

STOUGH, D. E. (DR.)

INTERVIEW

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James R. Carselowey,
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An Interview with Dr. D. B. Stough,
Vinita, Oklahoma.

My name is D. B. Stough. I was born in what is now Crenshaw County, Alabama, on September 2, 1856. I later moved to a farm near Troy, Alabama, where I received a common school education and farmed while I was not in school.

When I was twenty-one years old I fell in love with a very fine young lady, and as I was only a common cotton farmer her father, a judge, would not let me come on the place nor allow the girl to go with me. It was then that I realized the value of an education, and I started into school again, farming in the summer and going to school in the winter. I then taught school for a few years, and on November 17, 1881, Louella Turnipseed and I were married.

I had bought forty acres of timbered land while I was teaching and had built a nice little log cabin on it, from logs that grew on the place, and we moved into it and were very happy. I continued teaching for several years, farming between terms, but my wife's parents did not become reconciled until our first child was born and my wife's mother came to visit us.

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I had always wanted to be a doctor, so my wife told me that if I would go to a medical school she would take up teaching where I left off and would teach until I had finished my course. I received my diploma at the Kentucky School of Medicine, at Louisville, Kentucky, and began the practice of medicine at Highland Home, Alabama, where I was born and reared and later at Shady Grove, Alabama. I was appointed railroad surgeon for the Plant Railroad System, later called the Alabama Central and held that position until 1907.

MOVES TO INDIAN COUNTRY

The state of Oklahoma was admitted to the Union in 1907 and as I had read so much about the new Indian country, I made up my mind to go west. Officials of the railroad, which I had served for so many years, offered to raise my salary, if I would stay with them, but I had made up my mind to come to Oklahoma and I landed in Vinita on September 25, 1907, just two months before the state was admitted to the Union.

TOWN WAS FULL OF DOCTORS

I had not stopped to consider that the town might be

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full of doctors, but sure enough it was. I found ten other doctors already located here. They were: Drs. Oliver Bagby, B. F. Fortner, A. M. Cinkscales, M. Frazee, A. N. Foreman, Houston, T. T. Wimer, M. P. Haynes and J. W. Craig.

I started right into practicing, and all the doctors were kept busy. The country was full of malaria and the water and health conditions were both in a very bad state.

In 1910 I was appointed County Health Officer and have held that position for twenty-seven years up to the present time. I at once set in to clean up the town and county and it was my duty to visit all the small towns in

the county. The State Legislature passed a nine-foot sheet act and I had to visit all the hotels and rooming houses to see that they complied with the law.

The water system was the next worst problem we had to contend with. All of the towns were watered with wells and none of them were properly kept. Most every town had a public well where the public could come for drinking water, and the same well was also used for watering stock. A long

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trough was usually provided for the watering of stock and that was built so close to the well that a horse could take a drink, then hold his head over the well and let the slobbers fall back in the well. I put a stop to that by having the wells closed in so that a horse could not get close to the well.

EARLY DAY WATER SYSTEMS

As stated above, all of the water systems of the early day towns were supplied by wells. These wells were usually shallow, and filth from the outside in a great many instances would drain back into the wells. Vinita was the worst town in the county for bad water. The hogs were allowed to run loose in the streets and usually wallowed around the water holes where horses were watered and always had a lob-lolly around the well.

People were so full of malaria that many would be taken sick in the morning, have a hard chill and die before night. Many of these wells were condemned and not allowed to be used for drinking purposes.

It was not until the city of Vinita began to

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experiment with artesian wells that Vinita had a good water system. The first well was drilled in the center of the street, at the intersection of Illinois and Wilson Street, and proved so successful that the town was soon drilled full of artesian wells that flowed over the top and many people had their own private wells. The city put in a system supplied with artesian water and piped it all over the city, but in a few years the water begin to rust the pipes out and the city abandoned the artesian wells and piped their water from Grand River, a distance of fourteen miles. Since then the city of Vinita has had as good a water system as any town or city in the state.

For the past eight years I have had charge of the patients at the County farm which is under the jurisdiction of the County Commissioners. In the year 1937 the Commissioners established a County Hospital at the County farm. The county jail was torn down and re-built into a fine hospital building, on the County farm, where a patient may be taken for operation or sickness and may employ any doctor he sees

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fit with but little charge for hospital accommodations.

County patients are looked after by the Commissioners, at the expense of the County.

STREETS AND ALLEYS

The streets and alleys in Vinita in the early day were not much better than the wells. There was not a paved street in the town and I have seen wagons mired up right on the main streets of the town and it was almost impossible to deliver goods at the back door of any store, as the alleys were simply lob-lollies.

I had ideas of paving in my head long before I dared say anything to anyone about it, as no one but an Indian was allowed to own town property and the towns-

people were against anything that had a tax to it and the inter-married citizen was worse than the Indian about that.

I remember one day saying something to John Swain about paving and he nearly exploded before I could get away from him. He was one of the early day settlers who had married an Indian woman, had been in the mercantile

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business ever since the town started and had built a brick residence close in on North Wilson Street and I naturally thought he would be a good man to approach on the subject of paving. But after he had run down enough from his explosion, so he could express himself, he said, "If you are not satisfied with the town, get out! Trains are running every few hours".

When the city finally passed a paving act to pave the street in front of his brick residence, he forthwith sold out and moved to a place which he thought was so far out that street paving would never overtake him, but it did, and he had to become reconciled as he was only about five blocks out and that street is now paved ten blocks out.

HORSE AND BUGGY DAYS

Those were horse and buggy days and a doctor dreaded the sight of an automobile about as much as any of the farmers did for they invariably held us up when we were in a hurry to get out to a sick patient. I have had to get out many times and take my horse by the bridle bit to keep him

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from running away and tearing up my buggy.

An electrician, L. N. Ditto, at the city water plant, rigged up the first automobile that was ever driven up the streets of Vinita. He made it himself and it made so much noise that every horse in town was afraid of it and people dreaded to see him coming. The city council finally passed an ordinance forbidding an automobile to run on any of the main streets of Vinita.

A petition asking for this law was signed by almost all the business men in Vinita, and many of these same men had to come forward in later days and ask that this law be repealed, as almost everyone was driving a car instead of a team.

Dr. W. Craig was the first doctor to purchase a car. It was a Model T Ford and did not have any top on it, and the doctor wore a big old horse skin coat to keep warm while driving it. He was considered a reckless driver for his time. There was only one mechanic in Vinita. His name was Nolan Woodall, a young Cherokee Indian. He opened up a little shop back of the Bailey Brothers store, near the present site of the United States post office.

Dr. Craig had a hurry-up call to go out in the country near Okeene one day and hopped into his Model T and started. He had to cross the creek, and just as he dove into the water, the road made a little turn and the doctor being in a hurry, failed to slow up for the turn and promptly upset his little Ford in the creek and got his long, heavy coat all wet. He waded out and caught a ride to a little store about a quarter of a mile away and there found Vinita's only mechanic in his own car.

This mechanic went and righted Dr. Craig's car and pulled it onto the bank and the doctor went on with his little Ford.

The roads in those days were really in no condition for automobiles, and I did not get one until I had to, to keep up with the times.