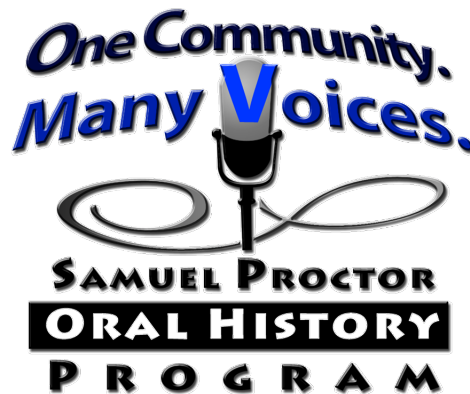


Mary Clay Lloyd

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project
MISS CHOC-054**

Interview by:

**Eddie Isaac and Johnson Bell
November 12, 1975**



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MISS CHOC 054 Mary Clay Lloyd
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
Interviewed by Eddie Isaac and Johnson Bell on November 12, 1975
16 minutes | 8 pages

Abstract: Mary Clay Lloyd describes how she became interested in Choctaw history because her grandmother grew up with Choctaw friends who would visit her often. She is a historian who studied her ancestor Gideon Linsecum, a naturalist who knew Pushmataha, who she also studies. She discusses how she wrote her master's thesis on Linsecum and tells several stories of Pushmataha. She discusses conflicts over land in Mississippi and Pushmataha's funeral.

Note: A 20-minute section of accidentally recorded background noise was removed from the end of this tape.

Keywords: [Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; Pushmataha; Gideon Linsecum; Mississippi; History; Oral biography]

ORAL HISTORY

P R O G R A M
University of Florida

MISS CHOC 054

Interviewee: Mary Clay Lloyd

Interviewer: Eddie Isaac and Johnson Bell

Date of Interview: November 12, 1975

I: The twelfth, 1975. We are interviewing Mrs. Mary Clay Lloyd. Today on the interview is Eddie Isaac, Johnson Bell. Starting off, let's see. I would like to know how long you have been studying on these Choctaws and all that?

L: How long I been interested? Well, since my childhood. My great-grandmother, **Duchan** Lincecum—L-I-N-C-E-C-U-M—Cole had played with the Choctaws and lived near them when she was a little girl, and so I would enjoy hearing her talk. And then some of the Choctaws would come to visit her, that she had known when she was young. And they would come by where we lived out in the country from Brooksville and in Macon—town of Macon, we moved later in there. And Choctaws would come. And so naturally, I became interested that way. And then, when I went out to Texas to be a librarian at Mary Hardin-Baylor College at Belton, Texas, which is a Baptist college for women. And just in mentioning, talking to the Botany teacher, mama mentioned that she had this Uncle Gideon Lincecum who had been a naturalist collected plants in Mississippi. So, Ms. Capp, the teacher, was very much interested that we were related to him because, see, he was famous in Texas. We didn't know it in Mississippi. We didn't know he was famous because he'd moved out there 1848 before my mother was even born. We knew we had some Lincecum kin people out there, but we didn't know that he'd gotten to be famous. But the Southern Methodist University, a science teacher had written Lincecum up in *The Naturalists of the Frontier*. And so, we found out that he was well-considered in Texas, and at the time on 1938, when they were celebrating the Centennial, they moved his

remains from Central Texas, where he had farmed and collected specimens, they moved him to the official state cemetery in Austin and made memorandum, you know, markers on his grave about his great work. And he had lived with contemporary with Pushmataha. So, in his old age, he wrote this first biography of Pushmataha. And when I was a student doing my thesis on Gideon Lincecum at Mississippi State University, I read about Pushmataha. That was one of his writings that he did, beside nature writings, that he wrote about Pushmataha. So, I began to be interested. And then when we moved from Noxubee County, Mississippi, over to Demopolis, Alabama. When I was a little girl, I played at a place called Gaineswood, which is a beautiful home, and that Pushmataha oak was out in the yard. And so, we played out there. We had tree surgeons come and doctor the tree so that it wouldn't die, because he said that was the tree that Pushmataha signed a treaty with the Whites and they were trying to keep it alive. And so that was of special interest I grew up with. While I was a little girl, I had my grandmother. And then when I went to Texas, and finding out that Lincecum was famous. So, when I decided that I wanted a master's in history, the librarian over there at Mississippi State University said, "I think we have enough materials for you to write your thesis on Gideon Lincecum. And I know that you are kin to him." And I said, "Oh, would that be interesting." So, I did write my thesis on it. And then all the time, I was finding out more about Pushmataha because he was one of the Chief writings. So, people in Starkville, after I married Mr. Lloyd and settled down and graduated—I was named Clay but I'm married to [inaudible 14:13]—and settled there and they heard that I knew a lot about Pushmataha, so

