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James R. Carselowey, Interviewer.

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Interview with Jones Louis Puckett.
North 3rd Street, Vinita.

Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians were given a reservation in 1867, at Medicine Lodge, Kansas, the same as the other tribes of the plains. In the fall of 1867 they were placed on this reservation and promised a home there.

The Arapahoes being a small tribe were very peaceful. Their chief's name was Left Hand. He was strong enough to hold his people together, and if they had had their way, they would have made no trouble.

The Cheyennes were different. They did not have a chief who was strong enough to hold them together. They had Little Raven, Cloud Chief, Dull Knife, and others. In the winter of 1867-'68 they left their reservation and went back to the plains.

The Cheyennes and Sioux are the same tribe of Indians.

A bunch of the Sioux Indians pulled off from the rest of

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them, and went to Wyoming under a chief whose name was Cheyenne, but they talked the same language.

In the spring of 1868 they discovered that the buffalo hunters were killing buffalo just for the hides, but they were just small tribes with bows and arrows, while the buffalo hunters were in large numbers and were armed with guns. The guns were long range guns and shot cartridges. The Indians went on the war path, but they were helpless. It was considered that an Indian could shoot ten arrows while a white man was loading his gun, but these white men had breech loading guns and could shoot as fast as the Indians. All the show the Indians had was to hide in the grass, which was very high, and shoot at white hunters with their bows and arrows.

The government could not do anything, but let the Indians have their own way. They figured that when the Indians saw starvation was certain they would let the soldiers catch up with them. In time they were brought back to Fort Reno. Then the Government put the young men up to a certain age in chains and sent them to Florida,

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where they would be taught the English language and something about civilization.

The old men, women and children were forced to camp in a little prairie valley between Fort Reno and the North Canadian River. An armed guard marched around this camp day and night to keep the Indians from going back to the plains. Every morning just at sunrise the white men would run a cannon out of the fort and shoot it over the heads of the Indians. This was to remind the Indians that they were still prisoners of war.

The Arapahoes put their children in school very early, but the Cheyennes didn't give up for their children to be placed in school, until the latter part of the '80's.

When the Cheyennes were first brought in off the plains, if a woman had to go to the fort on business or to the Agency, which was about a half mile east of the Fort Reno ^{North} on the Canadian River, she would pull a blanket around her; but when in camp the woman just wore breech-clouts and close fitting garments without sleeves, with low necks, which reached down to the breech-clouts.

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Mr. Darlington, the agent, was a Quaker as were all of his assistants. The Quaker women soon induced the Indian women to wear skirts coming to their knees.

Many men would call the Cheyenne women "squaws" but you will not expect that of a man like me who has been married to three Indian women.

At the time the Indians were being held as prisoners of war at Fort Reno I was working for Dan Waggoner, a very rich cattleman, who had one of the largest ranches in Texas and also one near Fort Reno.

Dan Waggoner had a contract to furnish beef for the soldiers at Fort Reno and also for the Indians. There were something over one thousand soldiers at the fort and about two thousand Indians, all of whom the government was having to feed.

Every few days we would cut out so many cattle and take them down to the fort to be used for beef. The government had their butchers for the fort and the agency but the Indians did their own butchering. They had a small piece of

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land something like ten acres with lines around it which was what they called the "Issue Ground". When it came time to furnish beef to the Indians, two of us would cut out a beef and head it for the "Issue Ground". There were about a dozen warriors stationed at the corners of the "Issue Ground". They took after the beef with their bows and arrows, and soon had it filled full of arrows but it would run some distance before it fell. The Indian men did the killing, but the Indian women had to dress the beef. There were a bunch of Cheyenne women sitting on the ground close by with blankets around them. When the beef fell they rose and left their blankets on the ground, and ran with butcher knives to dress their kill.

This was my first time to see a bunch of Indian women dressed in this manner, and it excited me very much. This was in 1882. When I came to myself the whole crowd was looking at me instead of the women. Jim McAnalley had been with the army a long time and knew all about the Indians. When I spoke about their clothes, he said, "Don't let your

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eyes fool you. ~~God~~ made those women if the devil did make their dresses." Later on I found out that Jim knew what he was talking about, for there were over one thousand women in those two camps and there was not a bad one in the bunch. They were just like diamonds in the rough, and I made up my mind then and there that it did not take clothes to make women honorable.

THE U-BAR RANCH.

In 1882 I left Dan Wagoner's ranch near Fort Reno and came to Vinita, where I soon secured another job on the U-Bar ranch, located west of Vinita near the little town of White Oak. It was owned by Dave Allen, a white man, who had married a Cherokee woman.

