

SORRIK, L. E.

INTERVIEW

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BORRICK, E. E. INTERVIEW 6593
LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field-worker's name James H. Fleming

This report made on (date) July 10 1937

story or poetry

1. This ~~legend~~ was secured from (name) E. E. Borrick

Address Yale, Oklahoma

This person is (male or ~~female~~) White, ~~Mexico Indian~~

If Indian, give tribe _____

2. Origin and history of legend or story Sac & Fox Race

or opening, in verse by W. M. Watson of Chandler.

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____

Note: I obtained and copied this from a copy owned by E. E. Borrick of Yale. It was written about the Sac & Fox Opening by W. M. Watson, address now unknown.

There isn't too much poetry, but there's a story in it.

James H. Fleming

Just across the Cimarron River from where Ripley now stands,

Four families of us waited a year for this opening of land,

The Proclamation was issued the day it was set,

But up till this time I had no horse to ride yet,

Then Says Old Jake Sorrick, "I will loan you Old Doc,

For I know you will do him no harm,

Go take him and ride till you get you a farm."

Old Doc was a raw bone horse with scarcely no tail or mane,

But it was plain to be seen there was good blood in his veins,

Then Jake Sorrick swore he was going to have the nearest claim to be reached,

George and Steve Stiles said they would pull for Cabin Creek

And as for myself, I said I didn't know

But I believed the Dry Fork was the place to go.

Just then Marion Kane came riding by, and he said

"Watson, I would like to go with you,

For you are better acquainted in this country, than I."

Now, Kane was fortunate enough to have a race horse of his own

He was long legged and lank and a strawberry roan.

At twelve O'Clock noon on the line two miles north of Stroud

Found us there with both feet with the rest of the crowd,
We had been in the saddle since three hours before day,
And thirteen long miles before us yet day,
All the equipment we had to take along on this run,
was one old squaw ax and each a Winchester gun.

Men mounted on steeds of every description had met
in this race for a home,

Side by side now ready for the start, stood the
black and the roan,

And you can bet your life there is no fake,

Where a farm and a home is the price and stake,

And as I remember there has never been but five
of this kind,

And it makes a picture that will never fade
out of my mind,

The signal to start was given, the mad rush was on,

Across the country we swept like an oncoming storm.

The first three miles across bare prairies lay,

The grass having been burned on the preceding day,

And to the right and the left on either side,

Each horse and rider could be seen in a space

three to four miles wide.

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One now and then began dropping behind,

As they came to the claim they thought was about
the right kind,

But most of them needed for something farther on,
Salt Creek, Dasha, Ranch Creek, and the Dry Fork beyond.

But in all this host there was only one that was
giving us a rub,

And that was a fellow that rode a sorrel mule,

With two Texas spurs and a big elm club.

And it would surprise the best horsemen, how
that mule could get up and dig.

When that elm club and spurs would rattle around
her short rib,

But alas for the muleman, the end of his journey he reached

For we were now on the banks of the Famous Salt Creek,

The banks were at least four feet straight down,

But old Doc didn't hesitate, he went off with a bound,

The mule scored second, but she shied and seemed

To be looking for a crossing further down the creek,

Where the banks were much lower and not quite so steep,

Kane was third for he was coming right at the mule

Lan's back

And the Roan did full as well as the black.

And as he was climbing the banks on the opposite side,

The muleman hollowed to him to lead his mule,

While he got off and tanned her hide.

But Kane only answered and said, "He didn't dare stop,

For he was due on the Dry Fork at just one o'clock,"

Then he tried it again and again and repeat

But each time the banks, to the mule, appeared
to get both higher and steeper.

Then he tried coaxing,

It seemed he wanted to tell the mule, on the Dry
Fork the blue stem grew tall,

That each night regular, she should have a good stall

He could see visions of alfalfa, oats, and the big
yellow corn.

That Dry Fork is now noted by all the states around,

But neither whipping or coaxing prove of any avail,

For each time his mule was brought up she was cross-
wise the trail,

He were now disappearing in the west at a good lively gait,

But the mule was still trying to convince the rider

It was time to locate.

On we went through the timber, over ditches and hills,

Over vales and canyons, over creeks and rills,

There was not a road, a bridge, a path, or trail,
We crossed each where we found them and never did we fail,

It was a typical picture of a red man's land,

And not a solitary sign of a white man's hand,

It seemed hours now had passed since the race begun,

And I longed to see the breaks where the Dry Fork runs.

Says Kane, "If it's much farther I cannot stop,

For my horse I can see is fast going away.

But the raw-boned black had now shown that he could
win the race,

For he layed with the rest and chewed at the bit
as he led the chase.

We now reached Rose Hill and at the top

Kane's horse slowed down to a cowboy trot,

We looked to the south, then north, then east,

But not a soul could we see, neither man nor beast.