I was invited to speak at the Daughters of the American Revolution. And so, I'm speaking again. They've got another generation now. Some of them have forgotten my talk. And I have learned a lot more anyhow since. That was 1953 that I married, and so I'm going to talk to them again in February. All the time, whenever I see anything about him, well, I read it. Were you here when I told about the music? That they found at the Ole Miss? The symphony has been done on. So, I made note of that and gave it to the library that it is up there—the music, you know, you want to borrow it and learn to do the symphony. And then when I went out to Tulsa this summer to see the Cherokee play, well, I went and I found Peter Perkins' picture in the Gilcrest Museum, which is one of the best museums that we have for the Indian arts, a beautiful building—a rich man, Indian out there, got oil on his land, and gave the money to build the museum. And they have—I ran in to Mr. Pitchlynn, he's a guard there. He had a tag on his chest that he was walking around, you know, keeping people from stealing the pictures or any of the things that are on display. 'Course most of the players are out back in vertical files away from the public. But some things out there need watching, and so he's there and his people saved their letters. And so, the Pitchlynn letters are there. I had a picture of him, did you see it over there on the table? That is his ancestor, who lived over here in this area and was a friend of Pushmataha and Lincecum.

I: Would you tell us some things about Pushmataha's background, his childhood days, when he became Chief and all that?

L: Well, they didn't know much because his parents were gone, you know. The Governor Murray of Oklahoma was the Chickasaw descendant. And he had an idea that he puts in his little book that Pushmataha's parents must have died in a war and that some Chickasaws took him over and reared him and that's the reason that he didn't know about his family. Now that's just Murray's idea. Anyhow, he didn't know much, and he would tell that story about springing from the oak, which would make a nice tradition, but he didn't seem to know any details about his earlier life that I have found record of.

I: What about as he grew up?

L: Well, he became famous as a fighter. He went to go out to Oklahoma—it wasn't the state of Oklahoma then. It wasn't farmed. But he liked to go out there to hunt. He went first to hunt and take some friends with him. And they would get in fights with the Osages and other Indians out there, and usually they won but one time all his fellow friends got killed. And so, that's when he went down to where the Spanish people were and learned to speak Spanish well. He spoke Spanish and French and had very fine—Lincecum talked to him, you know. Said that he had one of the finest minds that he had ever seen, and that he could analyze and make plans, you know, like for the treaties, and that he had good sense of humor. Did you read the little story I wrote there about [inaudible 8:08] Columbus, the first [inaudible 8:12]? He wanted to touch them and see if they were angels, because he hadn't seen white-skinned girls and he had been going to the mission school and learning about angels and all in the Christian school. He asked to touch them to be sure they weren't angels. Then we had about the

wives, anecdotes about that. When he was drilling, before the war of 1812, he found out that other officers had their wives along with 'em. So, he sent for his wife. They would parade up—the place they had, they liked to show off—parade up and down and exercise, and the different officers of the American army would show off their wives. And so, he sent for his wife so he could parade her around and show off too. Then, about the horse bidding, that's one of the famous stories that they tell. He had lost his horse that he lived way down, he didn't live up this far, he lived down around Meridian, in that area. Maybe on the Mississippi side, maybe on the Alabama side, at different times. So, he wanted to come up here, around the Columbus area, something was going to be, some entertainment was going to be. So, he walked eighty miles. That was just a year before he died, too. I think that walk helped to undermine him, a very long walk like that, not riding at all. He walked eighty miles up there. And so, when some of the friends noticed that he was walking, he was going to walk back, they said, "Well, we'll let you have a horse if you promise not to sell it and buy liquor with it." And he said, "I promise." So, then the next time they saw him, he was walking again. Then they said, "Why, Push, you promised us that you were not sell that horse to buy liquor with." And he said, got himself up real straight and he says, "I kept my promise. I haven't bought liquor with it. But you didn't say a thing about not betting it on a ball game." [Laughter]

I: Could you tell us some things that he did as he was Chief during his days that you may know?

