

RUCKETT, JONES LOUIS

INTERVIEW

6812 254

Interview with Jones Louis Puckett,  
North Third Street, Vinita  
By James R. Carselowey,  
Field Worker,  
July 21, 1937

About the middle of April, 1883, I came to Vinita, in what was then Indian Territory, where I met Dave Allen, my former cattle boss, for whom I had previously worked, on the Bar-U ranch, near White Oak. He was glad to see me and said I had come just in time. He was going to start in a few days to meet a big herd of cattle in the Seminole Nation, which he was having driven through from Texas.

We made ready and were off in a few days. The first night we stopped near Claremore, on the Verdigris River. One of the boys had lived in that neighborhood before, and he told me of a widow down on the river, who had two grown daughters, and we slipped off after supper and went down there.

At that time the Creek Indians were having a little civil war. Isparhechar and Samuel Checote

POCKETT, JONES LOUIS. INTERVIEW.

#6812

2

were at war, over the chieftaincy. Isparhechar had most of the Indians on his side, while Checote had most of the negroes and mixed blood Indians on his side and the two factions were having some pretty hot times. About all the talk you could hear down that way was about this Creek war.

A sixteenth part negro, by the name of Dick Glass was a terror in that community. He had just made a raid through that country, and had come very near stirring up war between the Cherokee and Creek Indians. It was reported that he had been seen in that neighborhood, with a bunch of Creek negroes. We believed it too, and the girls looked as if they also believed it.

After we had talked, until we grew tired, and the old lady had told us it was bed time, my partner and I lay down to sleep on the porch. It was a hewed log house, with a porch facing east, and the moon was just rising. We piled up some boxes and

a bench or two, on the edge of the porch, before we lay down.

The folks had a pet deer, that had a habit of going into the woods, and staying for a week at a time, and when he came in he generally had a fight with the dogs. They had about a half dozen dogs which stayed around in the yard.

Suddenly we were awakened from sleep by a hoise of dogs barking, and there the dogs were, coming straight for the porch, knocking down our boxes and benches, as something jumped over them, and ran into the house, with every dog doing its best in howling and barking. We jumped up, and my first thought was, that the whole place was full of Creeks. Around the house we went, pell mell. The smokehouse door was standing open, and my partner darted into it, but I was running so fast, that I did not see the door in time to stop, and I landed around behind the smokehouse. I thought I could hear

POCKETT, JONES LOUIS. INTERVIEW.

#6812

4

horses running and was afraid to go any further, but I soon discovered that the sound I had heard was my heart beating, and not horses' hoofs.

I was just in the act of throwing up my hands and howling for mercy, when the good woman came and called us, and said it was nothing but Billie, the pet deer, that had come in. We returned to our bed, but we didn't go to sleep.

We got back to where Allen and his men were, about day-light, and started on our way. We were soon in the Creek Nation and crossed the Arkansas River at Wealaka Mission, and from there we headed towards Wawoka. We never saw any sign of a war party, until we had gone seventy-five miles. Then across a little river we began to meet bunches of armed men. Everybody we met warned us to be on the lookout. Our party was searched, and Allen's

5

men all wanted to stop and go back, but he always told us some stories of how he had out-manuevered large parties of wild Indians, and so he reassured us, and we went on. Sometimes he would tell us such a fearful tale, that the hair would stand up on our heads.

One day we came to a little country store and were told that a hard battle had been fought, just ahead of us, but Allen was in a hurry to get on and meet his cattle, and we kept going. We had gone but a short distance, when we met a party of Indians. They rode up close, and one of the men rode forward, and Allen went to meet him.

"Who are you?" asked the Indian in a friendly manner.

"Cowboys," was the answer.

"Where are you from," asked the Indian?

"From the Cherokee country," replied Allen.

"What are you doing here?"

"We are going to Wewoka to meet a bunch of  
cattle."

Then the Indian motioned to the rest of his men  
and they all came up.

They told us that they were Isparhechar's men,  
and that Checote's men were on ahead of us. They  
sent one man with us until we passed the line. We  
saw lots of Indians, but we never did get to see  
the main body of the army. After we had passed  
the place where our guide thought it would be safe  
for us to go on, he turned back. Before he left  
us we asked him how far it was to a place where we  
could stay all night, and he told us there was a  
cattle ranch, not far ahead, but never a cow ranch  
did we see.

Finally, we came to a creek, and as we were  
afraid to travel in the dark, we turned off the road

PUCKETT, JONES. INTERVIEW.

#6812

7

and went down the creek a little way and decided to make the best of it, and to camp for the night.

