

'SMITH, DAN

INTERVIEW'

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Interviewer, L. W. Wilson,  
Interview with Mr. Dan Smith,  
Haskell, Oklahoma.  
February 14, 1933.

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I was born near Red River, December 10, 1867, and am now seventy-six years of age.

My wife, Mary, was born in the Red River country of the Indian Territory and is about the same age as I am. She remembers being told she was born near the close of the Civil War. She is a white woman and possibly possesses some Creek and Seminole blood.

My father, Shelton Smith, was born in the Cherokee Nation of Georgia about the year 1830. He was a white man but became an adopted citizen of the Creek Nation of the Indian Territory and died a few miles north of the present town of Haskell.

At the outbreak of the Civil War he was enlisted in the Confederate Army. His death occurred in 1873.

Mother, Lucinda Ann Hopwood, was born in Alabama in 1834. She was a full blood Creek Indian and was moved, along with her parents, at the time the Creek Indians were

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moved from Alabama to the Indian Territory. She is buried beside her husband. Her death occurred in 1830.

I am of Creek descent from Mother's side and white from father's side, thus I am a half-breed Creek Indian.

#### Migration.

My father, Shelton Smith, came to the Indian Territory in 1853, along with other emigrants, by wagon train. They traveled through the states of Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas and finally landed at Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Here, the party followed the old California Trail until it intersected the Texas road about five miles south of the present town of McAlester.

At this point some of the party continued westward, some southward, but Father came north through Northfork

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(Now Dustin in Hughes County) into Fort Gibson and finally located at the Old Creek Agency on the south side of Fern Mountain about five miles northwest of Muskogee.

While living at this location, father was engaged by the Government to haul freight from Fort Gibson to Fort Arbuckle. His work carried him only as far as the present town of Okmulgee. This road was known as the Fort Arbuckle Road.

My mother, Lucinda Ann Hopgood-Smith, came with her parents from Alabama after the Creek Indians had signed a treaty for their removal to the Indian Territory. Many refused to abide by the treaty, but Mother's parents were agreeable to the treaty and attempts to this treaty were moved by the Government. The Government moved them to New Orleans and then by steamboat up the Mississippi River to the mouth of the Arkansas River and then up the Arkansas to Webber Hills, and then by wagon trains to Fort Gibson and from Fort Gibson to the Old Creek Agency location.

After they arrived here the soldiers from Fort Gibson furnished each family with a flint and steel with which to start a fire. Usually a fire once started was never ~~permitted to become extinguished.~~ Their tools as provided by the soldiers consisted of a hoe and an axe. Corn was given them as well as some rice with which to start crops. The balance of their belongings were clothing, bedding and some few articles they possessed in Alabama which were brought with them.

Settlement of the Creeks  
Before the Civil war.

The land in Indian Territory was owned in common and

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and any place one chose to make a home was satisfactory.

The corn and rice were planted with the hoe. The corn was planted in small clearings made with the hoe and the rice was planted in the lowland usually below a spring of water. The corn was ground in a mortar with a pestle or maul to make meal with which to make bread.

The rice headed and if the birds did not get the most of it, the heads were cut off and the rice was threshed by laying it on the ground and threshing it out with poles. The rice would be gathered up and poured in piles when the wind blew so as to blow the dirt off as much as possible. The rice was well dried in the sun before it was used for food.

Missionaries were among the Creeks, teaching the Gospel at that time.

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The roads were very rough. About the only roads at all were the Texas Road, the Arbuckle Road, the California Road and the Military Road, Fort Gibson to Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Soldiers were garrisoned at Fort Gibson, Fort Arbuckle, Fort Wayne, Fort Coffey, Fort Washita and forts at other points. These soldiers were used principally to protect

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migrants and to squash raids between different Indians.

My parents, Shelton Smith and Lucinda Ann Hopwood, were married in 1859 in accordance with the laws of the Creek Nation.

Civil War.

The Creeks were in a comfortable condition at the beginning of the Civil War. Many Creeks had acquired slaves. They were used to slave labor, having come from Alabama and Mississippi.

The Creeks had suffered many hardships in their new land and felt that the Indians should really take no part in the war and refuse to take action until it was absolutely forced on them. Most of the officials of the tribes leaned toward the Confederacy and it is true that the majority of the Creeks were really in sympathy with the South; however, some felt that if they did not fight with the North, annuities for the Creeks would not be made and for that reason the Creeks were divided.

A treaty was made finally that all Creeks would join the South and my father joined the Southern Army, and my father was moved to the Red Hive where I was born.

