

LONGTAIL, JAKE

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James Carselowey,
Journalist,
Feb. 12, 1938.

An Interview With Jake Longtail,
Vinita, Oklahoma, RFD 4.

Journalist Note:

I have known this old Indian for about 40 years, and have hesitated to ask him for an interview because he could not talk the English language, only in a broken way. So many have told me I should interview him, that I finally decided to do so, and am giving it to you as nearly like he gave it to me as is possible to write it. He says:

"My name he Jake Longtail. I live Vinita, route 4, close Estella, this side. I born Indian reservation, Kansas 1848. Pretty soon I'm ninety years old, next year. I come Indian Territory emigration party, Shawnees 'bout 1871.

When I come I stop same place I am now, but I no find 'em house to live in. Not many house Indian Territory then, just few log cabin, maybe little field close by. No white man live here then, just full blood Cherokee. Good many them kind in White Oak Hill, all over. I bought two log room house, Jim Horsefly, and five acre ground. I give it \$300.00 his place, he move out. I think I got it

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big land field fence, when I buy them land. He got rail fence round, all round.

Right way I make improvement, that house. I go saw mill, close by and get lumber, I box it up 'nother room, between two log house, then I got three log room house. I farm patch myself, raise corn, feed "pessil" and make corn bread.

When I first came, I can't find it grist mill no where, finally Jim Horsefly say, you saddle pony, put sack corn on behind, and I show it grist mill. We gone two days, go way Spavinaw town got water mill that place, just big wheel run it all time no push it, no pull it, just run it by self. We stay all night Cherokee Indian house. Jim Horsefly, he talk it Cherokee, that man, but I'm Shawnee can't understand it them language. I understand it pretty good, English language, but I can't find it all them words what I want say. Jim Horsefly, he talk good both way, he pretty smart Indian. Sometime he interpret court house, and council house, Tahlequah.

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 PRAIRIE CHICKENS EAT UP CORN.

When I first come this country, too many prairie chicken. He light on trees all round my field, in tree, putty soon I aint watch it, he eat up corn patch. I shoot 'em, just lots chicken, one shot. Sometimes I kill 'em 7, one shot.

Plenty deer them hills too, but he no eat corn, ~~pretty wild them buck. I wait long time one place before he come. He got, what you call it deer lick, hunt salt.~~ Sometime I put salt there myself, and fool it, then I hide close by and shoot it.

~~Pretty soon, about 1885, white man begin to come, hunt all time, kill 'em heap deer and prairie chicken, and pretty soon all gone, then we have to eat wild hog. Plenty that kind meat yet. When wild hog play out, I raise 'em tame hog, myself, then white man steal it. Kill it just like wild hog--have to watch it all time, them white mans.~~

MADE BEAR TIMPSON'S COFFIN.

I git it 'nother good neighbor, Cherokee mans, name Bear Timpson. He live close my house, other side, close

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Estella. He Baptist preacher and leader among his people. He come my house, to make good my friendship. He run it councilman one time, Cooweescoowee District, and got it office. I vote for it, and I go hear it preach, little church house call it, Timpson's chapel. First preach it log room house, make seat out slab, rough on bottom. I help make 'em; we bore hole in it slab, put legs in, then set on it, hear sermon.

Way after while, Bear Timpson just keep on preach it, and pretty soon make it new preach house, and start it school. I guess oldest school, Craig County, he start 'em Bear Timpson. Long time call it Timpson Chapel, but now call it Estella school, but Bear Timpson's old church still stand same place-got new one now-white house, big sign in front say, "Timpson's Chapel". Graveyard on same lot, 3 acres, got same name. Bear Timpson buried there. 'Bout three days before he died; he come my house, Bear Timpson. He say, "Jake, I want you make coffin and box for me, when I die". I say, "all right". It was just kind of Indian way, and I thought maybe several years before I make it, but he dead in three days. I make it coffin out of dry

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walnut. I keep it in loft all time make coffins. I make it box, too. I make it out rough oak.

I make 'em lots coffin, early days ain't no coffin house close this side Chetopa, Kansas, and somebody make 'em most every neighborhood. We go Vinita get lining and trimming, and coffin look just like "new one". We get handle, too, and when we get through, coffin look like sure enough one. Coffins better them days, than now,
thick walnut last longer than modern casket.

HERE BEFORE VINITA ESTABLISHED.

When I came here, 1871, no Vinita town here, but little new town, call it Downingsville, on Cabin Creek, two miles south of where she stand it now, that Vinita town.

Next year 1872, I'm run it big race, two railroad, one coming from north out of Kansas, and one coming from Missouri from east. Hire it heap mans, make fly heap dirt. I go Chetopa, close other side to see it make railroad-- look like in big hurry to go somewhere. Mans just lay it tie on ground, grab up big railroad iron, lay it down and nail it, then go on. He sure work fast them mans. One

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mans told me he make race with Frisco, that M. K. & T., and first one to reach Indian land would get it half the land lay close railroad.

Well, Katy mans, he beat it Frisco some whay out, but Uncle Sam she just fool it railroad, like she fool Indian. Railroad no get 'em Indian land yet.

When Katy road reach it Downingsville, she swell up and goin make big town, but pretty soon here comes Frisco, and fool it that Downingsville town. She land two miles to north. Then Downingsville mad like old wet hen. She have to tear it all up, that town, and move it to railroad crossing. Then make more trouble, some smart Cherokees.