We sat quietly for awhile, holding our horses, while they grazed, then we decided to make a little fire down in the creek bottom, and try and get us something to eat. We tied some of our horses out, and hobbled the rest, and unpacked our camping outfit. Dave had a little bunch of wood in his hand, and I had just started a fire, when I saw Dave drop the wood and run behind a big tree. I got behind one too, and the rest of the boys were out with the horses. Just then a small body of men dashed up on horseback. We were all hidden, and they could see no one, and I had scattered the fire before I ran.

"Then one of the men said in a loud voice,

"Throw up your hands!"

"Don't shoot then" said Dave.

PUCKETT, JONES.

INTERVIEW.

6812.

8

"who are you and where are you going?" asked the man, riding up to the bank and trying to see Dave.

"We are cowboys, going to Wewoka," was the answer.

"Well, this is no place for you tonight. Come and go with me," commanded the unknown man.

"Who are you?" asked Dave eagerly. "Lieutenant McIntosh" was the answer. "Is that you, Charley," asked Dave eagerly. "Yes, this is Charley McIntosh.

"What is your name?" "Dave Allen," he said, as he stepped from behind the tree. "Well, come and go with me," said the lieutenant.

Allen called us all in and we all had a big laugh. Allen and McIntosh were old time friends. We found that we had camped within a quarter of a mile of Checote's line, and had not known it.

PUCKETT, JONES. INTERVIEW.

#6812

9

Lieutenant McIntosh took us to Checote's headquarters, and after explaining who we were, the chief asked in a rough voice, "Well, what do you want here?" "The first thing we want is our suppers," answered Dave. "Well," said Checote, "you must stay around my camp, and do not go away from the tent tonight. Have as little to say to these people as you can, and I will see you again in the morning."

Chief Checote and his officers slept in a tent, and we slept in a cook tent. There was little attention paid to us, until the next morning, when I saw more negroes than I had ever seen before, or have since. Some had shot guns, some had muskets, and some had Winchesters.

They sent men to guard us, until we had passed their lines. The guards told us many things about the battle, that had been fought a few days before

10

our visit. They said one bunch of their men had Isparhechar cut off from his army, and had shot his horse out from under him. They had shot at him over a hundred times, without hitting him. A few of his men saw his perilous condition and dashed back and picked him up. They said Isparhechar had a needle gun, and every time it smoked a man fell.

We rode across the battle ground, and saw many dead horses, but the men had all been buried. We went on our way, without further trouble, and met the cattle about ten miles south of Wewoka.

We turned back, and drove the cattle over about the same route we had just traveled. The soldiers, however, had got in with the Creeks and stopped the war. The government had counted the votes, and Checote was declared chief.

Isparhechar was elected chief several years afterward. We went along without further trouble

PUCKETT, JONES. INTERVIEW

#6812

11

except that sometimes the cattle would stampede at night and then we would have a little excitement. We turned our course a little to the north, and came to the Arkansas River, near Tulsa. The river was swimming deep, and there was much quicksand. We camped all night on the west side, and early the next morning we started the cattle across.

We had fifteen hundred head of cattle and we started swimming them across the Arkansas River just as the sun was shining bright in their faces, glistening on the water till it blinded their eyes. I learned afterward that it was a very foolish thing to do. The cattle began bellowing and began to float down the stream. We swam into the water on our horses and tried to turn the cattle up stream but they floated all around us and on down stream. We swam around with the cattle and tried to drag them out, one at a time, but when we would get one out, and

12

turn it loose, it would plunge back into the river. The cattle were climbing on top of one another and bellowing, until our ears were almost split with the noise.

It looked as if they would all drown. Our horses were worn out, and it looked like foolishness to try to do anything more with the cattle. Just below the place where we had tried to cross the river, it made a short bend, and just below this bend was a sand bar. The cattle washed upon this bar, which was not far from the bank, and we finally got them started in the right direction, and soon had them on the right side of the river. The bar was all that saved them, had it not been there the whole herd would have been lost.

#### TOWNS SPRING UP.

This was in June, 1883. When we left Tulsa we came east along the Frisco Railroad, which had just been extended to Sapulpa from Vinita the year

before. The towns of Tulsa, Claremore and Chelsea were just springing up. We reached the end of our journey about the last of June, 1883.

#### MORE CATTLE.

That same fall old man Wills brought another herd of eight hundred of cattle up from Texas and placed them with the Kimberly Cattle Company, with which he was connected. Grayson Wills, son of the old gentleman just mentioned came to White Oak that same year, and took charge of his father's cattle, and as soon as he learned the business the old man withdrew from the company and went to Sapulpa and went into business.

Grayson Wills soon got started in the cattle business for himself and grew rich, and lived at White Oak until his death.

PUCKETT, J. L.

FOURTH INTERVIEW. #1288