

ROBERTS, P. W.

INTERVIEW

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Billie Byrd,  
Journalist,  
Jan. 12, 1938.

An Interview of P. W. Roberts,  
Age 62, White, Okemah, Oklahoma.

## LAND DISPUTES.

The boundary lines of a certain section of land in what is now southwestern Oklahoma was disputed by Texas and Oklahoma. It had been set aside as a neutral county known as Greer County and so left until a proper understanding could be reached. Texas professed ownership while old Oklahoma claimed the right to own the land. The dispute over the land continued until the United States Supreme Court finally decided in 1895 to annex that part of the land that had been causing all the anxiety to old Oklahoma.

After the annexation moves were completed, the land was to be opened for settlement but before any settlements could be allowed and before the formal opening, some people had already entered this particular section of land and settled. These people being trespassers were ordered to vacate the land but there were a few who disobeyed the orders and kept on living on the lands. When the final orders for

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the opening were made, many people were anxiously waiting to enter on the land and stake claims. Some had high hopes of obtaining good fertile claims.

In all this excitement there were certain parties who were honored with government permits to stake claims and choose the very best and fertile land. Those permits were issued to the men who were veterans and those who had served in the Spanish-American War. I was one of the veterans having served in the 2nd Texas Regiment in Company G. Several others of the men received these permits.

Having so much to do and being very busy, I turned my permit over to a neighbor whom I trusted and knew would use his best judgment and stake a claim for me on the most fertile land he could find. This friend was going to stake his claim, too, and was only too glad to help me out. Later, the friend informed me that I did not obtain a claim of land as the officials had declared to him that the right persons and to whom the permits had been issued were required to be present in person to rightfully stake a claim.

When I first entered into Oklahoma, I came in from Texas, and having lost a chance for a claim, I just went

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ahead and bought one hundred and sixty acres of land near what is now Mangum.

When I came to this country Mangum, now in Greer County, was just another little western town of the early days when six-shooters barked at every corner, up the street or in the dance halls where the cowboys whooped and gobbled when they rode into town from the different ranches at break-neck speed with sudden halts made at the dance hall door or at the chili parlors. The places afforded pastime hours for amusements for the boys who could enjoy an evening of fun after the serious hours of a hard day of riding and work.

It was while I was located there, during one cold winter when it must have been twenty-eight degrees below zero, that a lone cowboy rode into town and discovered real chili and called it a "hot one". It was the usual order for a cowboy to order chili on the cold days they happened to be in town. The chili was hot from being on the hot stove just as well as from the hot seasonings put into it, making it seem very hot to the taste. The cowboy upon receiving the order of chili took a spoonful in his mouth and called it

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hot as he jumped about two feet up in the air, kicked his heels together two or three times before hitting the floor, ran outside into the zero weather, ran up the street and returned later to the chili parlor and exclaimed, "Hot-a-mighty! I've been on the trail a hundred times back and forth for the cattle but I've never seen anything hotter than that chili".

Duke was probably seventy or a few more miles south of Mangum, which was a post office, and about that much more distant farther south of Duke there was a trading post known as Boggy Creek. Another man named McCurdy and I drove a span of three-teamed mail and stage coach between these two points. I drove the mail and stage coach from Boggy Creek to Duke while McCurdy drove the mail and stage coach from Duke to Mangum. We had to drive our coaches even during thirty-two degree weather - a weather so cold that nothing could crack the ice that formed in the water and the passengers would be half frozen by the time we arrived at their destinations with them. Our salaries, as stage and mail coach drivers, were \$50.00 a month.

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I quarried all the rocks that went in the building of the school house at Kangan and am one of the five members of the State National Aid Organization.