

CASTOE, GEORGE D.

INTERVIEW

7186

332

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

CASTOE, GEORGE D. INTERVIEW

7186

Field Worker's name Alene D. McDowell

This report made on (date) August 12, 193 7

1. Name George D. Castoe

2. Post Office Address Route #1, Bartlesville, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) Tuxedo, Bartlesville, Oklahoma

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month June Day 8 Year 1866

5. Place of birth Newton County, Missouri

6. Name of Father Robert Castoe Place of birth Missouri

Other information about father Cherokee extraction.
buried in Chautauqua County, Kansas

7. Name of Mother Lutecia Sears-Castoe Place of birth Kentucky

Other information about mother buried in Nowata, Okla.

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 16.

Alene D. McDowell
Research Field Worker
Washington County
Indian-Pioneer History, S-149
August 12, 1937

334

CASTOE, GEORGE D. INTERVIEW

7186

Interview with
George D. Castoe
Route #1,
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

George D. Castoe was born June 8, 1866,
in Newton County, near Neosho, Missouri.

Father - Robert Castoe was born in
Lawrence County, Missouri, died at the age
of 48 years and is buried in Chautauqua
County, Kansas. He came to the Indian
Territory in the early 80's to enroll on
the Cherokee Indian rolls. He went before
Judge Springer to enroll, but Springer
demanded a large amount of money from him,
if he ~~was~~^{to be} enrolled. He refused and for this
reason we did not receive any land.

Mother - Lutecia Pears-Castoe was born
in Kentucky, died at the age of 82 years
and is buried in Nowata, Oklahoma.

I came to the Indian Territory with my
parents in 1874 and settled on a farm

- 2 -

in the Territory, 12 miles south of Elgin, Kansas, on Pond Creek, in the Osage Indian Reservation near Pawhuska. We lived on this farm for several years.

My father, then, rented a farm from John Truegiver, an Osage. This place was located on Pond Creek, near Pawhuska and we resided here, improving this place, until the early 80's.

In 1882 we removed to the Frank Frenchman place, on Caney River, west of Copan, in Washington County, where my parents resided for 16 years.

While we lived near Pawhuska, my father hauled rock, with three yoke of cattle, for some of the first bridges at Pawhuska, and hauled material for the Government school building at Pawhuska. He also used these cattle to break land for his crop.

Our first home was a two story, log

- 3 -

house with three rooms down stairs and one room above, with a rock fireplace. We had a dug water well for household use and watered the stock at the creek.

ALLOTMENT OF LAND.

The land in the Cherokee Nation was appraised by the Government and allotted to the Cherokee and Delaware Indians, according to the valuation. Some secured 60 acres and some 160 acres. If the land was good and well located, it was appraised higher and the acreage of the allotment was smaller.

The Osage allotment was handled differently but I do not know their method.

HUNTING GROUNDS

The Strip Country was noted for wild game, and at ^{the} ~~that~~ time of our arrival here, was about the only place where the buffalo still existed.

My father made trips to the western Strip

- 4 -

Country, and hunted buffalo with the Indians.

The wild game in our immediate vicinity was about the usual variety, deer, antelope, raccoon, opossum, rabbit, squirrel, prairie chicken, wild turkey and quail.

CAMP MEETINGS.

The Indians held their camp meetings separate from the white people. The Osages, like the other tribes, had their camp meetings. These meetings varied in different tribes, but were all carried on in a similar way, each having a different custom.

The Indians were ^{of} a very religious disposition- while they knew nothing of the Christianity we practice in the present age, they were true to their religious beliefs.

The Indian Legend stories were handed down from generation to generation, like fairy tales in which every one believed.

The Osages held their Camp Meetings in a

- 5 -

log house, located on the creek banks on our farm, west of Copan. This was 50 years ago. The house is in a dilapidated condition, but is still standing.

INDIAN DANCES

The Indians celebrated every occasion with a dance. There was the War dance, Sun dance, Rain dance, Green Corn dance, Snake Dance, Ghost dance, and many other kinds.