It was just a mile or a little more,

To the northeast corner of twenty-four,

And when we finally reached the land for which we had run,

Upon each corner a Sooner's flag now hung,

The noble roan had stayed till the race he had won,

But upon reaching the spot, he sank to the ground,

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Old Doc dropped, rolled, tumbled and sprung to his feet,
As if to say, "If I had to, I could the whole thing repeat."
I then called to Kane for the time of day,
Who was then driving his stake across the way,
One O'Clock, he answered, or to be exact, five minutes past,
Just then two long whiskered Sooners came down a path,
And aside from those whiskers, each carried in hand,
A big long musket of some ancient brand
"What the hell you doing here?" remarked one to Kane,
"I have settled and staked and this is my claim."
I left the line at twelve, came in with the run,
He then began to finger the trigger of that seven-foot gun,
Like a flash Kane's Winchester was brought into place
And a stern business look came over his face,
"I made the race fair and square and there lays my horse
For proof;
And no damn Sooner can beat him on foot."
The coast was now clear until half-past two
Then a bare back rider came tearing through.
He rode a coal black but he was so covered with red
dust and foam,

He would have made a good mate for Kane's strawberry roan,
And he had run from the mouth of Bush Creek twenty miles away
Where the Turkey Track Cowboys used to mow their hay
And as we approached he gave us to understand,
That he had made settlement and was claiming the land,
Says I "Young man, you are all wet,
While you came from the north we came from the east,
And we beat you here an hour at least."

And if you will along with us go
I will prove to you that all that I say is so.
Gloom covered his face, and he hung his head
But after a while he finally said,
"This is the only chance in a life time to get a home,
And I can see right now that it takes that chance
for a man to learn how.

But I says to him "Stranger, don't be alarmed"
For if you will come and go with me you shall have a farm.
I know of a claim that there is no one on,
And it has rich valley land that will grow big corn.
Oak timber is plenty and there tall pecans grow,
And across one corner the Dry Fork flows."

And as we talked I could see a smile steal over his face

The first one probably since he entered the race,
And he says "If you know all this, what you say to be so,
That's good enough for me, come on let's go."

We then mounted our horses and rode through the woods,
Till an opening came,

But at that place now, there runs a lane,

"Now this is the claim that before us you see

"Here take this ax of mine, begin blazing some trees,

And tonight, you come to yonder tall oak tree

And there you'll find Harlon Kane and me."

Now, this was John Embry,

Yes, our plain honest John.

And he had come all the way from Kentucky,

For a Sac and Fox farm.

And later on as he worked in the timber with me,

Little did I think that some day,

He would our United States Attorney be.

That night around that tree when the sun went down

Some nine or ten men had gathered around.

And they lay around on the ground, stretched

out broad side,

All hungry and tired from their long hard ride,

By nine o'clock my mule team from the line had arrived
Bringing our tent, flour, bacon, coffee and some
pumpkin pie,

We cooked and cooked until every sinner was fed

They then gathered leaves and made them a bed

And at sunrise our tent was flapping in the breeze

Among the great bur oak and tall pecan trees.

And I shall state right here, for it surely is no harm,

That this was the beginning of Shady Nook farm,

Our family was small, there were only four,

The wife and two babies that played around the tent door,

Our purse it was empty and feed there was none,

And our eating depended largely upon our success

with the gun.

Deer there was some and wild turkey galore,

And wild hogs if you could find them, they were there

by the score.

But wild hogs are cunning and are seldom found,

For in the day time they never move around,

And many a moon light night when other folks slept

I went in search for those porkers, that sometimes

I didn't get.

We began at once to build cabins and run our lines,

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I helped John Embry with his, and he helped me with mine.
And when we drank creek water till we all got the chills,
We divided the calomel, the quinine and pills.

But many changes have taken place,

Since Kane and I rode in that memorable race.

Old Jake Sorick made good his boast, for he sure did win,
The claim of his choice with the great dripping spring
And may he live many more years, that good-hearted soul,
Before he is called on up yonder to answer the roll.

George Styles and wife with their hair white as sea foam
And still happy and contented at their Cabin Creek home.

While one of their sons when a lad,

At a nickel a piece use to catch gophers for me,

Is now one of the best doctors in Washington, D. C.

On the banks of the Dry Fork in the Pecan and Oak grove,
Where Kane's tent stood

The finest of alfalfa now grows,

~~And the boy that played around the tent door,~~

Is now grown up and gone to that far eastern shore

But on yonder hill the girl has been sleeping,

Years, more than a score.

Many of those old timers are now laid away,
The wife's hair then dark is fast turning to gray
Marion Kane and his wife are both gone,
John Embry long since forgot now to plow corn,
And life at the best seems but a chase,
With time going double the speed of that Sac and Fox race.
And there are many yet that have a claim to stake
And decide where their future home shall make,
And when we finally draw rein at the end of the race,
Will it be in Hades or that other good place?