

STRODE, LEE.

INTERVIEW

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Field Worker, Ethel B. Tackitt,
April 14, 1938.

Interview with Lee Strode,
Hobart, Oklahoma.

The Red Store.

I was born in Texas, July 30, 1917. My father, John A. Strode, was a native of Virginia and my mother of whom I remember so little that I do not even know her given name or maiden name, just Mother is all I know, died when I was a very little child, leaving my father with four small boys. He used to tell us that before she passed away she asked him to promise her that he would keep us boys together and rear us himself and he kept this promise to her well. for he never re-married and he kept us boys with him until we were grown and made homes for ourselves.

When I was yet quite a little boy, I do not know just the year, Father moved to the Comanche Indian Territory and settled near Fort Sill on Cache Creek. Many soldiers were kept at the fort for the Comanche Indians

were yet guarded very closely and forced to stay on the Reservation because of the raids on the white settlers in Texas and the Civilized Chickasaw and Choctaw Tribes.

I remember when Apache Chief Geronimo and his band of Indians were located on the Fort Sill Reservation in 1890. Time after time he would try to make his escape and a few times was able to get back to his old home in Arizona. I recall the haste with which the soldiers would follow after his band when they were missing from the reservation.

The Comanche Indians lived in their Territory surrounding the present town of Lawton and Fort Sill on Cache Creek, both branches, in great numbers, and I well remember Chief Quanah Parker who was a fine appearing man and showed his white blood to a marked extent, in his manner as well as appearance.

The Red Store was a long wooden building with high old style front and porch with a door in the middle, a frame building with another side door and porch on the east side. This stood west of Lawton. There was no town when I can first remember, on Cache Creek. This

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building was used to store Government supplies which were issued to the Comanche Indians at certain times. In it was stored cloth, clothing, blankets, tepee cloth and all kinds of food. It was simply a commissary building and here the Comanches gathered every drawing day. White men also came here to trade with the Indians and run horse races. One time I remember very clearly there was a big horse race matched and two young Comanche Bucks were matching their ponies. Something happened and they became angry with one another. They both had pistols and drew them and it looked as though a regular war was going to start, but the soldiers, who were always on the watch for such occurrences, came and took charge in time to keep them from killing anybody.

The Indians were not supposed to carry pistols and so far as possible they were kept from doing so, but with so many unscrupulous white men coming into the Indian Territory for no other purpose but to take advantage of the ignorance of the Indians in trade, pistols and whiskey were furnished to them, causing much harm to them.

both in health and conduct. Ordinarily the Comanches on the Reservation were quiet and friendly to the few white people who were among them, but when whiskey was given them they were apt to pick a quarrel with one another or any white person who happened to be present. The Comanches used knives in fighting as they had these and they were not supposed to be weapons. They cared little for the flour and foods like that which were issued to them as they did not know how to cook them and often the squaws would cut the end out of a sack of flour, then get on their ponies, taking the sack by the corner and striking a run would scatter the flour over the prairie, saving the sack for the bright lettering and pictures on it. Their young people had not been educated like the Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians, for whom they had a great dislike.

Some of the young men of Geronimo's band were appointed Reservation Police and soon came to understand why they could not return to Arizona and the Western country from whence they came. They were taught to wear clothing

like white men and to talk English, read and to write. They appreciated better living conditions and became satisfied, but the older Indians of the band would not try to speak English or to enjoy living on the Reservation.

As a child, these Indian Drawing Days were great sport to me and I always went up to the Red Store to see them draw their rations as well as to watch the horse races and the betting among them, which was done by both bucks and squaws. Some would go away with great packs on their ponies to their tepees which were congregated in villages on Cache Creek, Beaver Creek and other watering places in the Wichita Mountains, while others went away without anything at all.

Beefes were also issued to them and much of the meat was eaten on the spot.

Quannah Parker lived much better than the most of the Comanches. He had a good house and a white man to look after his place. He enjoyed making it look pretty.

The Red Store was known all over Western Texas, as well as the western Indian Territory.