

MONTAGUE, BERT

INTERVIEW

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**INTERVIEW
BIOGRAPHY FORM**

Form A-(S-149) **#10091**
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**WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma**

Field Worker's name **Ophelia D. Vestal**

This report made on (date) **February, 25** 193**8**

1. Name **Bert Montague**

2. Post Office Address **Lawton, Oklahoma**

3. Residence address (or location) **1008 Park (S.W. Side)**

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month **January** Day **10** Year **1873**

5. Place of birth **Iowa**

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 **3 pages**.

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Investigator
Ophelia D. Vestal
February 25, 1938

Interview with Bert Montague
1008 Park (S. W. Side)
Lawton, Oklahoma

My family moved from Iowa to Kansas many years ago. Then in 1899, they moved in the vicinity of Purcell and White Bear Hill. I started to working when I was ten years old helping cowmen, the best I could do at that age. When I came to Oklahoma it was very common to see people driving ox teams. I drove an ox team and hauled wood the first year I was there to supply Fort Sill with fuel. Dr. Clark, a big cowman, hired me to work for him.

Later I helped him with his large herd of cattle and I plowed one hundred acres of land for him on the place known now as the Morris Simpson farm.

Then I worked for Waggoner, a big cowman. I plowed almost one hundred acres of land for him. Now I must say that much land was thought to be an awful lot in those days. Waggoner had a big dugout where his hired hands lived.

Rice and Quinnette ran a big store at the post, which was first called the White Store. I worked there some. Mr. Rice died, then the store was operated by Mr. Quinnette.

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In the eastern part of this state, the way the Indians were punished was, when an offense was committed the person committing the offense was whipped if they were found guilty. The guilty person was turned loose after promising to come back the day set for his punishment. Twenty-five men on horseback were each given a whip. They rode around the tree in a circle hitting the guilty person who was tied to the tree without any clothing on his shoulders. These whippings were pretty severe sometimes. When a second offense was committed, the date was set and the guilty person came, if he couldn't get anyone to take his place by paying. His clothing was taken from over his shoulders and he was placed sitting on the ground with his back to a large tree. Three horsemen were given guns with shells, blank shells and three had guns loaded with real shells. All rode around the man by the tree and shot at him, no one knew who killed the guilty man. Before the shooting began a leaf was placed over the guilty person's heart. I knew a grandfather who took the place of a grandson and was shot, as he thought he didn't have too long to live anyway.

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The Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians called hominy "Tom Fuller". The Creek and Seminole Indians called it Sofka. When the Indians made hominy they chose a solid block of wood about three feet in length and one foot in diameter. Sometimes a tree was cut down leaving a stump about three feet high when the Indians were sure they were going to stay there for awhile. A sharp pointed rock was used for a chisel and a deep pointed bowl was made. The corn was placed in the bowl, a long pole, round on the larger end, was used to beat the husk or inside of the corn kernel off. These husks were blown from the bowl and it was beaten a little, leaving it coarse. It was then placed over the campfire, with lots of water and cooked pretty tender, after which it was set aside for two days, when it was ready to be eaten.

The Indians made corn-pone by beating the corn fine and using it, more as we use meal. Water and other ingredients were added, then it was fried. It had a pretty good taste.

Once I worked for an Indian north of Fort Sill by the name of Ni-a-wat. This land is owned now by a white man here named William Cox. Ni-a-wat had lots of cattle and horses and when the white people came in here they beat poor old

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Ni-a-wat out of his cattle playing Monte (cards). It was here I learned to talk Comanche. Ni-a-wat couldn't speak English so he helped me and I helped him. Ni-a-wat called me Ninma-ta-quas-to-wah, meaning "the talking white man".

