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CAPPS, ROBERT

SECOND
INTERVIEW

12101

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CAPPS, ROBERT. SECOND INTERVIEW.

12101

Investigator Grace Kelley,
November 12, 1937.

Interview with Robert Capps,
Dewar, Oklahoma.

Born Missouri, 1870.
Parents Pleasant Robertson Capps,
Sarah Flowers, Illinois.

In 1890 two other boys and I walked from Austin, Texas, to Dougherty where my father lived. I was twenty years old. There was a cut-off trail between the Washita and Rock Creek on top of the divide from Lerwyn to Dougherty. We waded the creeks. There were just a few settlers and most of them were afraid of us as there were so many rustlers and bad men that they thought we must be either rustlers or bad men, or we would not be going through as we were. We had a little money and sometimes they would sell us a little to eat. Some of them would not even let us get a drink of water from their barrels. They had to haul water for fifteen or twenty miles. They were not close with friends and neighbors like that but they had to know you before they showed any friendship. We slept in cotton patches and on the prairie as they would not even rent us a bed.

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When we got to Durwood Mr. King let us stay at his house for two or three days to rest up. There was a trail between Durwood and Lougherty. Lougherty was twenty-five miles north of Durwood.

Durwood was an inland town with two or three stores, blacksmith, grist mill and cotton gin, and with a post office in one of the stores.

Lougherty was on the Sante Fe Railroad; four stores, post office, cotton gin and grist mill constituted the town.

Old Store.

There was a store, a sixteen by twenty foot box house, four miles north of Red River in a flat country. I would say that it was on the second bench land or ridge land of the Red River, close to Marietta. I do not know who owned it.

Mail Routes.

Mr. Redford of Lewar carried the mail from Lougherty to Mill Creek on horseback.

Mr. Hoff had the post office and carried the mail from Hoff to Mill Creek. Later the route was changed and went from Hoff to Davis, to Stonewall where the railroad was. That was what we called a bus line. Some called it a hack

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and others called it a coach. Anyway, it was a wobbly thing. The ones who had a branch office had to carry the mail to the railroad themselves or else hire it done.

Hoff.

I worked for Mr. Joe Hoff for seven years. He had a mill and during the week we sawed rawhide lumber from oak logs. I would cut from forty to fifty logs a day and oak is hard to cut. On Saturday we ground meal or corn and charged an eighth part of the meal for grinding it. Sometimes we would grind from Saturday morning to Monday morning without stopping. There were always two of us working, one to run the mill and the other to run the engine. One man would bring a wagon load of corn for a whole community on one Saturday. The next Saturday some other man of that community would come with everyone's corn. In that way only one man would have to make the trip, sometimes they came from a long way and over bad roads besides losing that time in the fields.

Everyone ate a lot of cornbread in those days. I have known folks who lived on cornbread and water until they got their crop in. If they were lucky enough to get hold of some flour, it was kept until Sunday when the wife made light bread

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or biscuits. The children would be anxious for Sunday to come so they could have some biscuit. On Sunday people always had company and wanted the nicest food for the company. People visited more then than now.

The reason Mr. Hoff put me to working in the mill was that there were some "toughs" who would bring their corn and not wait their turn as they were supposed to do, but would do their own grinding no matter how much it was and never would bother to pay for it. Mr. Hoff was not making anything at all with the mill.

I kept a gun in a box handy, but I never had to use it on anyone. The first time that trick was tried on me I had done a lot of grinding and there was a long line of grinding ahead of me. I had a half bushel of corn in a basket to be ground for a man whose child was bed sick and who wanted to hurry back home. A "tough" came, emptied the corn out of the basket and started filling it with his own, preparing to do me the same way as he had always done Mr. Hoff. I kicked the basket a-windin' and told him I was doing the grinding now and he would wait his turn like others besides paying the same as they paid. When they saw that I could not be run over I had no more trouble.

Joe Hoff was a "galvanized" white man which meant he had an Indian wife. He had a store and post office, the mills, twenty-five hundred cattle and the ranch house.

Editor's Note: "galvanized" was evidently the slang word for nationalized."

I was cutting forty to fifty logs a day when a fellow came with a string of recommendations, telling that he was a good lawyer and could make more profit for the boss who would have to pay him two-fifty a day and a dollar a day for a helper for him. I did not like him from the start for I had never been used to people having written praise of their work. Usually a man would tell what he knew and when asked could show how skillful he was. I had never been to mechanics' school so the boss thought it would be good to hire him and told me to watch and learn as much as possible from him. He worked seven days and sawed seven or eight logs and ruined the saw.

Dave Clatts bought some new machinery from Dallas and they furnished a man to put the machinery in working order, that is to set it up. He had bought the boss out and I was not working for him. When he got through and left they

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started to grind but the line shaft was a half foot out of line. They sent for me to see if I could fix it. Either the line shaft would have to be changed or the engine moved over so I moved the shaft over. I worked for him a long time after that.

Rock Crossing.

On the Washita River, three miles north of Lerwyn, there was a rock crossing or ford. There were no ferries on the Washita then.

Ferry on Red River.

Mr. Hinds had a ferry on Red River but as Mineral Wells was the last big town we came through I could not give a location of the ferry; it was south of the Arbuckle Mountains but that does not help much.

Rancher.

Else Murray, uncle of Bill Murray, had a ranch between Hoff and Mill Creek on the head of Little Blue Creek. He had about five or six hundred head of cattle.

Water Mill.

Low Rance or Mr. Lawrence had an overshot wheel water mill close to Mill Creek. He was a squaw-man, too. There

was a big spring like an artesian well; there was a place as large as a wash tub where it came out of the ground and made a big creek. Mr. Lawrence built a big pond that covered two or three acres and was fed by the spring. As it held so much water it gave the mill more speed. We ground wheat and corn.

airroad strike in 1899.

In 1898 we had a drouth so we did not raise much corn and had to buy our meal and flour. In 1899 the railroad had a strike and would not pull or haul anything. When the stores ran out of meal and bread-stuffs we had to go back home without anything and eat roasting ears and potatoes for five or six weeks or until the trains started rolling again.

We had plenty of meat in the woods from the game and you could buy a hundred pound hog for three dollars, anytime.

The soap was made at home; soft soap from the bones, entrails and scraps and hard soap was made from the cracklings. The smoke house was always full of sugar, coffee, salt and things like that which were all that we bought.

Cloth for dresses cost three cents a yard but it took more yards than it does now. The wool and cotton thread and stockings were made at home.