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CYRUS, CARRIE. INTERVIEW.

Otis Hume, Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History S-149
June 17, 1937

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Old Indian and Pioneer days as given
by Carrie Cyrus, a native negro woman,
205 South Eufaula, Wewoka, Oklahoma.

Carrie Cyrus was the daughter of Dan and
Angeline Marshall who brought her to the Indian
Territory in 1878 to live in the Seminole Nation.
She is a negro native woman. Her husband, Dennis
Cyrus, who was a wide-awake man, was brave and wanted
to keep peace in the Territory and was appointed as
one of the Light Horsemen in which office he served
for thirty years. He also was United States Marshal
for five years under John Cordell.

Carrie and her father belonged to the Seminole
Tribe but mother did not.

She said that she had seen many an exciting
time here in the Nation as this was a resting place
for the outlaws. The outlaws after making their
hauls would come to the territory to divide their
money and one of their main hideouts was about nine
miles north of what is now Wewoka on Big Creek near
Chimney Mountain. Another one was west of Konowa,
Oklahoma. Such outlaws as the Daltons, James Boys,
and
the Youngers, the Crystal gang, Henry/Frank, and
Belle Starr were often in this locality. Her husband
helped capture some of these bad men.

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The Indians had many laws, many of which were like the ones we have now, and they were strict that their laws were not broken; and, if they were broken, the culprits were taken to the old whipping post tree and tied hand and foot and whipped with a hickory switch. For the first crime committed he was given fifty lashes with the switch and for the second 150; for the third crime, 250 lashes were administered and if a murder was committed, death was the penalty. When an Indian committed such a crime, he would be tried and the date set for his execution. The Light Horsemen would take the accused home with them and tie him till the day of punishment. If the crime was not too bad he would be turned loose and told to come back on a certain day for his punishment, and he would always be there even if he had to swim a river to get there. On that day he would be shot by two men firing at the same time.

The Indian peace officers were called Light Horsemen and all of the people feared them.

If a bad outlaw came in the Territory that they wanted to catch, the Light Horsemen would gather with what they called the Snake Doctor, who

would mix a quantity of herbs together; such as, Devil shoe string, Conquer John and others not known. He would put these into a big kettle and put a fire under it and boil this all together until it looked like tea. Then the Horsemen would gather around the fire and spit till they put the fire out. But during this time the Snake Doctor was spitting in their faces with the medicine that was in the pot. This was supposed to carry them through battle without getting shot.

During hostile times the ones that wanted peace wore a corn shuck in their hats and at home there would be a white sheet or something white hanging on the porch or the side of the house, so the others could tell how they stood.

They got their mail twice a week. It was brought here from Eufaula by two men that went horseback or in a buggy.

It would take the carriers two days to make the trip. The postoffice was in the Wewoka Trading Company building that was owned by C. L. Long and others.

When the Rock Island Railroad was built

through here the Indians and natives would look and wonder at the long steel rails that the men were putting on the ground. There was always a bunch of men and women watching them work. When word got out that a train was coming through, the Indians and natives gathered to see the train. Some were scared to get very close to the train. One native said when he saw the train coming, "Everybody get back. He is drunk."

One day a train ran over some cows that belonged to some Negro boys which made the boys mad, so they tied logs, ties and a lot of other things on the railroad track and said "train kill cows, we kill train." The Indians soon found that the railroad was of great benefit to them. They could get their cows to market days quicker than when they had to drive them to market in Kansas City.

How Dyes were Made

Dyes were made from polk berries, walnut hulls, and oak bark; and were made by putting the berries, bark, or walnut hulls in water and boiling until the water was colored good, then dropping a small piece of alum into this to set the color.

Then they would dip the cloth or anything that they were dying into this fluid.

How clothes were made

Clothes were made in the earlier days by spinning the goods from wool and cotton that they raised, or some were made from hides of wild animals that they killed. But in later years they would go to some trading post and buy their cloth and beads from which they made their clothes. Belts and shoes were decorated with the beads.

Shoes were made from skins that were tanned by them by burying in the ground with ashes. Some of the leather was bought at the Trading Post. The women made most of the clothes by hand.

As for the food they had to eat, the Indians always had plenty to eat as there was plenty of wild game for them to kill for their meat. When they killed more meat than they needed for that time, they would cut the best part of the deer or beef or anything that they killed into small strips and dry by putting on top of the house or some other place where it could be dried. The meat was turned over every day till it got thoroughly dried. The

bones and joints were barbecued by putting over a fire which was made of hickory wood and cooked until it was thoroughly browned.

They raised their own corn, rice, and a few other vegetables. ~~Sofay~~ was one of their foods that was made by taking corn and mashing in a large wooden block.

Storms and how to Escape

There was a certain bird that hollowed when it was going to rain but the name of this bird is not known.

When a storm is coming up, cover up all mirrors or anything else that you can see yourself in; then go outside and take an ax, and swing it around and around over your head four times; then turn around and face the wind, sticking the ax in the ground with the blade facing the wind. This is supposed to split the wind. The Indians never had a storm cellar to get in when a storm came up.

Medicines and their uses

Their medicine was made from roots and herbs gathered from the fields and woods.

For rheumatism they would take polk root,

cook it in a pot until the roots were tender; then crush; put in a small bag; then put into shoe and wear it and your rheumatism will disappear. Or take the water the roots were cooked in, rub it all over the aching parts of your body.

When baby has spasms, get crab grass and make a tea.

And for the dropsey go to the woods and gather some grapevines, boil these, make a tea and drink it.

For snake bite, take snake root that grows wild in the woods; chew it up; spit on place that has been bitten.

For gun and other wounds, take a certain kind of wild roots (name not known); boil; make a medicine; then take buzzard feather and wash wound out with this fluid.

To cure the asthma, take a toad frog; blow your breath in his mouth; then put the frog in a box and the frog will take the asthma and you will not have it any more.

How they caught fish

They would get Devil shoe string and walnut leaves; put them in a sack; drag it up and down in the creek; and the fish would come to the top of the water where they could catch them with their

hands or shoot them with bow and arrows or guns.

As for Sports

They played what they call Indian ball with long handled clubs, that were cup-shaped on one end. They caught the ball in this cup. Sometimes when they were playing, they would get mad and hit each other with their clubs, sometimes killing each other.

Other sports were fishing and dancing what they called the stomp dance.

They would build a big fire and the men and women would dance around it, hollowing and singing. The women wore around their legs terrapin shells with shot or something in them to make them rattle.

Riding horses was a very favorite pastime.

Church

At church boys and men would sit on one side of the house, the women and girls on the other. Many times they would have big feasts that would last for days.

When one of the Indians died they would take him to their place of worship where they had services until they got ready to bury him. Their coffins were made of lumber and sometimes they were made

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of bark of trees and it was the custom to bury everything that the person loved with them. If one died in the morning without eating breakfast their meal would be placed in some kind of container and placed on top of house, and left there for four days and nights, thinking they would come back and get their meal. If part of it disappeared they would say that the dead came back and got it.