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Interview with Morris S. Sheppard,  
Route 1, Fort Gibson, Oklahoma.

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By

H. L. Ramage, Field Worker

Mr. Sheppard (Negro) was born at Webbers Falls, Oklahoma, in November, 1847.

## MOTHER AND FATHER:

My father's name was Cozar Sheppard. We were all slaves. Don't know very much about my mother and father. I do know that Tom Starr, John Robbie, Dick Blackburn, Joe Abe Scales and John Drew, all outlaws, saw my old dad and shot him to death for no cause at all. That was about 1858.

My Master, Joe Sheppard, sold my mother, named Esther, and two sisters, to Peter Goodman, in Texas. Our mistress did not want Mr. Joe to sell them, said he could not get anything for them, but Confederate money and that was no good. They were taken away on a steamboat. I never did see them any more. I had an uncle, Wash, and two cousins named Sam and Parsh. They were also owned by Joe Sheppard. Sam and Parsh ran away, went up North and joined the Federal Army. When the war was over and the slaves were set free, they came back. It was not long until they were shot and killed. No one ever knew who killed them, but the ones who did it. That was in 1864-65.

## TOLL GATE:

This Toll Gate was located on the old Mill Road and Springfield Trail, northeast of Fort Gibson. Joe and Mike Hilderbrand ran the Toll Gate. That was the only way to go unless you went miles and miles out of the way. The Negroes and Indians that lived around this part of the country would not be charged anything, but all the people traveling through the country would be charged one dollar and fifty cents for wagon and team, twenty-five cents horseback and ten cents a head for stock. Joe and Mike also owned the grist mill on Fourteen Mile creek. The only way you could get to the mill was to use the Toll Gate.

LICK:

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This salt lick was located on the old George Love farm, about three and one half miles southeast of Fort Gibson. George Love married Mary Ann Robison, who was Jack Spannard's aunt. Jack Spannard was sentenced to hang at Fort Smith by Judge Parker for the killing of Erwin, a U. S. Deputy Marshal.

I have killed lots of deer at this salt lick. I went there one night, hid in some brush, and was going to kill a deer. I had been there about thirty minutes when two men arrived. They talked like they had been drinking. They got in an argument which ended in a shooting. When the shooting started I tore out for home. The next morning a colored man was found dead at the Lick. I never did tell any one I had been there. The Negro was never identified. I never would go back to that place to kill deer. I have seen great herds of cattle go there to get their salt. Dave Ford now lives on the farm. I have pulled lots of cattle out of the bog at that place.

FAIR GROUNDS:

I have sure seen some awful things happen at the old Fair Grounds. Have seen some mighty fine horse races there, too. It was located about one and one half miles northeast of Fort Gibson. One time the French boys had a race horse there. They were Tom, Bob, Little Tom and Joe. There was another bunch of brothers (dont remember their name). had a race horse. Both these horses were in the same race. Each side had made bets on their horse. It happened the French horse got beat, but the boys would not pay the bet. This caused a shooting scrape. One of two were injured but did not die. The brothers that had the horse were from Webbers Falls. They told the French boys that if they didn't get their horse and be gone in fifteen minutes that they would all be killed. The French boys took their advice. At another race a man by the name of Sanders made a bet with a half-breed named Tom Woodland. After the race Woodland went to Sanders to collect the bet. Sanders began

calling him bad names and saying what he was going to do to Woodland. Woodland pulled his gun and shot Sanders. Sanders was dead in about five minutes. Woodland was not arrested for a long time. After his arrest he was tried and found not guilty of the murder charge. I couldn't understand that to save my soul, for I saw him kill the man.