There was also a faction among the Creeks which refused to fight on either side and started to take refuge in Kansas. It has been said that this faction had no weapons to defend themselves with and they started to Kansas in the dead of winter and most of them died from hunger and cold and only a few ever reached Coffeyville, Kansas.

The Creeks who joined the Northern Army were organized into regiments under the command of General Blunt at Fort Gibson.

The Creeks who joined the South, as my father did, were organized into regiments and stationed at Fort Washita, along with white regiments from Texas. Some soldiers of the Southern Army were stationed at Southern forts in the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations. My father never participated in any major battles but was on the defense against raiding parties which went through all the Nations of the Five Tribes, burning houses, barns, cabins, terrorizing women and children and driving away horses and cattle, destroying and demolishing everything of value to be found.

We were fortunate because Father came through the Civil War and joined Mother and me at Fort Washita.

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I was born while Father was in the army in 1862 and I never saw him until I was past four years old.

Reconstruction Days after the  
Civil War.

Now, that the war was over, the United States came to the conclusion that the Creeks and other Indians of the Five Tribes had taken an acreage according to the provision and went about to reduce this acreage by setting up reservations for the wild Indians from Kansas, Nebraska and other states. They were now crowding all Indians of all types into the Indian territory. The Five Tribes objected to this procedure but as usual could only object. Negroes who had been freed were also made citizens of the Creek tribe. Again the Creeks objected and again were over-ruled. These negroes shared in the land and naturally enjoyed a part of the tribal funds.

People started to building cabins, clearing land and re-establishing themselves.

Railroads were started and in a few years the Creeks were beginning to get back to living conditions.

Wild Indians began to inhabit the reservations. The  
Indians  
Saw Fox came to the Creek Nation. The Delawares, Shawnees,



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Osages, Kickapoos, Kiaws, Shawans, Senecas, Pawnees, Kiowas, Comanches, Osages, Cheyennes, Arapanches and others came on to reservation land, taken from the Five Civilized Tribes. The Sac and Fox Indians became friends of the Creeks, but many of the wild Indians were really wild.

Indian raids were numerous and for a long time United States Government had soldiers stationed at different forts throughout the territory to handle the wild Indians and to keep them confined to their own reservations.

Cattle Trade between Texas and Northern Markets.

As long as cattle raising was the principal business it was always active in the business in some capacity.

From the time I was a small boy I enjoyed being with cattle, riding the range and loafing around the bunk houses, listening to the cow-punchers' yarns.

I have always farmed except when I worked on ranches or ranges.

Cattle used to be driven from Texas to Kansas to the market at Wichita or Coffeyville, Kansas. It would take months to get these cattle to market as they were moved slowly so as to allow them to graze on the tall, blue-stem grass. So many cattle had been killed during the Civil War

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and consumed by the army that prices were high. Many cattle were in Texas but there were no railroads to get them to market so the idea of driving them slowly through the country was advanced.

Some of the cattle arrived in Kansas, thin, foot sore and unready for the market; however, some of them were fat and in good condition when they reached a shipping point.

These were the days when Jesse Chisholm established the old Chisholm Trail. Chisholm was a half-breed Cherokee Indian. He had refuged to Kansas during the war. After the wild Indians had been moved into the territory he used to load up goods and supplies in wagons and haul them south to the wild and Plains Indians, trading and selling his wares. The trail he founded was called the Chisholm Trail. This trail was followed by many of the cattlemen and became very well-known to all the cow-punchers and cattlemen between Texas and Kansas.

#### Cattle Ranches in Indian Territory.

These Texas cattle were of all types, colors and breeds. Mexican type and long horns. They were brown, white, black, fawn, spotted and bore many different brands and had to be branded over after their arrival at a ranch.

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Each ranch had certain ranges and in many cases these ranges over-lapped.

Each ranch had a number of buildings; namely, the foreman's house, cook shack, bunk houses, sheds and corrals. Most of the buildings were of logs and the corrals were made of split rails. The superintendent's house was usually built of lumber.

Employees on the ranch were the superintendent, foreman, cowpunchers, horse wranglers, cooks, salt boys and occasionally there was a harness maker. The number of employees, of course, was in accordance with the size of the ranch.

Occasionally, even after the railroads were built, some ranchers would go to Texas and drive the cattle through to their ranges.

