

Field Worker: Zaidee B. Bland
May 14, 1937.

Interview with George A. Stroud
221 East Commerce,
Altus, Oklahoma.

Born October 16, 1877,
Texas.

Parents John Stroud, Tenn., father,
Amerilla, mother, Tenn.

I came from Texas with my father, mother, and brothers and sisters in 1888. Father had already been up here and selected his section of land, plowed around it and dug the dugout for our home. We came in a covered wagon, driving a pair of mules with 30 head of loose cattle with us.

We crossed at Doan's crossing. People have a hard time locating Doan's now and I'll tell you why. Old man Doan owned or claimed a good deal of land lying along the river. He lived in a dugout on the north bank and kept a small stock

of things people likely needed on the trail and had a good well of water. The banks of the river were low and every time it rained or had a big rise, that crossing would shift. Sometimes it was two or three miles above the old man's dugout; sometimes that much below. Wherever you crossed one usually drove by the store to chat a while, get directions and fill up water barrels and water stock. So your crossing anywhere along there was known as Doan's. Our dugout was built box car fashion; 30 feet long by 16 feet wide. Boxed up above the ground about two feet with half windows in them. It had a tar paper roof with dirt thrown on top so never leaked mud or water as some did.

We dug a well about twenty feet deep and did not have time to get our tools all out before the hole was filled with the clearest sparkling water. But alas! it was so salty neither man nor beast would drink it. We dug more than twenty wells on that old place but never could we get water we could use. We always had to drive our stock three or four miles to drink and haul water for the house.

We went over into the Indian Territory and cut poles for our cribs and corrals. It was open country and the government owned the land, but we had heard so much about the United States Marshals patrolling the border and objecting that every time a leaf stirred on that first trip I jumped. When in truth there wasn't a man within a hundred miles of us.

There was quite a little settlement along the river at that time known as North Fork of Red River and we hauled lumber from Vernon to build us a schoolhouse and called it Dunbar.

One of our first teachers (Steel, by name) lived seven miles across the prairie from the school house. One morning we had such a fog he got lost and did not get to school until two o'clock in the afternoon.

There were lots of wild things good to eat; turkey and quail, deer, and fish in the streams. A few wild cats, plenty of coyotes. They did not give us much trouble but we had a

big wolf that went in droves called (Loafer) wolves. That was bad for the young calves and colts. I remember we built a new drift fence and the wolves got after our cattle and they ran right through that fence trampling it down three or four miles. We killed one bear; drove him three miles along the fence before we shot him.

Our winter drift fences were five wires stretched as tight as we could stretch it. The post we put out of the reservation. If we did not build these fences, the cattle would drift when we would have a big blizzard clean out of the country. I have seen the river and water holes frozen over so hard that we could drive a team right across the ice with a load of wood. I have cut a hole in the ice, so the cattle could drink every morning for six weeks at a time.

Fleas gave us a lot of trouble. I have seen them as big as ants and the world used to be alive with them.

You couldn't help but get lost if you wandered out much at night, there were no fences or roads to go by. One night I went to a dance and

there came up a storm. Thundered and lightened and black as tar. Broke up the dance and I took my girl home and started home. Got lost and wandered around all night within two miles of home and could not find it. Another man was trying to go home and decided he would cut the wire and cut across to home. He cut the wires when a quarter of a mile of his home gate and wandered around all night. About four o'clock when it began to lighten a little, he thought he recognized where he was. "Good Lord, I am at Doan's crossing". When real daylight came so he could really see he had been going around and around in his own pasture all night. He had his pasture torn up with those tracks round and round the fence and they stayed there in plain sight for months.

There were several big ranches in this country Three C"; cows and horses branded the same.

Triple D

Mr. McElroy, away over to the north, always invited all the cow boys all over the country ever Christmas. He fixed lots of things to eat and anyone

could go pay \$1.00 and eat and dance all day and night if he wanted to. There were not many places to go except to dances. I played the fiddle. Just ordinary dances; a man paid 25 cents and his name would be called for a dance. He might get to dance several times if there wasn't much of a crowd. If a big crowd he might not get to dance at all or maybe only once. Only four men and four ladies could dance in one room at the same time. That was the old square dance. The music makers got the fees for their pay. Sometimes we would make ten dollars in one night, seldom more, lots of times less, for there were usually three or four of us. I have gone to Indian dances and if you knew the different forms you could tell the tribe by the form of their dance. The Indian music was an old dry cowhide stretched over cord wood with the Indian squaws beating a kind of tom tom on it. The Kiowas danced in a circle, while old Geronimo danced in a square. I could never tell if they had a certain number, each time

they hopped and skipped and run in and out so; each fellow seemed to know what he was about. I have counted 24 squaws and 24 bucks all dancing in the same circle at the same time. There were two bucks that seemed to be the leaders and they were dressed in the fanciest buckskin suits that fit like the hide, all over beads, porcupine quills, snake skins and I don't know what all to make them pretty. I have spent three days at a dance. One day to go, it was so far away from home; one day to dance; one day to come back home.

The funniest thing I ever saw at a fair was three bucks trying to catch a greased pig. It was at Fort Sill in 1903.

We had a man from down in Texas come to see us one time and we were out hunting and he saw his first badger. He thought it the prettiest animal he ever saw and said, "I am going to catch that fellow alive and take him home for a pet." He ran toward him and the badger started to dig in the earth to hide. He caught the badger by the tail but the badger kept on digging and going deeper and deeper into the earth until he gave it up.

I filed on land when I was older and when I hauled the last load of lumber across the river from Vernon, it was 55 years before I crossed the river again into Texas, although I have lived within ten miles of the river all these years.