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Hazel B. Greene,
Journalist,
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An Interview with Mr. Ambrose M. Spear,
Boswell, Oklahoma.

I was four years old when my parents took the train at Glasgow, Kentucky, for Honey Grove, Texas. I was born in Kentucky and lived in Texas until I was grown and married, then I took a notion to move to the Indian Territory. I had never been over here but I came over and rented a place on the farm off George Crowder on Crowder Prairie, and two weeks later, on February 13, 1901, we loaded up into covered wagons and drove to our new home in the Indian Territory. I will never forget it, because our second baby was unexpectedly born that night. There we were, strangers in a strange land and among strange people,

the most of whom did not even speak our language. Jackson was ten or twelve miles away. There was a doctor there. Direct, Texas, was fifteen miles away and a doctor was there. It was about two hundred yards out to the home of George Crowder. I went out there for advice and to see if some woman would go and stay with my wife until I could get

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help. About six dogs nearly took me down out there but Mr. Crowder came to the door and told me that Mrs. Crowder was sick and not able to go. She heard us and called out that she would be ready in a moment and told me to hitch up and go after Julie Crowder four miles away. I went and got her. She delivered the baby all right and I gave her \$5.00 and from that day those Indians had a warm corner in my heart. I rented a place from her (Julie) the next year and lived on it four years. Our daughter, Irene, was born there. Again Julie earned \$5.00. Those Indians were splendid neighbors.

I have always raised and dealt with stock, hogs and cattle mostly. The woods were full of razor back hogs and they were wilder than the deer which would come up and get into our fields. The hogs never did that. They were interesting because there were so many of them and they were so wild. We all had dogs trained to round up wild hogs and pen them and I loved to hear the music of dogs rounding them up. It was a law of the Indian Nation that if a man found a shoat or calf six month old unmarked it was his if he

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could put his mark and brand on it. We would go hog hunting and make the dogs catch the unmarked shoats or calves. We would tie them down and mark them. I've spent the day catching and marking wild hogs and I would leave them tied down all night and return for them next morning in the wagon and take them to the house and pen them. They would be conquered by the time I would get back after them next day. We would pitch a little corn in to them. They didn't know what an ear of corn was. They would run from it. Some of them would learn to eat corn and some would just stay in the pen and starve to skeletons and never learn. We had another breed of hogs which we called "house hogs" because they were gentle, naturally. We made them rustle for their food, but we fed them just enough corn to make them keep coming to the house to sleep and to come at our calling. I raised a lot of hogs and I bought lots of them too and hauled them to Honey Grove, Texas, in a wagon a distance of thirty miles. Sometimes I would make only 1 cent a pound off of those I bought.

It was twenty-five or thirty miles from where we lived at Crowder Springs to Caddo but sometimes a bunch

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of neighbors would get their hogs together and with their trained dogs, would drive the hogs there.

We would ride horseback and keep the hogs herded, but really the dogs led the hogs. They would run ahead of them and bark a little and the hogs would follow, and wherever night overtook us we would bed them down and somebody would guard them all night. I knew one of the smartest little hog-dogs. He was just a little mongrel, but he was really smart. I have seen him run down between the wings and into the gates of a pen with the hogs following him right in. Then he would go through a small hole in the fence and run around to the gate and bay those hogs in the pen until we could close it.

One could judge the age of a hog pretty well if they knew hogs. Their tusks showed their ages pretty well. I have bought many a three and four year old barrow for \$1.50 per head from Indians. There were just wild hogs in the woods. They never penned them or fed them corn, they would just mark them and let them go. They didn't raise much corn anyway, just a "Tom Fuller" patch. I didn't

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put in all of my time working with hogs. I made crops and helped to put up hay. There was a world of grass on the prairies which we could put up for hay just for the cutting and baling. Sometimes we just stacked it.

I used to supply the King Hotel in Boswell with a lot of their meat and lard. I remember once I brought in five, ten gallon cans of lard and sold it to Mrs. King for 10 cents per pound and I sold her cured hams and bacon for 10 and 12 cents per pound. That was corn fed meat. Meat fattened entirely on mast brought only 5 cents per pound. Eggs were 8 and 10 cents per dozen. I paid for all the help on the farm with hog meat and lard. We had all the wild meat we wanted too. Deer, turkey, squirrel and prairie chickens were plentiful but I never killed but two deer. I bought venison.

The year that I lived on the Crowder Spring farm the deer nearly ate up my oats. I "laid" for them on moonshiny night and killed one. They never bothered

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my oats any more. There were plenty of wolves howling around at nights, but they didn't bother us. There was no railroad here and no Boswell either until the second year I was here. We got our mail at Direct, Texas, across Red River on the road to Honey Grove. We crossed at Templetons ferry. We did a lot of our trading at Honey Grove and at Duncan store at Mayhew court ground. I saw one Indian whipped there. He took it stoically. He was made to stand facing a big old hackberry tree with his arms around it and an Indian holding to either hand and they "poured" it on him with a seasoned switch. He had to take it. There is where I saw the old steel jail cell the first time. Then I saw it again when it was being hauled on a truck to Bokchito. When they attempted to cross a bridge over Mayhew Creek the banisters were too high to permit the jail to pass over them and it was too wide to pass between them had it been on a lower truck, so they just backed up and went west, around the creek to the county line and south down it, to the highway thence to Bokchito. The old jail was offered to the

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city of Boswell for \$125.00 about ten years ago.

Bokchito got it for \$100.00.

When we lived at Crowder Spring there was no church near enough for us to attend, and our main recreation was going hunting or fishing on Sunday. Sometimes we would go over to Honey Grove on Saturday night and come back Sunday. There was no school there then either.

I have always dealt in stock and do yet even though I worked in Blocker-Williamson and Cull Boswell's store four years. I was a deputy sheriff under Bob Connell for three years. Then in 1924 I became the only Republican Sheriff ever elected in Choctaw County. I am City Marshal at Boswell now.

I was living on Crowder Prairie when the Government brought a hundred and thirty-five Mississippi Choctaw Indians and established them in a camp at Cochauer Springs in tents waiting to allot them and put them on their lands. Some of them stayed there a year or more before they got moved to allotments. The Government fed and clothed them and they didn't do a single thing only sit there and wait.

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They didn't even get out and try to kill a rabbit. The young ones did not even play games. One of them of the name of Burton made weekly trips to Bennington for supplies of clothing and food. I remember Boyd and Tom Phillips were among the last to go away. They had no wagons or anything except what the Government gave them, but when they were settled on their places they were given work stock and farming tools and milch cows. They were quiet and peaceable, and didn't bother anybody. They had one old woman there, who claimed ^{she} was one hundred and thirty-five years old. I went there three times especially to see her but she would be in bed with her head covered up and I never saw her.