

SMITH, JOE G. INTERVIEW.

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Interviewer, Syllie Thornton,  
October 5, 1937.

Interview with Joe Gilford Smith,  
Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Born December 13, 1871,  
Harrison, Arkansas, Boone County.

Parents Joe Smith, Middle, Tennessee.  
Mary A. Smith, Mississippi.

I was born in Boone County, Arkansas, near the town  
of Harrison, December 13, 1871, on my father's farm.

This farm was rather small and not very fertile and that  
is mainly the cause of my coming to this Cherokee Nation.

However, I did not find this country like I expected  
it to be. I did not find it quite as wild as I had been  
told it was, but it took me and a brother of mine, who  
came with me, several days to get used to things out here.

In fact, we would sit up more or less through the first  
nights looking out for a gang of wild Indians to raid us.

But as time went on, we decided white men need not be  
afraid of these Cherokees unless they had a cause for it  
and we knew that we did not want any trouble with the  
Indians.

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We had been here only a short time when my father died at his old homestead in Arkansas and I sent and got Mother to be with me. She died in a few years here in the Indian Territory. At the time of her death, Mother was learning to spin cotton and weave and was learning many other customs out here but wasn't long then until the stores began to sell nearly everything along the line of clothing.

I have never forgotten about a man named Bart Robert, who came here from Arkansas and when he saw that spinning looms were in fashion he sent a man from here back to his old home in Arkansas to haul his old loom over here and when the man got back with it, he charged Bart Roberts more than the loom was worth for hauling it over here. That was a joke on Bart as long as he lived and the Indians nick-named him "Loom" Roberts.

When Brother and I first landed here I went to work for "Biscuit" Ross (W. W. Ross), helping him to build a rail fence at 75¢ per day and I worked for him and his brother, Ruff Ross, tending their land and making crops for about three years.

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We made good crops in those days and we did not work ourselves to death either.

Right out here on Bill Ballintine's place, close to where the old Moravian Church was located, I raised so much cotton that I could not hire enough help to get it all picked out and I turned under with my turning plow better cotton than they can raise around here now. I got about \$2.50 per hundred pounds in those days and made good money. My father-in-law wrote and told me that he was coming out here and asked me to buy up about three or four hundred bushels of corn for him and crib it for him, so I went and bought up Bill Ballintine's rent corn in the field at 15¢ per bushel and this was the finest corn you ever saw.

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I usually tended about thirty-five acres of land by putting most of it in corn.

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I hauled freight from Fort Gibson a great deal for pay during the year of 1895, and I received 20¢ per hundred for hauling freight.

I have seen the wagons loaded down with freight weighing from 1500 to 2000 pounds and so cluttered up

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with mud that the drivers would have to stop every little bit and take a long pole and pull the mud loose from between the wheels and the wagon body. The freighters considered warm weather better for hauling than cold winter weather on account of the ice.

Bill Ballard was the first man who operated a cotton gin in this country and J. A. Lawrence was the first man who bought cotton in this country.

Indian ponies were bought and sold for about \$15.00 to \$25.00 per head before the Strip Payment to the Cherokees and during the payment and just before they sold for 50.00 to \$75.00 per head.

~~Before these payments began we had only a few attorneys~~  
but after that, they began to flock in from everywhere.

In my opinion the payment money only benefitted the shrewd traders and attorneys and caused the death of many Indians.

~~I have plowed corn many a day with a calf-tongue,~~  
then later on I used <sup>a</sup> double shovel plow with a big steer hitched to it.

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Plowing with a single ox was fine until he got too thirsty, for then if he knew where there was a spring or a pond of water he would just give a couple of bellows and would take me, the plow and all, right down through the field, through corn, fences and all, and sometimes I managed to hook my plow behind a boulder or rock or a large stump and stop him. Sometimes then he would tear my plow all to pieces.

Good plow oxen were worth about .15.00 apiece.

Cornelius Boudinot operated a ferry boat out on the Illinois River and he charged 50¢ for putting across a man and his saddle horse and a dollar for a loaded wagon and team.

I once saw Judge Pitchford shoot a man named Jim Wolf just after <sup>Wolf</sup> had shot at buck <sup>Wolf</sup>ly. When buck was a policeman this Jim Wolf pushed buck down on the ground and at the same time jerked his gun out of the holster and took a dead aim at buck's head, but missed his head and just burned buck's lip a little, making a brown streak across his face and then Jim Wolf ran down the street and Judge Pitchford saw this all happen and he pulled his gun

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and took a shot at Jim Wolf. Luckily went and got a double barreled shot gun and hunted Jim Wolf up where he was hidden in the thicket on the branch and killed him.

This all happened before Hitchford was judge. The attorneys about that time were:

- ... Hastings
- George Enge
- George Pascal
- George Hughes
- Bill Thompson
- Cornelius Dubinot
- Judge Hitchford.

at Ross was the clerk of the United States Court and was succeeded by Harvey Shelton.