

BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for OklahomaField Worker's name Amelia F. HarrisThis report made on (date) May 26 19371. Name Mrs. Lotta Harris Mosier2. Post Office Address 317 S W 26

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day 4 Year 18775. Place of birth Iowa6. Name of Father W. H. Harris Place of birth IowaOther information about father Made run in 18937. Name of Mother Lybia Place of birth Ohio

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 _____.

MRS. LOTTA HARRIS MOSIER
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Amelia Harris, Interviewer.

Father became imbued with the Oklahoma homestead fever. He made great preparation for the run. He bought a race horse and spent much time training him as he didn't want to fail to get a claim.

Three days before the run father went to Arkansas City, Kansas, where he was supposed to register. Thousands of others were there for the same purpose. When he got to the registration booth he stood in line for hours, if a person left for anything some one would get their place, and then they would have to begin all over again. Father paid fifty cents for a sandwich and a cup of coffee. At last he got the certificate which entitled him to enter the Cherokee Strip.

Father had studied the map and wanted to get a claim on the Chikaskia River near Blackwell. When the gun was fired he headed his horse in that direction and let him run till at last he came to the valley of the Chikaskia River. Here father stopped his horse, looked all about him and didn't see any one, so decided not to go further. He unsaddled the horse, rubbed him down and

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took him to the river to drink. Just as he started back from the river a man stepped up and touched him on the shoulder and said, "Brother you had better ride on. You are too late, I staked this claim an hour ago." Dad knew he was a "Sooner" and that he would have trouble if he didn't leave. This, indeed was a great blow, to lose this nice piece of land but he saddled his horse and started in search of more land.

By this time every quarter-section had two or three settlers on it. He then decided to ride towards Perry. Here he found that thousands of people had already settled, business houses were up and doing business.

He then decided to try the Pawnee country. This was not thickly settled, probably due to the fact that few knew it was opened for settlement. He didn't have any trouble getting a good claim near the town of Pawnee and he drove down his stake here. In the meantime my oldest brother, fourteen years old, was driving a wagon team with the camping outfit in it. Father told brother to drive to Blackwell and stay there until he came for him. He thought sure he would get a claim in the Chikaskia River Valley, which is not far from Blackwell, but he didn't and he was

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four or five days locating brother. They then drove over to his claim, set the tent up, then father took the team and hauled lumber from Pawnee and built a box shanty.

He then went back to Kansas for mother and the children and here we started from the ground up to make a living.

Homestead days were days of toil, privations and hardships for parents and children alike. Tilling the soil from dawn until night, hauling water from nearby springs or streams until we could dig a well, harvesting the crops, caring for the livestock fell on the shoulders of us children while father worked in the adjoining states to get the money to improve the homestead.

I was seventeen years old when I started a small school in a tent. We had split log seats to sit on, split logs desks to write on and black calico tacked to the wall for a blackboard, but the children seemed happy and anxious to learn. Many had to walk three or four miles to school.

Our farm was adjoining some Pawnee Indians' land and we saw much of the Pawnees. Mother and sister were

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dark and the Indians adopted them right away and called them Indians, but I was very fair and they would shake their heads and say, "No, no- Paleface- no-squaw". However they visited our family often, especially one Pawnee Indian, Tom Whistler. He gave me lots of beaded things and also taught me how to make beaded things and he would come and tell us when the Indians were going to have a ceremony of any kind.

All fullblood Indians are very religious and superstitious, too. They believed in spirits, good and bad. This is why the medicine man was so important. He was supposed to have magic powers to drive evil spirits away and to make the sick well.

The Indians always accompanied their actions by elaborate rituals, as going on a hunt or to war, or returning from war, planting crops, healing the sick, burying the dead, bestowing names; all had their own separate ceremony.

Dancing was an important feature with the Indians and they had a dance for almost every occasion. One of the most popular dances was the Sun Dance, which was given in the summer as a form of thanksgiving. A tree

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was set in the center of the circle for the dance and on top of the tree were placed offerings. Around and around the tree they would dance to the beat of the tom toms. The tom tom is a drum made of skins stretched taut over a hewn out log; its weird beat can be heard for miles.

The Ghost Dance is another religious ceremony. The dance originated when young Woraka, a Pawnee medicine man, was taken sick with a high fever. When he recovered from his illness he told the Indians that he had been to the happy hunting ground and met the "God of the Indians", and that their God said if they would put on white robes and go through ceremonies he would cause all of the white people to be destroyed and that they would get all of their land back. While Woraka was ill an eclipse of the sun occurred and the superstitious Indians thought this was a sign and believed Woraka's story. The Indians often went through the Ghost Dance, wearing white robes and dancing and whirling madly until they fell in a trance hoping their god would give back their land. The Ghost Dance became a widespread custom among other tribes and was causing so much trouble that the United States Government called out troops to put

a stop to it. As a result of the first encounter between the Indians and troops because of the dance one hundred twenty-eight Indians were killed and thirty-one soldiers, but the Government succeeded in stopping the dance.

The Green Corn Dance was always held in early summer and signified a new life.

Other dances that we attended were the Scalp Dance, the War Dance and the Buffalo Dance.

All of the Indian tribes in the western part of the state performed in the Buffalo Dance. Sometimes it was carried out in pantomime, which was very interesting. The first scene would be a warrior representing a buffalo, who would come out wearing a real buffalo hide with the head pulled down over his head for a mask. He would imitate the gait of the buffalo, crouching and tossing his head from side to side. Next, came another warrior wearing the hide of a pony with the head drawn down over his own. He would lope along the trail as if in search of the buffalo. The next scene was a third warrior as a hunter with a bow and arrows. Then a real hunt would be carried out in pantomime. The last scene would be the young braves entering and

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carrying the meat and pelts, signifying the success of the hunt. After this all of the dancers would join in and dance and sing.

