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ANDREWS, JOHN. INTERVIEW.

Grace Kelley, Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History
June 15, 1937

Interview with John Andrews of
Henryetta, Oklahoma.

Mr. Andrews was born in 1806 at Mobile, Missouri.
His father, John F. Andrews, was born in Macon County, Missouri.
His mother, Nanny Hawkins, born in Ducktown, Tennessee.

Beginning of Coalgate, Coal town

In 1888, when I was thirteen years old, we came by train to where Coalgate is now. The No. 1 Slope was just starting, no other mines were there until later. Father was a blacksmith and I stood on a box to reach the handle of the bellows that I "blowed". We were working for the Southwestern Coal Company.

Wade Hampton worked with father. He was part white, part Indian and part negro and had once been the slave of an old Indian, Eligh Fulton. One day, either before the Civil War or close to the beginning of it, his owner left for, he thought, Washington on important Indian business. As soon as he was sure that he was gone, Wade got his owner's best saddle on his best horse, and his owner's overcoat, gun and things he thought he would need and left. He scouted until after the War and I think he said he went to Kansas but I'm not sure. Eligh Fulton offered a good reward but nobody could find him. He was a Government Blacksmith before he went to work with father.

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That was called open land, it belonged to the whole Choctaw Nation and any Indian could fence in whatever land he wanted without paying for it. A white person had to pay twenty cents a month to stay or live there, but that was all the taxes he had to pay. He could fence a farm, keep four or five hundred cattle or do any work for a living after paying that to the Choctaw Nation. The mining company checked that off of each person's check every month and paid it to the Indians.

Sam Smallwood, a well educated Choctaw, was the International weighman who came around to the mines and got the Royalty for the Indian Agency at Muskogee.

At first there was only one store at Coalgate and most of the trading was done at Lehigh.

Lehigh

There were twelve or fifteen stores of all kinds, a pool hall, and a bank, it was a pretty good sized town; now it is just a flag station without a Postoffice.

Philips is another that is just on the map but not a town now.

When Coalgate boomed, the ^{other} places went down; at one time Coalgate had four banks. Every two weeks the mining payroll was from seventy-five to a hundred thousand dollars,

twenty-five thousand men were working in the mines. It was made the County Seat when Statehood came in.

Destructive Cyclone

In the first part of June, 1909, a cyclone came from the southwest over the west or best residence part of town, went out to the northeast, leaving forty wounded and fifteen who died from the injuries.

Arrow Heads

Dixon Durant, the Choctaw Durant was named for, told me how they made arrows and he had a lot of arrows to show me, too. He was eighty years old then, a nice Baptist preacher, but he was a bad young man. He said: They went way off about Sallisaw, for there was no rocks like they needed near Coalgate, and got round flint rocks and brought them home. They were stacked in a pile with a lot of wood piled on top of them. A fire was made to get them right hot. Then the persons making the arrow, got an oat or wheat straw and a pan of water. The straw was dipped into the water then held over the rock which had been raked out of the fire, and the water dropping on the hot rock caused it to chip. They would keep dropping water where they wanted it to chip until it was the shape desired. Then they got a stick about a foot and a half long and

split it a little way on both ends. The square edge was put into one end or split and buckskin was wrapped around them to hold them together (I imagine like grafting G.K.) A feather was found that was suitable and fastened in the other end to make it go straight and hit the target.

I have the largest arrowhead I ever saw. It is three and a half inches across, of gray flint. I have thought of putting it in the Mus um at Okmulgee. I have seen them with stripes every color of the rainbow and they were surely pretty. And to think that they were made without tools of any kind makes them more wonderful.

Tom Fuller, Corn Recipe of Choctaws

They would take a log and saw it off about two feet high and hollow it out, leaving a good bottom. Corn was put in this hole and pounded with a mallet to make coarse grits, which were cooked with all kinds of meat in great big pots, very good tasting and satisfying.

Lodge Hodge was a wealthy Choctaw (quarter-blood) who owned a big ranch three miles southeast of Coalgate and the Hodge Mercantile Company store. The old place is still there but the ground is in farms now.

The half and quarter breeds were the mean ones, especially when they were drinking.

The fullbloods, the old ones, had no harm in them.

Boggy Depot and Bird's Mill

When looking for cattle for a rancher, I was at these places but I can't give a very good location of them. Whenever we wanted to go anywhere we just "set the course" and hardly ever failed to come out just right for we knew the country, but we never thought of miles and hardly ever thought of the directions but used landmarks. There were no sections and the only fences were some Indian's corn patch which was usually on creek.

Bird's Mill was near Atoka, southwest of Coalgate and northeast of Tishomingo. There was a powerful spring there at the mill. It was so powerful that it ran the mill and made a big creek. There is no telling how long it had been there.

Boggy Depot was an old trading post northwest of Coalgate.