923, I was united in marriage to Byron Williamson, who worked for a drilling contractor for a large oil company.

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We lived up in the Osage country for four years and in 1927, we moved to Artesia, New Mexico, where they were opening up a new oil field. Here the farmers irrigate their land from the artesian wells and their principal crop is cotton. Here we lived about eleven months until transferred to Eldorado, Arkansas, where there was a big oil boom and lots of wildcatting was going on in that part of the country. This oil field was situated in swamp land among the pine trees; they would have to build side walks from the land out to the drilling rigs.

After this oil boom was over we moved back to the Osage country, where my husband went to work as a cooper.

In shooting the large oil wells oil was scattered all over the grass in the pastures, which killed the grass. The heavy rains would wash the oil into the Creeks, rivers and ponds. This was beneficial to the cattle on the range; the cattle on hot days would go into the water and wade into it to protect themselves from the flies. The water would have a coat

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of oil on top and as the cattle would switch their tails the oil would spread out on the cattle and this oil helped to keep the flies away so that the cattle fattened much faster and their coats were slick.

We lived about seventy miles west of Pawhuska and I remember a true story that was told about an old full-blood Osage Indian whose guardian was a Mr. Collins, a merchant of Pawhuska.

This Indian was named John Stink and he lived by himself several miles out of Pawhuska. Late one evening he came to town and all his dogs followed him; most of his dogs were bull dogs and numbered about ten. That night after the business houses were closed John went to sleep upon one of the store porches with all of his dogs lying there with him. Sometime in the night the police found him and not knowing whether he was dead or just sleeping, tried to arouse him. His dogs made a fight with the police and the police killed all his dogs. The Indian was so broken-hearted over the loss of his dogs that he went home and no one saw him for over a month; then his guardian went out to see him to find out his trouble. John Stink told his guardian that he would not

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leave home without his dogs. His guardian immediately advertised for bull dogs and bought several for the Indian, but these new dogs did not satisfy John as well as the dogs that had been killed.

Sometime later the small-pox epidemic started and John Stink was taken very sick and was thought to have died and the Osage friends took him out near his home and buried him in a blanket on top of the ground, and placed sacks around and over him. John was not dead and when he became conscious he walked home and got well again and some of the Indians did not like him and others were afraid of him.