

SWAKE, JIM INTERVIEW.

#6897

483

SWAKE, JIM INTERVIEW.

(INTERVIEW WITH JIM SWAKE) CHEROKEE

#6297 421

Gus Hummingbird, Field Worker
Indian Pioneer History, S-149
June 15, 1937

Jim Swake, a full blood Cherokee, was born in Goingsnake District, July 23, 1875. His parents were Yellowhammer Swake and Elizabeth Swake, Cherokees, both natives of the Cherokee Nation.

There were ten children in this family namely; Tom, Jim, Nannie, Linnie, Mary, Lisa, Annie and Lawyer, now living; two died small.

(EARLY LIFE)

Jim Swake's early life was spent on a small farm operated by his father near the present town of Watts, Oklahoma. The said farm was on the Illinois River about two miles north of Watts. The community in which Swake was raised was called the Proctor neighborhood.

Many prominent men among the Cherokees lived in this community at that time, among these being the Crittendens, Swakes, Proctors, Morris, Sixkillers, Clandlers and several others. These families mentioned here were considered leaders in this community and they were also the leading politicians at that time.

The farm on which Jim was reared consisted of about thirty acres. This was a big farm in those days. Corn was the principal crop among the fullbloods. The mixed bloods raised wheat.

Swake's early home was of log construction built in the fashion of that time among the well to do people--a double log house, between the rooms there being a wide hall which was used as a store room for farm produce.

The building contained two chimneys one at each end. There were also windows in the house. The floors were fine, as the lumber was brought from a lumber yard. He did not live but about six miles from Wilcox, Arkansas, which was an early day trading place for so many Cherokees.

Mr. Swake seems to think that the Cherokees in this part of the Cherokee Nation, (that is the Goingsnake District) got along better than others because they were nearer to a good town where they could sell their surplus produce. They learned to live more like a white man long before the others in the interior of the Cherokee Nation.

The land in the Illinois River bottoms was fertile and all kinds of crops were raised and the farms were larger here than other places. There were not so many people here at that time. The farms contained not less than thirty acres, and the land was cleared ever fall and winter. The Cherokees in this part of the Goingsnake were real farmers before the others learned that money could be made on a farm.

Some of their early neighbors were Mose Crittenden, William Proctor, Mike Proctor, Jesse Crittenden, Richard Parris, and Tobe Parris.

(EARLY DAY SCHOOL)

The earliest school that he remembers in this community was a small school which was established by some old timers called the Proctor school in the Illinois River bottom, two miles north of Watts now. Here young Swake and his brothers and sisters attended school. This school did not last very long. They moved all the belongings to the Baptist Mission. The old teacher that he went to was Carrie Walls. After the school was moved to Baptist Mission, it was about twelve miles from where he lived and he did not attend much.

Swake did manage to finish the fifth grade at the Mission school at Baptist Mission. He reads and writes.

He went to an old teacher by the name of Mr. Lessley who was sent here from some other state. He learned more from this teacher than all the others put together. There were not as many books in those days as there are now.

(CHURCH)

The Baptist Mission was the first church established in this part of the Cherokee Nation. When Swake was a small boy, this was already a well established church. Among the early day ministers that he remembers are Wolfe Coon and Adam Lacie. He later lived just about two miles from this famous church.

The early day Church workers were the Crowders, Huskyheads, Lacies, and the Albertys.

(INDIANS)
(Daily Foods)

The Cherokees at that time did not eat like other people-- that is, changing foods ever meal. They ate almost the same food three times a day, usually corn bread or bean bread, wild meats, hominy, and dried fruit such as peaches, apples, and dried pumpkins.

The Cherokees did not can their fruit in those days. They dried it. They dried their peaches by the fire built out in the yard. A scaffold was built. But apples were dried on the house tops. Pumpkin was also dried by the fire-place in the fall of the year.

Sugar, pepper, spices, and several other little things were bought at the stores in Arkansas. Salt was made in the Cherokee Nation by people who lived near the salt springs that were located in this country. The most famous salt springs was in what is now Hayes County, near Catoosa, Oklahoma.

Coffee was also not known much to the Cherokees. Those who did like coffee, bought it by the barrel. They bought this coffee raw. It was then roasted at home before it was ground. Every home had a coffee mill.

Wild meat was to be found on almost every table in the home. Deer meat was the chief meat food in the winter, fish in the summer. There were also many wild hogs in the woods at that time. Every Cherokee had a claim in the woods at that time. Any Indian could

p. 1.

kill as man will hog a... like... as man as he needed out
 they did not wait... waste... the... Cherokee
 people in the... times... their food... with
 dent... the... utensils
 ... of now...

... ..

... ..
 remembers

... ..

... ..

(GAME AND FISH)

There were plenty of fish in the Illinois River at that time. Swake was raised almost on the banks of this river. He has fished in it when ^{he} was a boy. He has witnessed many fish killings on the river, helping in some. There were no laws to prohibit anyone from fishing in any way he wanted to at that time. He thinks there were more fish then than now.

The woods were full of game of all kinds--deer, turkeys, and many other small animals. Deer was killed like hogs on the Illinois River by the Cherokees and hung in their smoke-houses at that time.

(FURS AND HIDES)

Silcan was the chief fur and hide market during the territorial days for the Cherokees who lived in the northern part of the Coingsnake District.

All those Cherokees who wanted to sell furs and hides would find market at Silcan. The Cherokees at this place did not make their own shoes as did the Cherokees who lived a long ways from town. As said before, the Cherokees in this part of the District lived better than the Cherokees who lived a long way from some trading post.

(FINANCING FARMERS)

Then the Cherokees did not have to be financed. They were in no business only farming. Every family, Jim Swake thinks, had

money in this community. They did not have in the thousands but had enough to get by. If some one had to have money more than what he had himself, he could borrow from his neighbors.

(ECONOMICS)

The Cherokees living in this part of the district were in favor of the railroad. They thought that that would help the development of the country.

Many Cherokees were in the cattle business. They argued that there would be shipping points established in the district so they would not have to drive their cattle so far to market. The cattlemen here the Crittendens and the Sixkillers, drove their cattle to Vinita to be shipped to the northern markets.

(POLITICS)

He remembers the election just about the time the Kansas City Southern Railroad went through. He was a small boy at that time. Johnson's father was a candidate for the legislature and he came and stayed all night with the Swakes. He and Mr. Swake talked that night about the railroads. I suppose, says Mr. Swake, what would be called issues in the election following. Johnson's father won. It was during his administration that the said railroad went through the Coingsnake District.

Richard Wolfe was the senator. The voting precinct was on the river called Mitchells precinct. The first election he voted, Tobe ~~Parris~~ was the guard, The Counters were Jim Swake and Burch Anderson.

1.

Mr. Hawk was a member of the committee and for
Ruffin's name. He was a member of the committee and
always voted for the same.

In folk's eyes, the committee was a group of
on the bill.