During the opening of this country, the Indians camped in large groups. They were a little afraid of the white people and the white people camped in groups because they feared the Indians;

I used to help break wild horses for the Indians and they paid me well. Once some Indians hired me to help take care of a Mexican who had broken his leg. This man had been captured by the Indians when he was a very little boy and knew only the Indian habits so he seemed just as the other Indian men to me....Two doctors were called, one from Faxon and one from Cache. The doctors set the broken limb and put it in a cast. Just as soon as the doctors left the Indians rushed in, took a hammer and broke the cast on the Mexican's leg. They then gave him some mescal, took him by the hair and pulled him over the house. They made a hide cast, punched holes in it and put it on his leg and left, leaving me to

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watch and care for him for several days. The limb was never set but he could ride horseback after it healed. He lived to be near a hundred years old and died at his home south of Cache, where Cache Creek crosses the base line. His name was "Much-a-rew." After his death his squaw and brother gave a big feast and invited both Indian and white people. Much-a-rew was known to be a good buffalo rider too.

After I married and we were on the farm I drew, eighteen miles southwest of town, we lived by Indians who were truly good neighbors to us. The squaw used to come to our house. My wife cut newspapers in scallops and painted designs to put on shelves as we didn't have conveniences as today. The squaw went to her home, cutting newspapers for her shelves. She was always wanting to know new ideas about keeping house and new recipes for cooking. Once our womenfolk had made old fashioned flat bonnets to work in the field and gardens. The old squaw wanted a bonnet like it so she brought pink material for my wife to make her bonnet. My wife thought it would be a pretty bonnet to make it nice and put starch in it. It made this squaw angry because it blew down in her face without starch. My wife told her to go buy a package of starch and how to make it. The squaw went in a store, leaving her bonnet in

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the back while she was doing her trading. She bought the starch, went back to the hack to go home and her bonnet was gone, someone had stolen it.

Many times in the young days of this country white people would gather at that bridge west of Cache, having big dances on the bridge. The worst drawback the Indians had was the Monte (cards), mescal and peyote. Now it's the fire water and white people's habits.

Tanning animal hides by the Indians was of great importance, as they used hides for so many different things. The Indians would take a new hide, let it dry a few days, then when it seemed to be drying through they would kill other animals and take the brains from them and rub them thoroughly on the underside after they had chiseled the hair off the other with a sharp pointed rock. Working the brains over the hide was called curing it and this caused the hide to become soft. From this moccasins were made. They also cut the soft side in narrow strips, using these for string.

The Indians, in the early days, were not known to comb their hair. They unbraided the long braids and parted the hair carefully in the middle with their fingers from the front to the back of their heads. Several strokes were made lifting

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the fingers outward from the head, with the hair falling between the fingers.

Many years ago supplies were issued at Kingfisher, then Lindsay. A real old Indian man decided he needed a buggy and went over to the trading stores to buy one. When he arrived he had to go to several clerks before he made them understand what he wanted. Finally they convinced him they didn't have any buggies on hand at that time. He saw a hearse and bought it.

I had a very bad sore on my right limb just below the knee a few years ago. I was in a hospital here. The doctors had given me up saying I couldn't live over ten hours, and that I wouldn't be allowed any company. I happened to look out the window and I saw Pete-So, an Indian woman, walking on the lawn with her head bowed. I knew some of my good Indian friends had come to see me but they would not let them in. I called a nurse and told her if they didn't let Pete-So in when she came there to see me, I was going out to see her. The nurse said she couldn't let me see anyone. I jumped off the bed to the floor and was going out when she said she'd let them come in. Soon six Indian men came in. As soon as Pete-So entered my room

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she fell to her knees and started praying. She prayed several minutes in the Comanche language and as I knew the language I understood her prayer. When she stopped praying, she arose smiling saying to me, " I feel sure you will get well now. Our Father makes me feel that way." Then they left and today I am strong and able to work. That made me feel good to think I had real Christian Indian friends.

I could talk for a long time telling things about my own experiences with the Indians. Lots of things I will never tell for the Indians liked me and had confidence in me and I will never betray them.

I am glad to live with a memory of those days. The memories are very precious to me.