

SMITH, JAMES W.

INTERVIEW

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SECOND INTERVIEW

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An Interview with Mr. James W. Smith, Tulsa, Oklahoma.  
By - W. P. Holland, Field Worker.

August 9, 1937.

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In speaking of finding the big D.D.D. ranch of Tom Waggoner, I don't think I mentioned the way the distance was measured. That was done by my foreman and the man hired to furnish the material and construct the fence. They measured it with a buggy wheel. They first measured the circumference of the wheel and then tied a white rag around a spoke, then they got in. One drove and the other counted the revolutions of the wheel and then made their calculations from that.

I was associated, more or less, with the Indians, and in some cases attended their various picnics and dances. Right here in Tulsa they had a stamping ground at or near where Boulder and 14th Streets cross. All districts in the Creek Nation had their stamp grounds and they were named from the town, such as Tulsa Town, Cowata Town, Broken Arrow Town, etc; and the Indians of these various districts held their meetings in their respective districts. The time for the Green Corn Dance was determined by the clerk of the district. He would

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get a bundle of sticks enough to cover the exact lunar month from the time of their present meeting until the next. Then, at every full moon, one of the sticks would be thrown away, and when the last one was gone that was the time for the dance.

There is a stomp ground east of Sperry, where Hominy Creek empties into Bird Creek. This is known as Spybuck Stomp Grounds and I understand this one is still in use.

Coweta also had a stomp ground. I remember very well being there one day when Tom Root, half-breed Creek, shot up the place. Root was half negro and half Creek and a mean man, especially when drunk. He didn't shoot any one, just frightened us all.

About forty years ago I used to visit the Creek stamping ground a few miles south of where Broken Arrow now is. This was before there was any town of Broken Arrow. John Weis had a trading post there and also a post office. I knew him and traded with him in 1900 and knew the store had been established some years then.

Another early post office and trading post was.

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west and north of Broken Arrow. At first there was a church there, established about 1876. There was, and still is a cemetery near this church. Some of my people are buried there. It is used by whites as well as Indians and has always been so used, I understand. Dave Hedge was the preacher at this church. It was established by the Presbyterians. Hedge was a Creek Indian. This church is one of the oldest I know of any where around here.

About forty years ago, Ben Brooks, Nat Sanders and the Williams Brothers leased some land in this section and built a store house and ran a store here. They also established a post office at this place, and gave it the name of Elam. This was in honor of Elam Hedge, a brother of Dan Hedge, the preacher.

I know a number of incidents that took place in and around this settlement, some amusing and some rather tragic, but still of no great historical value.

I have attended the Green Corn Dance of the Creek Indians, seen them dance, and watched the Medicine Man

make medicine. They had herbs gathered, prior to the dance and ready for the medicine man. He put them in a pot, performing ceremonies as he did so. When the brew began to get hot or boil, the Chief, a medicine man, got his cane, a long cane with the joints burned out so he could blow through. He placed one end in the medicine and the other in his mouth. He would blow and of course bubbles would rise from the medicine. He blew three times, then would say a piece, or mumble something; then blow again, then mumble, and so on until the medicine was ready to serve. This was then taken by the men, and men only, at least I never saw a woman take any of it, nor did I ever see one suffering from effects of it. The Indian men would take a lot of this, then retire to seats or sit on the ground around in a circle and await the action of the medicine. This usually happened before long, causing sickness and vomiting. This began in the afternoon and continued through the night, usually by the next day they were able to eat and take part in the games, such as baseball.

I was farming for myself when I lived near Broken

Arrow. I remember hauling vegetables and farm products up here or near where Tulsa now is. We sold most of our produce at the Creek Bank coal mines. These mines were located in what is now Braden Heights in Tulsa. At that time this was a better place to sell produce than in Tulsa as there were a lot of people at these mines then.

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