L: He went on the boat, where you in here when I was telling about it? Going from New Orleans to Baltimore by boat? When Jefferson was president, they were working on a treaty, and they sent them by boat that time. And he enjoyed that trip, and Jefferson interviewed him personally. President Jefferson. And told him that if he ever got where he needed help, to remember that he was his White father and to call on him. And so, when he got back up there, this last time when he was going to die, well, he tried to find the real president. Of course, Jefferson was no longer the president, and it had changed presidents. And Jackson hadn't gone in, Jackson went in the next year in 1825 and Push died at Christmas, 1824, so he didn't know the presidents personally like he had known the others. And he got that treaty fixed all right, and then he had the Oakville Treaty. And Lincecum, my man that I wrote my thesis on, he was there at that treaty. And he gave a report on it, the conversation that took place there. That was when he taught Jackson about getting the rivers wrong in the geography of what's now Oklahoma. 'Course it wasn't Oklahoma then. But they were talking about it, and he was trying to swap off some land, this good land in Mississippi for some Push thought wasn't as good in the Oklahoma area that he was familiar because he went out there hunting and fighting and he knew the geography. Although he hadn't studied a geography textbook, but he knew it from practical visits to the country. So, he called Jackson's bluff right there and corrected him and that's in history books, that he won victory there. And he won victory—then when the Mississippi White people began to call out to get their—get more land, you know, they couldn't want two sets of governments. They said, "How are we going to get

deeds to the land if the Indians had some of the land they claim, and the Whites claim the same land. How are we going to know who the land belongs to?" That made a confusion for them. Of course, that wasn't fair to the Indians. I'm not taking up for the Whites doing it. But that was one of the conflicts that was there, that more and more White people coming in and wanting to prove that they owned the land. I told you that one of my Lincecum ancestors that is in the courthouse records in Lamb County, and those Lincecums went there and said that this land belongs to this particular Indian—called him by name, Red Bird or some such name as that for all these years and I know that it belongs to him. But they'd come in—squatters they called them. They'd just come in. They didn't own land, or hadn't bought it at all, but they'd just squat on it, just take it, and try to take it. So that made it bad, for they had two governments, see? The Indian government, and then they had differences the way they did about the justice. The Indians would go and, if somebody killed one of their family or enemies, well, they would go and shoot somebody else in retaliation. And of course, in the American justice system, they were trying to get away from that shooting just in revenge, but to have a trial and I know—I was reading in some of these things just last night about that they knew that the man had killed the other one in self-defense, and in American justice when they can prove that, they don't have to die, if they knew it was self-defense. But this Indian said no, that's the rule, my people, my Tribe. If somebody's shot, then somebody's got to be killed from the other side right away. And they held on to that, that made conflicts, you see, with two kinds of justice and two people wanting to govern.

I: What was Jackson's general opinion of Pushmataha? Did he ever say anything about Pushmataha?

L: Jackson?

I: Yeah.

L: Oh, he thought he was the greatest of all the Indians. He would praise him. He was there in Washington and saw that they had the big funeral, because he was already elected president when Pushmataha died, you know, used to go in— March 4 was the inaugural date, but he knew that he was going to be president, and he went ahead and had ordered the big funeral and came to see in person at the hotel where he was sick. Saw that he had nurse and he had a doctor's attention and all, but by that time it was too late.

I: Can you quote Jackson on anything he ever said about Pushmataha?

L: What's that now?

I: Can you quote Jackson on anything he ever said about Pushmataha? Is there a quote about anything? You know, did he ever say anything about him that was like, "He's my friend"?

L: I don't quite understand.

I: Well, did he ever say like, "Pushmataha is my best Indian friend," or something like this? Can you quote him on anything that he said?

L: Well, I find you over there in my books. I can't think offhand of a quote, but I can find you in the books some.

[End of interview]

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