I remember in 1882 when I was working on the Mule Shoe Cross Ranch, about twenty-five miles west of the present town of Okmulgee, that I, with others, rode to Abilene, Texas, to bring back a herd of four thousand head of cattle. When we left Abilene we checked up four thousand, four hundred and forty-four head of cattle with many different brands on them.

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We left the Mule Shoe Cross Ranch on horse-back and fitted out the chuck wagon at Abilene and picked up eight cowboys there besides the ones who left with me. The four of us, Simeon Yakapa, full blood Creek Indian, Mathey Posey, David Church and I, together with these other eight boys and the chuck wagon, brought those cattle through and lost only nine head enroute.

We had to wrangle our own horses and we each took turn about bringing along the chuck wagon and we cooked on the open fire. Everyone had to do his own cooking. No certain ones had a certain place with the herd. When darkness came and the cattle were tired we would bed down for the night with always someone left on watch. Sometimes we would change shifts as many as three times a night. The next morning those boys who had had some rest would start off with the point, then the flank would follow and so on.

It required three months and twenty-two days to bring the herd on to our range and everyone of us was more than glad to pull off his boots and flop down in that bunk-house.

The eight boys whom we hired at Abilene, Texas. were

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paid and I never saw them again. One of our best cowboys, Bill Cook, later turned outlaw and headed the Cook Gang.

On the ranch we would have Fall and Spring round-ups and the cattle that did not belong to us would be driven to their home ranges. On these round-ups we always took the chuck wagon and would be gone sometimes as long as three weeks. We cooked and ate any place and slept in our blankets on the ground at night. We were always up at the break of day and rode until dark. Those were long days in the saddle and at night everyone was ready to hit the ground for sleep.

On these round-ups we ran across many calves unbranded. If a calf followed a cow with our brand we knew it was ours. If a calf followed a cow with some other brand we would cut the cow out and drive both calf and cow to their home range. The cowboys and ranch hands as a rule were all jolly good fellows. In most instances, they were honest and detested a thief. They dressed picturesquely and followed out the line of dress about like you see them in the Western Movie plays in the shows of today. When we were not too tired we loved to play pranks on each other. It was just all good

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clean fun. I've seen pictures of cowboys shooting up the town, cleaning out saloons etc., but at no time in my life did I ever see a bunch of cow hands do anything of the kind unless some outfit got drunk and tried to get tough and then the cowboys got tough also. I started to work on the ranch for \$8.00 a month and my chuck.

The ranches on which I worked were the Half Moon, The Mule Shoe and the Mule Shoe Cross. I still have the old brands.

These three ranches were owned by the treasurer of the Creek Nation, N. E. Moore and his brother, J. R. Moore.

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My allotment where I am living today was part of the old Mule Shoe Ranch. For fifty-two years I have lived in this vicinity.

#### Indian Customs.

The Indians' food consisted of pork, game cornbread and hominy, and some of them raised a little rice. They cooked in iron skillets and pots on open fires and in fireplaces. Their dishes were limited. Some made bowls out of clay, made wooden forks and even plates, cups and pots were made of clay.

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The dyes for their clothing were made from the barks of trees. They also dyed their bows and arrows different colors. They painted their faces with clay, poke berries, and the dyes were used in dyeing their clothing. The barks used were oak and sycamore, and walnut hulls were used a great deal. Indigo made all shades of blue.

Their medicines were principally roots and herbs, such as bone set, snake root, dogwood roots, butterfly roots, dick root, frost root, and sometimes mullein and golden rod.

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Their amusements were foot races, ball play, horse races, cornstalk shoots, hunts, picnics and dances. The Creeks had their share of Stomp Dances which lasted for days. Stomp Dances were more religious ceremonies than dances.

Many Indians were artistic. From clay they made useful articles from which to eat their food and also made statues of horses, cows, wild animals and they made baskets and beads. These articles were often painted different colors from the dyes made from barks.

My mother belonged to the tribe of Creeks known as the Perryman Tribe and Father was an adopted citizen of

the same tribe and naturally I was likewise a citizen of this tribe. I attended school very little. About the only schooling I had was at Tullahasse and Eufaula and the name of the teacher at Tullahasse was Mr. Robinson. I believe the teacher at the old Asbury Mission at Eufaula was Mrs. McIntosh.

The Creeks after the Civil War received head-right money or bread-money. Then they got a few dollars on account of the sale of land to the Arapaho Tribe who were wild Indians and then long before the Dawes Commission was formed they got two payments of maybe \$25.00 or \$40.00.