The Delawares of this county still hold an annual stomp dance at the Halfmoon home, near Copan.

CLOTHING.

The full-blood Osage men wore buckskin^{cloth} leggings and moccasins, bright colored shirts and blankets. The women wore short buckskin leggings and moccasins, knee length cloth skirts and blankets or shawls. Both men and women wore their hair in long braids.

CASTOE, GEORGE D. INTERVIEW

7186

- 6 -

The papoose was strapped to a board or cradle until it was a year old.

INDIAN HOMES

THE WIGWAM:

The Indians were an unsettled class of people, moving from place to place. Their method of travel was on horseback and on foot, some having light spring wagons. The wigwam homes were easily moved and rebuilt and soon became the most popular home among the Indians.

High poles were set up in a circle, the top terminated in a point to resemble a cone. The inside of the wigwam was lined with woven rugs and the outside covered with elm bark.

The bark was peeled from the Elm tree, with a small sharp tool, which was run around the tree, under the bark to loosen it. The bark was then stacked, like lumber,

- 7 -

to season. The bark was always secured in the summer, so it would be thoroughly seasoned for winter.

The rugs for the inside of the home were woven from cat tail leaves which had been split and dried. They were then dyed with dyes made of barks, plants and roots. These rugs were also used for carpets.

THE TEPEE:

The tepee was covered with buffalo hides. Several hides were required for one tepee. The squaws would sew them tightly together and stretch them firmly over the framework, made of strong, carefully selected poles, bound together in a cone-shape. Clay and mud would be piled around the base of the tepee in the winter, to keep out the cold.

THE GRASS HOUSE:

The grass house was built of coarse grass

- 8 -

and sod. Long poles were set up in a circle, grass and sod was built around the sides. These houses resemble the Eskimo igloo.

A hole was dug in the center of the Indian homes for fire and the smoke was drawn through the opening at the top of the house, where the poles were bound together. The only light in the Indian homes was the fire light.

The Osages would form small colonies and build tepees where they would camp for several months. They never tilled the soil, for they were not settled in one location long enough to raise a crop. They received rations from the United States Government.

WEAPONS

The Indians made their weapons of nature's products. Their weapons consisted of the bow and arrow, and the tomahawk.

The bow was made of buffalo ribs and *boiled* arc hedge, which was grown wild in southern Oklahoma.

- 9 -

The arrow was made of strong wood, with a sharp flint rock head. A feather was attached to the arrow to make it sail straight.

The tomahawk was shaped similar to our present day hatchet, and was made of flint rock, with a wood handle.

INDIAN HORSE RACES

The Indians' greatest sport was horse racing. Any number could participate in this sport. They raced on a straight track and could rest assured the best horse would win. The prizes consisted of ponies, trinkets, blankets and "what have you."

INDIAN WEDDINGS

The Osage man would pick a girl for his wife and the negotiation was made with her father. She was not consulted regarding the marriage. The bridegroom usually traded her father so many ponies for the bride.

- 10 -

If he married the oldest daughter of the family, he assumed the privilege of taking all of her sisters, as his wives. Some men had as many as seven wives, providing he had the necessary purchase price. The tribal chief performed the ceremony, in the native language. My friend, John Truegiver, had two wives.

TOLL BRIDGES

There was a toll bridge over the Arkansas River at Ralston, located southwest of Gray Horse and one over the Arkansas River south of Ponca City, in Osage County.

There was a toll bridge over the Verdigris River near Lenapah, in Nowata County.

There was a swinging bridge on the Jim Day place, south of Bartlesville. This was the only toll bridge in Washington County.

FERRIES

There was a ferry over the Arkansas River

- 11 -

at Pawnee, in Osage County, one over the Arkansas River south of Tulsa and one over Grand River at Fort Gibson.

Joe McClintock operated the ferry over Caney River at the north edge of Bartlesville.

ROADS AND TRAILS

The old Chisholm Trail was the historical trail of the Indian Territory. Jesse Chisholm, a veteran Cherokee trader, ^{who} lived on the present site of the City of Wichita, Kansas, broke this trail in the early days.

