

ROBB, J. J.

INTERVIEW:

~~#12085~~

382

LEGEND & STORY FORM  
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field worker's name Gomer Gower

This report made on (date) November 10th 1937

1. This legend was secured from (name) Jesse J. Robb

Address Poteau, Oklahoma, Route #2

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe From John Slaughter; Choctaw

2. Origin and history of legend or story Battle of Honey Springs

other Civil War experiences as related to Mr. Robb by John

Slaughter, Choctaw, who was a participant.

Also story of Indian Characteristics

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 6

A Civil War Story  
Related to J. J. Robb of Poteau, Oklahoma.  
By John Slaughter a participant(now deceased)

Gomer Gower  
Investigator.  
11-10-37

Jesse J. Robb, the sponsor of this story, came to the Indian Territory from Georgia in 1880 and engaged in teaching a community Indian school at what is now the town of LeFlore in LeFlore County.

After teaching four years he established a merchandise business at that place and later moved to Cavanal, a station on the Frisco Railway about two miles north of what is now Wister, and re-established his merchandise business which he continued until the station was abandoned by the Frisco Railway because the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf Railway, now the Rock Island, had established a station at Wister, the point at which it crossed the Frisco Railway.

Mr. Robb was and still is a man who is held in the highest esteem by his Indian, as well as his white friends. While engaged in the merchandise

business, it was to him those in need of accommodation went for credit. To him, too, went those who dealt on a cash basis. He not only enjoyed a lucrative business, he also enjoyed the wholesome respect and confidence of all who knew him. For those reasons, too, he enjoyed a wide acquaintanceship in what is now LeFlore County which brought to him many men with their joys and successes to recount and their troubles and sorrows to share.

From the wealth of stories which he gleaned from many of his friends of that early period, the one Mr. Robb likes best to relate is that of one of his Indian friends, to whom the name John Slaughter was given to replace his unpronounceable Indian name, who was enrolled in the Choctaw forces which served under General Cooper in the Civil War.

The Civil War story as related by John Slaughter to Mr. Robb in broken English was: "One <sup>War</sup> time in big <sup>we</sup>, with General Cooper, Jack McCurtain and Adam Morris, ride across big river, we ride for many day. After we come to big

-3-

prairie, bi--g prairie, no little prairie like Choctaw prairie. After come to big prairie, Jack he ride fast on quick horse and say, 'Everybody stop.' Everyone he pretty quick stop. General Cooper he call 'em Jack and speak English to him. "

" after, Jack he speak Choctaw to all Choctaws and say: 'Pretty soon, we find him Yankees, not know how many. Every Choctaw must hear order. When Jack say go, go. When he say go quick, go quick. When he say stop, everyone stop.' After Jack he speak he say, 'Go slow and hear him good, command.' Everyone he go slow, horse he walk. Pretty quick we look way off on big prairie see guns he shine in sun. No can tell how many. General Cooper he speak to Jack. Jack he ride 'em quick tell everyone go quick. Everyone he make it horse run. Pretty quick we see lots Yankee, much Yankee. Jack he got much quick horse. He ride quick and say, 'Stop.' When he catch man in front he say, 'Stop, stop.' Fella in front he no stop. He turn 'em horse round and go off from Jack and Yankee quick. Every Choctaw he no stop, he turn em horse, too, and run after fella in front

end go way, way off. Jack and moh offica he try make Choctaw stop. Choctaw he no stop till way off, pass big prairie."

Adam Morris, as already noted, was one of the subordinate officers of this troop of Choctaws and was a very intimate friend of Mr. Robb's at the time this story was related to him by the Choctaw, Slaughter.

During the years intervening between the war period and the time of the relating of this story, Morris came to be regarded as a man who ran away from no danger.

This fact elicited the question by Mr. Robb: "Did Adam run, too". to which John energetically replied: "Yes, Yes, Adam he run much quick. Everyone he run. Pretty quick, Jack he run. General Cooper he run way from lots Yankee".

As pictured to Mr. Robb by Adam, discipline among the Choctaw Troops was an indifferent part of their military training. The infliction of penalties for the violation of established military rules and regulations was not practiced for had they been, not one would have been left with which to form a corporal's guard.

5

A Choctaw who desired leave of absence for a long or short period of days would not approach his immediate superior and formally apply for leave, but would, in most instances, approach General Cooper, without giving the customary salute and quite nonchalantly say "General Cooper, I goin' home for killit hog, dig 'tatah, or find'e a cow, be back tree-four week" and then would mount his shaggy pony and ride away in the direction of his home. Little did he know and little he cared about differences in military rank.

Another incident which depicts the character of the Indian is related by Mr. Robb. While Mr. Robb was engaged in the merchantile business, as has already been noted, he extended credit when requested to do so by responsible parties. Among these applicants for credit was an Indian who owned some sheep.

This Indian told Mr. Robb that the bill for the goods which he bought would be paid in full when he sheared the sheep and sold the wool. This assurance of payment was entirely satisfactory

to Mr. Robb. However, before shearing time came, all the sheep belonging to this Indian had died from disease or had been devoured by predatory animals. Not a word was said by either Mr. Robb or the Indian concerning the payment of the bill at the time it became due.

Some three years passed and still not a word was said by either of the men regarding this bill. Then, one day the Indian walked into the store and inquired of Mr. Robb as to the amount of the bill. When informed of this he calmly pulled out his wallet and paid the bill in full with the added explanation that he could have paid it long since, but since he had promised to pay it when he sheared his sheep, he had waited until he could fully carry out his agreement; that the sheep he owned and expected to shear and apply the proceeds from the sale of the wool to the payment of the bill had all died so he had had to wait until he could replenish his flock and thus produce the wool as he had agreed.