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~~What the Creeks got other than their allotments of land would not buy a Model T Ford.~~

#### Bridges.

There were only a few bridges in the early days. Streams were usually forded or ferried. I remember two toll bridges on the Texas Road. One was across Little Elk Creek, run by a man named McIntosh; the other was across Big Elk Creek and was run by a Creek Indian named Drew.

#### Ranches.

There were ranches all over the Indian Territory. Some were large, others small. The F. S. Ranch was located near the site of the present village of Bald Hill. It was owned



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by Captain Fred Severs. This ranch handled from twenty-five to thirty thousand head of cattle yearly and was the largest ranch in Indian Territory. Some of the foremen were Shelton Smith, my father, Red Neck Lrown and Ed Hart.

The Spaulding Ranch, known as the Lazy S, was on Cloud Creek, owned by H. B. Spaulding. This ranch handled fifteen or twenty thousand head of cattle yearly. The brand was the Lazy S. Some of the foreman were Jim Spencer, Al Todd and Jim Garrett. Jim Spencer lives at Haskell today and Al Todd is still in the cattle business south of Muskogee.

The Spike S Ranch was on Cedar Creek and handled about five thousand head of cattle yearly. It was owned by a fellow named F. Sango.

The D. C. Ranch was a horse ranch and was located on Deep Fork Creek west of the present town of Okmulgee. This ranch was owned by Dave Carr and it handled between five hundred and a thousand horses yearly.

The Half Moon Ranch was located near the D. C. Ranch on Deep Fork Creek west of Okmulgee.

The Mule Shoe Cross was located near the present town of Okfuskee. The Mule Shoe was located some three miles south

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and a quarter east of the present town of Haskell.

These three ranches, Half Moon branded "C", the Mule Shoe Cross branded "A" and the Mule Shoe branded the plain mule shoe "N." These were owned by Judge N. B. Moore and his brother J. K. Moore. I was the superintendent of these three ranches.

On the Half Moon and the Mule Shoe Cross we handled about a thousand head of cattle yearly on each ranch and on the Mule Shoe Ranch about five hundred head of cattle yearly.

We received some of our cattle from Texas by rail at a point on the M. K. & T. Railroad at the present station of Summit and some by the Frisco Railroad at the present town of Red Fork. The cattle coming over the M. K. & T. Railroad were driven to the Half Moon and Mule Shoe Cross and those coming over the Frisco to the Mule Shoe.

I remember Bob and Emmett Dalton who came and worked for me awhile. They were good cowboys and I knew them for they had worked for the F. S. Ranch previously but they ultimately became outlaws. Al Jennings, another cowboy who turned to be an outlaw, worked on the Sengó Ranch. I remember well when United States Deputy Marshal Ledbetter captured him east of Muskogee. Bill Cook, another outlaw,

once punched cattle on the Mule Shoe Cross. After the cattle on these three ranches were fattened, they were loaded into cars at the points where we received them and shipped to Northern markets.

The Three Bar Ranch was located near the present town of Beland and was owned by Clarence Turner. This ranch handled from five to ten thousand head of cattle yearly. The foreman on this ranch was Thomas Carey.

#### Cow Towns.

Before the railroads were built and when cattle were being driven from Texas to Kansas, in the eastern part of the Indian Territory, the present towns of Coweta, Wagoner, and Council Hill were usually alluded to as cow-towns. At these points many people replenished their food supplies.

#### Ferries.

The Leacher Ferry crossed the Arkansas River at the north end of Mill Street in Muskogee. The Nevins Ferry crossed the Arkansas River at the mouth of Grand River. The Sutherland Ferry crossed the Arkansas River about half way between the mouths of the Verdigris and Grand Rivers. This ferry was used by people traveling the old Texas Road. The Childers Ferry crossed the Verdigris River about four

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miles west of Wagoner where the highway bridge is now on Highway 51. The Gentry Ferry crossed the Arkansas River about one mile east of the site of the present town of Haskell. The Fry Ferry crossed the Arkansas River north of Delaha at what is now the town of Leonard. The Simeon Brown Ferry crossed the Arkansas River at about the present location of the Spaulding Bridge some four or five miles northwest of Muskogee.

#### Ghost Towns.

The Old Creek Agency located on the south side of Fern Mountain about two miles north of the present United States Veterans Hospital in Muskogee was at one time a village of seven or eight hundred people. When the M. K. & T. Railroad built through the territory in 1871, the town of Muskogee sprang up and the people moved to the new village.