Allen, himself, lived in Vinita but he had a brother-in-law who was exactly my age, by the name of Cude Gillis who stayed on the ranch with me. We had pretty good times "batching" together. We got along fine in the daytime but when night came and when a big storm would come up, we would

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both be scared nearly to death, and putting a big quilt over our heads would run out on the creek bank and get soaking wet before the storm was over when we would go back into the house. There were so many cyclones in those days that we were always uneasy for fear one of the things would come our way.

We hunted more for watermelon patches than we did for cattle. There was no place to go for amusement except a place about five miles to the northwest, where on the edge of the Shawnee hills there was a Stomp Ground where the Shawnee and Delaware Indians would go at that season of the year and dance for weeks at a time. We would go there once in awhile and see the Indians dressed in full regalia with paint and feathers performing their annual stomp dance.

Allen would come out on Sundays and tell us good stories and sing and pick on an old banjo we kept about the place. I never dreamed then that he would turn out to be "the cowboy preacher" that he did. He had been

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reared in Memphis, Tennessee, by wealthy parents, but, like many other wealthy people, the Allen family had been broken up by the Civil War.

Allen was an inspector in the Confederate Army, in the department of Texas and Indian Territory, during the Civil War. This threw him in contact with the Indians and cowboys. He had a good education and could adapt himself to any conditions. He had a peculiar way about him of being able to compel the respect of even the toughest men by simply using kind words.

Vinita at that time was a very small place with probably five or six hundred inhabitants. The population was composed of cowboys and people from everywhere, and of Shawnee, Delaware, and Cherokee Indians. There was not a brick building in town. There were probably half a dozen stores, two blacksmith shops and a Methodist church.

Winter came, and growing tired of the cold, windy prairies, I decided to go back to the Spavinaw hills. About the middle of November I settled up and catching an apple wagon that came from Arkansas I found myself back

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among the flint hills. I stopped with a man everybody called "Uncle Jeff Beck". He was a good old man and had quite a fortune. His place was on the road from Mayesville to Tahlequah and just outside his door yard was a grave yard, where some thirty odd men had died with their boots on. They had been buried there as many as eight at a time.

Uncle Jeff had a son about the same age as myself and we would take in all the dances and all the other gatherings. One night we went to a dance at the home of a white ~~man~~ who had married an Indian woman. I was soon talking with the owner of the house trying to get his idea of civilization. He said there was no harm in a good dance and he always had a good one. Noticing that the lamp was sitting on a high shelf, I mentioned the fact. He said he always set it up high that way so that if any of the boys wanted to take a shot at it none of the ladies would be hurt. I had not been there long when Henry called me to one side and ~~said~~ he wanted me to chip

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in a quarter to buy "a white mule". On inquiry I found that "a white mule" was colloquial for a pint of white whiskey, and that the whiskey peddler was called "a mule man". They all wore six shooters which they called their killing machines. There were but two tunes that the fiddlers ever played in that country. One of them was "Indian Glory". The other was "Black Jack Grove". Those were the only two tunes that musicians then called up to-date in the country. The fiddler would usually sit in a corner on a wooden stool with his face turned to the wall, while a girl or boy would usually sit on a back log and with two small sticks or knitting needles play second by beating on the strings just above the left hand of the fiddler.

At first we would have good order, but toward the last they danced with their hats on, turned their belts around so that their six-shooters were in front, tucked their pants inside their boots, and those who had taken off their spurs put them back on. Our fiddler was a long haired Indian called

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"Apple Jack". Occasionally one of the boys would call "Apple Jack" out of the house and give him a drink, and then the fiddle would take on new life.

All at once there came a lean, long Arkansas looking fellow, who turned out to be the "mule man." He had sold all of his white mule, and after looking around until he was satisfied that there were no marshals there he came into the house and begin to take a part in the dance. He asked permission to call one set in Arkansas style and asked me to take part with him. I selected a little Cherokee girl. He said that when he said, "Swing your partner", to swing them by the waist. Then it was swing your partners, change partners and swing, and then swing your partners. In the change I came to a big fat Indian girl, threw my arm around her and tried to swing her but she was too heavy for me, then I took both hands and managed to swing her, then crippled back to my partner. Just then he bawled out, "We are all done now. You can all go home and kill old Towser if he goes bow wow." Bang, went the guns, and out went the

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lights, boys yelling and guns popping. I almost ruined my shins running over the wood pile, but I finally got to my horse and went down the hill with my bridle rein in one hand and my hat in the other, and didn't draw a good breath until I got home.

Henry didn't come in until ^{almost} daylight. He said they had a good time after I left. He said an Indian by the name of Little Feather was killed and two or three others had their heads pretty badly beaten up.