

COMBS, IDA

INTERVIEW

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

Field Worker's name Ethel D. Pfeiffer

This report made on (date) June 7, 193 7

1. Name Ida Combs

2. Post Office Address Duke, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Route 2.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 7, Year 1867

5. Place of birth Birmingham, Alabama

6. Name of Father Andrew J. Hill Place of birth Georgia

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Martha Skipper Place of birth Georgia

Other information about mother Mother of 6 children.

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 9.

FIELD WORKER ETHEL D. PERIFFER  
Indian-Pioneer History Project S-149  
June 7, 1937.

INTERVIEW WITH IDA COMBS.  
Duke, Oklahoma

Life and experience of a Pioneer.

I was raised in Texas near Alvarado. I married James G. Combs, at the age of 26 years.

We came in to Indian Territory in 1895, and settled east<sup>of</sup> Comanche. We heard of a drawing for home land and decided that we would try for a home. We loaded a wagon and with four horses started for the land of promise. We only worked two horses at a time to the wagon. That way resting a pair so we could travel farther. We were two weeks on the road but did not have any special trouble, except bad roads. It had been raining and the mud was bad; the streams were all swollen and had to be forded for there were no bridges and not many roads, only cow paths. We crossed Red river at Burkburnett, Texas.

I liked the looks of Oklahoma, and thought it a grand place for poor people to get a home. The grass was fine and the herds of cattle were fat. When we camped the cowboys would ride up to visit with us. We always asked them

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to eat with us and they were very kind and friendly. One cow boy told me it had been three years since he had tasted a woman's cooking. I think the cow-boys should have the praise for settling this country and civilizing it. I always found them good and willing to lend a helping hand.

"INDIANS".

After we crossed the Red River we began to meet Indians. I had seen Indians before, but had never heard them talk; nor had any dealings with them. The first Indian camp of Tepees we came to was not far from Addington, Indian Territory. We made camp and my husband and I went over to the Indian camp for a friendly visit. I wanted to see the Indian babies and how their mothers carried them on their backs. An Indian man came out to meet us. He asked Mr. Combs how many squaws he had. When Mr. Combs said only this one, the Indian held up three fingers and said, "me three." These Indians were Comanches. While we lived at Comanche we learned a lot about them. The Indians would come to

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trade and camp near our house and use water from our well. While the bucks traded, the squaws would visit with me. The squaws did all the work, putting up tents caring for the horses, as well as all the work around camp. They did very little cooking for they ate nearly all their foods raw. They would gather broom weeds and pile them in great heaps and then spread their blankets over the pile for beds. They wore moccasins which were beautifully beaded, on their feet. I asked a squaw what she would take for a pair of moccasins, and she held up a hand with five fingers spread out; meaning five dollars.

## A barbecue

I remember attending a barbecue once at Addington, Indian Territory. There were about 500 Indians there, all decked out in their finery. The squaws were wrapped in beautiful shawls of all colors, with long silk fringe on them. The white people ate dinner from the spread tables first, and then the Indians ate. Some of the

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Indians got right up in the middle of the tables and sat down. Some one had to make them get down, so there would be room for all. In the evening the Indians held a "Pow Wow" dance, the first I had ever attended. They built a fire of brush and then danced around it, beating on drums and chanting a monotone chant, the words or meaning of which I did not understand. Both bucks and squaws took part in this dance. Most of the Indians came on ponies but some of them came in wagons, bringing squaws and children who were sitting flat in the wagon bed. They always had a lot of dogs following these wagons.

#### Moves

From Comanche we moved to Indianola, Indian Territory. We moved in a covered wagon, and had a lot of trouble with robbers and horse thieves. Two different nights they tried to get our horses and after that my husband or I would sit up to keep watch all night. The thieves would slip up and steal our provisions right out of our wagon with us sleeping in the wagon.

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There were no roads only cow trails; and the Indians were all the people we saw any where. It was very hard to find a place to get supplies. Some times, if we found a white family, we could buy eggs, butter, and milk, but the ranches would sell us nothing. Once we had to travel until eleven o'clock at night before we could find anything to eat, and the horses were completely given out.

In the spring and summer there were plenty of wild grapes, plums,, berries, and currants, in the woods. We wandered around eleven months before we stopped at Indianola, which was a new town with one small store and a sawmill. This mill sawed mostly cotton wood for people to build shacks for those people who were grading the way for a railroad that was to run through from Ft. Smith, Arkansas.

We lived in our wagon and camped under a tree, until after a while we got a tent. Later we built a shack, the roof of which sloped one way. I did my cooking over a camp fire.

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## Furniture

We went to the sawmill and got lumber and made a table. We had sawed up logs for chairs, and nailed scaffolding to the wall for beds. I had ticks filled with native grass for mattresses, and we had plenty of feather pillows. We cooked on the fire place using a dutch oven until we got a wood stove. We had so much fire wood to burn that fuel was no object.

We had good spring water. A branch ran through the town and every one got water from it. We went down to the branch to wash our clothes and would spread them on the bushes to dry.

## Boarding House.

We soon built an addition to our 16' X 16' room, a lean to 28' X 16'. This gave me three large rooms; so I started the first boarding house in this town. I started out with nine men as regular boarders. They all slept in the Lean-to, with scaffolding nailed to the wall for beds. I went to Crowder City and bought my first bed spring. We bought springs for all the

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men's beds but I told my husband that we would not buy any for us as I would not sleep on the things.

The first school my children attended was taught in a tent by a Mr. Cotten. The men built a school house which was also used for church. The benches had no backs to them; but they were useful.

Soon the rail road got through the town and then lumber got cheap and how the town did boom! You could hear hammering on all sides, from day light till dark, no one thought about the long hours, as we were building a new town.

My husband was a carpenter and helped all he could. He also took up an Indian lease and farmed four years. We made good crops and had plenty of money, and things to eat, but most of the time we did not want to eat. The country was not a healthy one and some of us were sick all the time. There came a flood that washed all our crops away and with sickness and all we found ourselves broke. The land was swampy and the mosquitoes nearly ate us up, so we decided to move to a healthier country, and here we are today.

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"My Mother"

My mother's mother was an Indian. I do not remember my grandmother except as I have heard my mother talk about her. There were no records kept and I don't know to what tribe she belonged. My mother lived with me 19 years before she died July 13, 1934, at the age of 102 years 6 months and 6 days.

Foods.

When we first came to the Territory there were wild hogs every where and we would pen a sow and mark her pigs. Some times we would not see any of them again until they were all grown and we gathered them in to butcher. We always had plenty of meat, and lard, for there was free range and when we wanted meat we drove in some hogs and butchered as many as we wanted.

"My Father "

My father fought in the Civil War. He was a Confederate soldier and fought through the entire four years of the War. My father liked to hunt and have me hunt with him. We would take turn about shooting the game. We

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hunted every thing from quail, to deer and antelope. We also caught quail in nets. We would set a net, and then call quail until some times a whole drove would come and then we would gently drive them into the net.

"A Fish Fry."

We had great fish fries on the Canadian river. All the neighbors would take dinner baskets of food, and the men would seine the fish. We would fry the fish on an open fire, on the banks of the river. I liked those old times best, as people did more visiting. We loved each other and liked to stay all day visiting. We lived our religion every day and would not miss a Sunday Service for any thing if it could be helped. I have gone to church horse back many a time with two children behind me on the horse, and one in my lap. We did not mind the so-called hardships of those days, as we were living and raising a family and God ordained that we be happy in doing it.