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BOATRIGHT, DeWITT

INTERVIEW

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SECOND INTERVIEW

#6625

BOATRIGHT, DeWITT.

INTERVIEW.

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Interview with DeWitt Boatright
532-38 W. Avenue, Tulsa.
Interviewer - W. T. Holland
July 9, 1937

My father, James H. Boatright, was a farmer; my mother was Susan Jones Boatright and her father, John Jones, was a pioneer physician of Tennessee.

My people were living in Madison County, Tennessee, when I was born on March 16, 1860; but migrated from that state to Arkansas.

I has two uncles, W. W. Evans and J. M. Evans, and W. W's health was very bad due to the low country in which we lived. There was much malaria there and my uncle had suffered from chills and malaria until his health was very bad. He heard, through others, of the wonderfully healthful climate of the Territory

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and the freedom of the people who lived there from chills and fever, so he and his brother, J. M. Evans, decided to come over to Indian Territory. W. W. Evans was a stone mason and Uncle Jim was a carpenter. They thought they might get some work to do among the Indians, in the building line, and that they might farm some too and at the same time they hoped that W. W.'s health would improve. Well, all of this came true.

The trip we made covered about two hundred miles and we were on the road about three weeks. We loaded our things on the one wagon and then did not have a load; we had only a few bed clothes and bedding, some pots and skillets, but no stove at all. Our trip while slow, was pleasant. We would travel a few miles and then strike camp until we finally stopped on the land of a Choctaw Freedman who owned and controlled a lot of land. We rented

some land from him paying one-third of all corn raised and one-fourth of all the cotton we raised. This land had been plowed and was not very hard to cultivate; however, we did not have many implements to farm with. A one-horse plow, a turning plow, and one double shovel plow and some hoes, constituted our farming equipment.

We got along well, living in a log house on the place. This house had shed rooms on two sides, a stick and clay chimney, a clapboard roof and a plank floor made from rough lumber.

This place was about thirty miles east of Caddo, where our nearest store was. As I said, we had no cooking stove, so did the cooking on the fire on the hearth and in pots and skillets hung on pot hooks. Living was simple and easy then.

In my early life, practically everything was raised and made at home.

My mother spun the thread and wove the cloth for our clothes. I remember a jeans suit she made for me when I was eighteen years of age. It was a gray mixture in color, homemade dye was used, and the suit was made by my mother. I was eighteen years old before I ever had any "store" shoes. Before this time my father had made all of our shoes. He killed several cattle during the year and the hides of all of these were sent to the tan yard where they were tanned, some for sole leather and some for the upper parts of the shoes.

The shoes were made with wooden pegs. These pegs, made of maple, were also made by my father. These were good shoes, wore well, but were not as soft as our shoes of this time.

When, later, I came to Oklahoma Territory, I was offered \$25.00 for my jeans suit; I didn't sell it as I couldn't have duplicated it for that money.

Well, when not working on the farm with my uncles or helping them build houses, I split rails. This negro paid me 50¢ per hundred for splitting rails and I could make good wages at that.

In this section was found quite a lot of timber and being raised in Arkansas, in the timber I was familiar with any timber work. I made about 6000 rails for this man. I found the timber, post oaks, in "schools" or bunches, on the edge of the prairie. I would select one, cut it down and try splitting a cut; if it split easily, I found that all the trees in that "school" would split easily; if one was tough, all would be found to be that way. This negro was a good farmer and reliable. I didn't have any trouble collecting my wages.

My uncles, W. W. and J. H. Evans, built a nice house for the Choctaw Freedman. This house was made from sawed lumber and had two stone chimneys.

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It was the best house in the community at that time. This negro had about two hundred head of cattle grazing on the prairie, as well as a lot of ponies. These ponies grazed on the grass in the Summer and Fall and in the Winter went into the cane brakes and lived and did well on cane shoots, which remained green through the Winter. Once in a while this Choctaw Freedman would sell some ponies, getting from \$5.00 to \$25.00 per head. Cattle were sold when fat and driven to Caddo, from which point they were shipped, Caddo being on the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad.

Wild game was plentiful, so plentiful it was not appreciated as it should have been.

Turkeys in droves of one hundred or more were usual sights and deer were plentiful, as well as small game, squirrels, quail, and prairie chickens.

The hogs were wild. A man rarely ever had to feed corn to hogs to fatten them in the Fall.

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There were lots of pecan trees in the "bottom" lands not so far away and these hogs ran wild here and fattened on pecans. In the Spring, the Indians would go out with some corn to tempt them and would herd up a bunch of hogs, especially sows and pigs. They would catch and mark these pigs in the ears with a certain mark; each man had a different mark of course. People would usually kill hogs with their own mark, but if not handy some other hogs or any old hog would do.

In the Fall or early Winter, when the weather was cold enough to keep fresh meat, the Indians would hitch up a team to a wagon and load in their kettles, guns, and call the dogs. They used a small dog, a "fice" to drive the hogs. These dogs were small and quick, could run in and nip a hog and ~~jump away out of reach of the hogs,~~ when a larger or slower dog might not be able to get away. They would round up these hogs and get them in a pen

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erected beforehand which had a "slip gap" partly or wholly concealed, into which the hogs would be driven.

In the meantime, the kettles would have been unloaded and fires built under them and they would have been filled with water, getting ready to scald and clean the hogs. The largest and fattest hogs were selected and shot. Then they were cleaned, the entrails taken out and put into tubs and the trip home was started.

When home was reached, everything was turned over to the women, the squaws, who made chitterling soap and rendered up the lard and salted away the meat.

This meat was fine, of a sweet and pleasant flavor, unlike that of meat when hogs had been fattened on corn, only.

In hunting the hogs, we always went on horse back, as it was dangerous to be out in the woods.

on foot, especially when there was a wild boar around. Once in a while a hog would be brought to town for sale, with the head off. This indicated that the hog had been stolen, as the head bearing the tell tale ear mark would have shown who the owner was. Of course some people would contract for and buy these hogs, knowing they had been stolen; however, when an offender was caught, he was given a public whipping of one hundred lashes. This whipping usually cured these thieves or at least, made them more careful.