He loaded several wagons with the usual traders' equipment and followed a faint trail, left by the Federal troops at the outbreak of the Civil War. Other travelers followed this trail and it soon became known as the Chisholm Trail.

This trail passed our home and thousands of cattle were driven along the trail each year.

- 12 -

A trail from Red River, through the Chickasaw Nation and the Unassigned Land, joined the Chisholm Trail, which led to the cow towns in Kansas.

I hauled freight from Elgin, Kansas, into the Indian Territory. I first hauled cattle and lumber, then later freighted merchandise from Monett, Kansas, and drove from two to six head of horses to the wagon.

The trail from Elgin to Pawhuska was in about the same location as the present road.

RAILROADS.

The first railroad built in this section was the "line road" built in 1883, along the Kansas-Indian Territory line. This line run from Caney through Elgin and Cedarvale to Wichita, Kansas.

The Santa Fe railroad was built by Jake Bartles, from Caney, Kansas, to Collinsville, Indian Territory, in the late 90's. It was

CASTOE, GEORGE D.

INTERVIEW

7186

- 13 -

the first railroad into this vicinity of the Indian Territory and was later sold to the Santa Fe Railroad.

In 1903 the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad was completed from Coffeyville, Kansas, to Oklahoma City, Indian Territory.

MISCELLANEOUS HAPPENINGS

The first automobile I ever saw was in 1909. We were moving from Oolagah, in Rogers County, to a farm on Hogshooter Creek, ^{South-}east of Bartlesville in Washington County, when we met a buggy type Ford automobile. It was built similar to a buggy, with high buggy wheels. I don't know which was the most excited, the horses or the family.

The largest fish I ever caught was in Caney River, west of Bartlesville. I caught it with a hock net and it weighed 100 pounds, dressed.

CASTOE, GEORGE D.

INTERVIEW

7186

- 14 -

RANCH LIFE

I worked for Joe Hurt Ranch in the Osage Reservation. He shipped between 15,000 and 20,000 cattle a year. His brand was 0000 for the cattle and **V** for his horses.

Lou Waite owned a ranch at the head of Sand Creek, southwest of Elgin and shipped about 6,000 head.

The Donaldson Ranch was located on Salt Fork, south of Cedarvale, Kansas, in the Indian Territory. They shipped between 12,000 and 15,000 head. I worked for this ranch for a while.

Red Fork, located south of Tulsa, was the first cow town in this vicinity.

Cattle were unloaded at Wichita, Kansas, and driven into the Strip Country, where they were grazed before they were shipped to market at Kansas City, Missouri. I have helped unload these cattle many times.

- 15 -

Some of the United States Deputy Marshals I knew were, Billy Rogers, a Cherokee Indian, Bud Ledbetter, the Dalton boys, Scott Bruner, and Dave Sears. Sears was a Deputy Marshal in the Osage Nation for twelve years. Court was held at Pawhuska.

Jake Bartles handled the Cherokee and Delaware payments here in the early days.

I lived on Fish Creek in 1897, when the first oil well in Oklahoma, was drilled in what is now the Johnstone Park, in Bartlesville. It was plugged for a dry hole and two years later was opened up, and is still pumped.

COMMENTS

Mr. Castoe has spent 63 years in Osage and Washington Counties and has witnessed many changes in the country. He has seen it grow from ^{the} days of the ox drawn wagon

- 16 -

to the speedy automobile and aeroplane days. Mr. Castoe enjoys giving his experiences and hopes the younger generations will understand a part of the hardships their ancestors went through to make this state what it is today.

Mr. Castoe also tells of a long, happy married life. On Christmas Day, 1887 he was united in marriage to Miss Lillie M. Lee, at Independence, Kansas. Their first home was located in the Forks of Caney, northwest of Bartlesville. They have weathered the storm of these many years together, and if nothing happens to prevent the happy event of their Golden Wedding in December, they will celebrate their fifty years of happy married life in their beloved state of Oklahoma.