Fisnertown and North Fork town near the present town of Eufaula were on the old Texas Road. When the M. K. & T. Railroad was built through Indian Territory these two villages became ghost towns for Eufaula sprang up. Eufaula was at one time the largest city on the M. K. & T. Railroad between Kansas and Texas.

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Lee Post on Cane Creek about three miles north of where Boynton is today became a ghost town after tribal government was discontinued. The court house and whipping post were at Lee and there was also a store and a stage stand there.

Sawokle was about one mile south and one west of the present town of Muskell. E. B. Harris was the postmaster and a man named Bradford ran the store. The post office was in the store. The building of the Midland Valley Railroad in 1904 caused the town of Muskell to spring up and Sawokle was made a ghost town.

#### Indian Enforcement Officers.

In the Creek Nation there were three towns or districts; namely, Coweta, Muskogee and Okmulgee. Each district was policed by officers known as lighthorsemen. There was a captain and there were usually five assistants in each district. Some of these lighthorsemen were George McIntosh, Wiley McIntosh and John Sixkiller.

#### Green Peach War.

The Green Peach War started in 1832. It started at the time that peaches were green in the Spring. The cause of this uprising among the Creeks was an election for the Principal Chief.

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The two candidates involved for Chief were Jim Checote and Isparhechar. Checote defeated Isparhechar and the Isparhechar faction would not submit to defeat, claiming the election was crooked and tried to keep Checote from being elected as Principal Chief. People arose in arms on first one side and then on the other and battles ensued at different points throughout the week of election. Isparhechar met defeat nearly every time. One of his best men "Sleepin' on it" was killed by the men. Isparhechar kept retreating until he got into the Big-Fox and the Cheyenne Country and these Indians did not want any fighting there and appealed to the United States soldiers at Fort Gibson and these soldiers captured all Isparhechar's men and brought them to Fort Gibson as prisoners. Isparhechar signed a treaty to quit and that ended the Green Beret War.

The voting places in the contest between Checote and Isparhechar were Tullahassee, Coweto, Okmulgee and Wiffule.

Salt.

There was a salt works east of what is now Pryor, near Grand River. Wells drilled there furnished salt water.

This water was boiled in large kettles until only the pure salt was left. This salt was used by the people and also

heaped up in piles around the branches for salt licks for the cattle and horses. Later salt was received in barrels by rail; these barrels/hailed to the ranches, sawed half in two and then placed around at different points for the cattle. This barreled salt cost us about 70 cents per barrel.

#### Marriages.

Legal marriage was entered into by securing a license from the Federal Judge at Fort Smith, Arkansas, and the marriage ceremony was usually read by a minister.

#### Permits to Non Citizens.

People who were not citizens of the Creek tribe had to secure permits to work for citizens and these permits cost \$2.00 per month. Sometimes the employer paid for the permit and sometimes it was paid by the non-citizen who was employed.

#### Missions.

There were a number of Creek Missions. The Creek orphanage was about one mile northeast of the present town of Okmulgee. The Pecan Creek Mission was on Pecan Creek about seven miles west of the present town of Muskogee. There was a Creek school at the present town of Sapulpa. The Wealaka Mission was located near the present town of Leonard. The

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Asbury Mission was at the present town of Eufaula. The  
Tallahassee Mission was at the present town of Tallahassee.  
(Mekasukey)  
The Michasooka Mission was near the present town of Nowoka.

#### Creek Principal Chiefs.

I remember well chiefs Isparhechar, Sam Chac te, Joe  
and Legus Perryman, Moty Tiger and Pleasant Porter and  
incidentally the town of Porter was named after Pleasant  
Porter.

#### Creek Council Houses.

My father told me that before the Civil War the Creek  
Council House was located at a place called High Springs.  
The present day location would be near Bainwright or Council  
Hill. After the Civil War, the Council House of the Creek  
Nation was at Okmulgee.

#### The Story of Yahola.

This Creek Yahola clad himself in skins and furs, lived  
by himself except for about a dozen car logs that followed  
him through the woods as he searched for wild game, fruits,  
nuts and berries. Should a human being approach him, he  
would walk around and around a tree and say nothing. He had  
an old mule called Pete. Pete got sick and one day he was



leading him down to the creek for water and as he trudged with him along a little trail he muttered in the Creek language "Poor Pete sick: Poor Pete." Some boys on Gane creek hid in the brush and as Yehola and the mule got near them they jumped at him and the mule, whooping in Creek, shooting a rifle and at this point old Pete ran away. Yehola came tumbling down the trail and all the little boys following, went yelping to his cabin. After this no one saw Yehola for weeks.