The Indians had many other quaint customs, some of them very interesting, such as naming their children. This was done when the child was about three years old. A sort of baptismal rite was performed by the medicine man similar to the birthday parties of our children of today. They would receive moccasins or other trinkets and they were usually named after some bird or animal.

The marriage ceremony was a very elaborate affair; sometimes the parents selected the bride for their son; in other cases the brave chose his own bride by paying for her in trinkets or pelts. This was a very interesting way of making a proposal. The young man would pick out the girl he wanted; then he would take several horses to her teepee and tie them outside. The next day he would go back. If the horses were gone this signified the parents' consent. The Indians would then prepare an elaborate feast. The bride and groom would meet some place away from the crowd and would gallop their horses up to the crowd, then they would part here and each circle

around the gathering until they met again. They would then run their horses back to the starting point then gallop back, part, and circle the crowd again. When they met again the crowd formed an opening and they walked their ponies slowly down to about the center of the crowd where the Chief stood. He would say something in their language, then all of the Indians would sing or chant their ritual song. The Chief would then say something like a prayer, which concluded the ceremony. The marriage was performed with the bride and groom on their horses. After the marriage ceremony was over they got off their horses and all went to where the wedding feast was to be served. The white people usually went home before the feast; some would stay and eat with them.

Mother usually furnished the pies for those celebrations. They were very fond of her pies and always traded her ten or fifteen yards of beautiful, bright colored cloth for the pies. She would make as many as fifty or sixty pies at a time.

When we first moved to our farm near those Indians they lived in sod or grass houses. Most of the women kept their little homes clean and raised good gardens, and

the men cultivated the soil like the white farmers. They raised corn, cotton and tobacco.

They couldn't read or write, but they would draw pictures of things they wanted to keep a record of. Signs were used for other means of communication but quite a few talked broken English.

Buffaloes and deer provided most of their meat and clothing.

Those Indians were very artistic and loved bright colors. They used juices from berries and herbs, porcupine quills and the buckskin fringe that trimmed their costumes.

The Indians buried their dead differently, according to the tribes. Some used high mounds or tree tops to bury the dead, while the Pawnees buried in shallow graves. It was also a custom to bury presents with their dead or things that belonged to the dead, such as bows, arrows, war clubs, beads and toys, not that they expected those things to go with their dead to the happy hunting ground but they believed everything had a soul and it was the soul that they wanted to go with their dead.

We also saw a "Love feast" between the Pawnees and

Otoes. The Otoes were originally a tribe of the Winnebago Indians of Minnesota who were sent to Oklahoma in 1882 and were assigned lands and placed under the Pawnee and Ponca Agency.

The Otoes and Pawnees were always jealous and at war with each other, but the chiefs got together and decided to make up. They made great preparations. They traveled one night and day by our farm leading ponies and beating the tom toms. We were anxious to know what was going on. That morning Tom Whistler came over and told us. Mother made sixty pies for them and they had a big feast and danced and made each other presents of those horses. After that they were always friends.

One day when Tom Whistler came over to our house I showed him our family album. He had never seen one before. He was so interested and recognized each one of us. When he came to my picture he smiled and said, "Papoose, Papoose." I said "Yes." He then said "How much?" I thought he meant the cost per dozen so I said, "Three dollars." He said, "I take um", and handed me three dollars. I had a time convincing him it was not for sale..

Father teased me a lot about Tom's courtship. He

didn't come to our house for two or three weeks and during this time I had married. When he came in he looked around for me then said to father, "Where Papoose". Father told him I had married and left. He didn't say anything for a few minutes then said, "How much pay um?" Father said, "Nothing". He said, "I give", (and raised both hands up twice which meant twenty, then one hand once which meant five) twenty-five ponies. Father said, "No, no, gone now."

I have not spoken much of the other tribes of Indians but I knew some of the Kiowas and Comanches, too.

The Kiowa and Comanche lands were opened by drawing July, 1901. (This was the big pasture). I registered at El Reno for a claim. I received a card which was placed in an envelope and sealed; there were two boxes, one marked El Reno District and the other Lawton District, of which Ft. Sill was headquarters. I returned home and didn't think much about it. On August 14, 1901, I received a card notifying me that I had drawn number 1354 and to report at Lawton land office August 17 and file on a claim. This I did. I soon had a two room box house built and moved on my claim which was two miles southwest of Walters.

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I taught the first school in Comanche County. This was about a mile from my claim. Later I gave five acres for a school called "Soldier's Valley". This school is there today.

I was personally acquainted with Quanah Parker. He was a revengeful chief and wanted to punish the white folks for the harsh treatment they had given his father and mother. He was very grateful to the Government when they brought his mother's body back and buried her at Post Oak Mission, near Indianahoma, Oklahoma. This was December 4, 1910. Quanah gave a great feast and invited both Indians and white friends. That day he urged his people to follow the ways of the white man and to settle down to peaceful farming. Just two months after the reburial of his mother he died at his home near Gache and was buried in full Comanche war dress, by the side of his mother. I, with thousands of others, was at his funeral. I have seen Geronimo many times on the streets of Lawton. He had a coat made from the scalps of white women. He brought it to Lawton one day and attempted to put it on before a big crowd but the white men became so incensed they were about to kill him when the soldiers came up and took him away.

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Inscription on the tomb of Quanah Parker.

Resting here until day breaks
And shadows flee and darkness
disappears is

QUANAH PARKER

LAST CHIEF OF THE COMANCHES

Born 1852

Died Feb. 11-1911

This monument was erected under Act of Congress, Approved
June 23, 1926.