

GASSAWAY, LILLIAN M.

KIOWA SOCIAL LIFE

#9454379

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

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Field Worker's name Lillian Cassaway

This report made on (date) December 17, 1937

1. Name Lillian Cassaway

2. Post Office Address Anadarko, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 311 est Alabama Street.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 25 Year 1888

5. Place of birth Anadarko, Oklahoma.

6. Name of Father J. J. Methvin Place of birth Georgia.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Emma Beall Methvin Place of birth Georgia.

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 Seven.

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Lillian Gassaway,
Investigator.
December 17, 1937.

Kiowa Social Life.

The Kiowas originated in western Montana where the winters were long and the snows deep. They believed that they were created by a supernatural being, who brought them forth from a cottonwood tree by stamping his foot on the ground.

They have no linguistic affinity that can be found. It is believed that there is a branch of the Kiowas still living in the north somewhere. Occasionally someone has reported that they have met with bands of Indians whose language seem to be the same as the language of those in Oklahoma.

The two bands separated when two rival chiefs quarreled over a piece of choice meat, one band moving on to the southeast, the other to the northwest in about 1700.

Those who made their way to the southwest met with the Crows, formed an alliance with them and established themselves in the Black Hills, living there

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until the Dakotas ran them out. The Kiowas have always lived near the mountains and in all their history they have never stayed away from the mountains very long at a time. They came south with the Crows until they reached Fort Robinson, Nebraska, where they left the Crows and continued toward the south.

The Kiowas had no horses before joining the Crows, only dog teams and sleds. Travel was very slow. They soon procured horses from the Crows and became a menace to the Spanish Frontier by making raids, thus acquiring more horses. The possession of horses changed the Kiowas into daring buffalo hunters and dangerous enemies of the whites; where before a Kiowa had been only a skulker in the timber now he could procure food enough in only a short time to last his people a long while. With plenty of leisure he soon began to make raids over the plains.

Tribal Sign.

The sign for "Kiowa" in the Indian sign language is

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made by holding the right hand close to the right cheek, with the back down, fingers touching and slightly curved, the hand is moved in a rotary motion from the wrist.

This sign originated from an old custom of their warriors who cut the hair short on the right side of the head even with the bottom of the ear, while they allowed the hair on the left side to grow full length. This they braided and wrapped in beaver or otter skin. In addition to this a small scalp lock was worn braided and hanging down the back. The sign indicates the short hair on the right side of the head. The scalp lock was worn long after they stopped cutting the hair on the right side.

Character.

The Kiowas were far below standard in character. They had none of the finer characteristics of the other tribes. They had little honor and were one of the most savage tribes on the western plains. The Kiowas were

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considered the worst tribe the Government had to deal with. Cruel and unreliable, absolutely without honor. Battey described them as "the most fierce and desperately blood thirsty tribe of the Indian Territory!"

Names.

All Indian names have meanings. Children are not named by the parents but either by the grandparents or some relative. These names are usually suggested by some incident or to commemorate a warlike deed of some ancestor. A girl may have a name given her by the grandfather to preserve the recollection of his own achievement.

Young men as they grew up would assume dream names in obedience to visions but these were later lost and replaced by names acquired on the warpath or in the council.

Sometimes when a man gets old he will pick out some young man whom he thinks worthy of the honor and

give him his name. Then the old man assumes a new name or lives the rest of his life without a name, being referred to as the "Old Man".

When an old man dies without giving his name to a younger man the name dies with him and is never mentioned in the presence of his relatives; upon the death of any member of a family all the others take new names. All words suggesting the name of the dead person are dropped from the language for a period of years, and other words are substituted which would convey the same idea. This custom existed among other Plains Tribes also.

Tribal Government.

The Kiowas are not a tribe of clans or classes. This custom has never existed among them. There were six sub-tribes, but these were not clans, only political sub-tribes. Each division had its own chief with the recognized head chief of the tribe.

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The tribe was governed by a head chief who ruled with despotic powers and the chiefs of different bands. There were three War Chiefs who controlled military affairs. The head chief was feared as well as respected. Tawhosin was the last head chief of the tribe. He died in 1866. Since that time there has been no one strong enough, who had the unquestioned allegiance of the whole tribe, to take his place.

The women had no voice in the government. Any violations of camp or ceremonial regulations were punished under the directions of the war chiefs. Personal grievances were punished by the injured party or by his nearest kin without interference by the tribe.

Military.

In connection with their military order the Kiowas and Apaches have a heraldic system which is expressed in the ornamentation of their shields and tepees. There were about fifty shields used in the two tribes. All warriors carrying shields with similar ornaments and

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paintings were of associated orders. Their war
cries, taboos, body paint and ornamented tepees
were all similar, though their language might
differ.

Every prominent family had its heraldic te-
pee and a certain place for it in the camp circle.