BOUDINOT-BELL AND
OTHERS FENCE LAND.

When he see 'em coming Frisco, Cornelius Boudinot, Hocley Bell and a few others, see 'em big chance make heap moneys, them town lots. He fly in and fence it all them land close where railroad cross, and Cherokee law give it quar-mile on each side his fence. Then he lay off town lots and wait. Can't make it town now, less you buy lot from Boudinot, Bell and Company.

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Heap raise 'em stink all them Downingsville folks, cause he want move it town right way. He send it delegation to Tahlequah, see them Chief bout it, and Chief, he send it Indian police that place, tear it all down fence, then Downingsville move, and in few years change its name to Vinita.

Boudinot, he go Washington all time, bout that time and he stick it on White girl, name Vinnie Ream, she make sculpture, and right way he want call it Downingsville after that girl, and pretty soon he make it, and that is how Vinita get name.

STILL PLOWS AT 89.

I am only man, close my house, who at 89 can still plow. Long time go my wife die, my children all get married. I been plow all my life, I still plow. Most people think funny, but I plow all day, just like white man. I got good farm yet, same one I bought Jim Horsefly in 1871. I been farm like white man long time. I raise corn, wheat, oats, all by myself. I plow 'em corn all day, cook my meals. Long time my daughters stay my house,

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cook meals, but gone now, and I cook it myself, milk it cow, then farm. I got 100 acres allotment. I got 'em yet. I got 'em cultivation now, most all of it. Some of it in Cabin Creek bottom-raise good corn. I got hog. I feed 'em corn, raise myself. I no draw 'em pension, old age. I no need 'em. I got three good horses. I come Vinita Sales Day, today I want buy it another horse, then I got two team. Mabyso hired it hand, help me sow it oats.

One mans, over there sale ground, say, "Jake, What you do that stick when you plow?" I say, "Don't need 'em, Just bring 'em to town, looks".

MADE OWN BULLETS.

When I first come this country, I got old oap and ball rifle. I make bullets myself. Just melt 'em lead, pour it in bullet mold, come out round. I put 'em in end of gun, punch it down, call 'em ram-rod. Don't see any more them kind gun.

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SHAWNEE TRIBE PLAYING OUT.

The Shawnee tribe of Indians, be play out pretty fast now. Heap Shawnee came to Indian Territory, when I come. Some of 'em very prominent mans. Some had large family, now all dead. Some of Shawnees who came when I did are:

Charles Rogers, Chief of Shawnee Tribe; Johnson Blackfeather, chief; Cyrus Cornatzer, chief, some one time, some two, David Blackfeather, William Greenfeather, Sampson Rogers, Charles Tucker, Jonathan Gore, Samuel Cornatzer, Fred Chouteau, William Ben, Alex and John Chouteau, Dudley H. Tucker, Sam, John and Doss Tucker, John Franklin, George Franklin, Frank Franklin and Alex Franklin. Of the above, all die long 'go, except John Franklin. He live close my house yet.

SAME WAY WITH CHEROKEE.

It's same way with Cherokee. When I first come this place, White Oak Hill full, nothing but full blood Cherokee-now not many left-just Charley Hunter and few young man. Old Aunt Liza Buzzard and Jennie Buzzard,

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Cherokee woman, oldest close Estella, this side die 'fo soon, last year, almost hundred years old. I'm oldest man left in White Oak Hill now.

EARLY DAY SETTLERS AT VINITA.

I know good many early day settlers in Vinita. Most of them dead now. Last one to die is biggest man I ever saw. He six feet, six inches tall and weigh about 300 pounds. He mighty good and popular man. He name Thomas Mitchell Buffington. He die at home in Vinita, Friday, February 11, 1938.

I know 'em long time ago. He came Delaware District 1878, from what you call it Snakegoing somewhere district, close Westville, this side. He run it office good many times, get lected every time, can't beat it no mans.

Some other mans what live Vinita town, when I come this country are; Jim Bly, postmaster early day in Vinita. He got two daughter, one marry Billy Miller, might near first hardware man in Vinita; other one marry L. W. Mark he white man, and early day United States Marshal. He first white man to cock pistol on Belle Starr. He 'rest it one time, then let it get away.

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Belle Starr tough, just like man. He scout, ride horse all night. One night she come my neighbor's house way in night, and say want stay all night. My neighbor put it horse in barn, then go in, and she say, "My name Belle Starr. They are after me, but can't catch it! Next morning my friend ain't slept much afraid come them officer, and 'rest him too. He get up 'bout 4 o'clock, can't sleep, and pretty soon here come Belle Starr. She say I want pay you for my stay all night, your house, and hand it ten dollar bill. My friend say, "don't want no money", but she just walk out, get horse and leave, 'fore day light.

Some more early day settler in Vinita name Henry Drew, Henry Effeirt, Oce Trott. Oce here before I come. Live on farm, one mile south of fair ground, close Vinita, other side. When Vinita start he build first residence house in Vinita. It's still here, but Oce gone happy hunting ground.

Then there was a man name Pace and another man name Trott, call it Hardin Trott. He big man run lumber yard. Pace walk in one day and say, "My name Pace". Trott say,

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"My name Trott". Pace want to fight it then, cause he thought Trott make fun of it.

There wasn't no doctor here when I first came, just Indian medicine man. About '80 sometime first white doctor came. He name Oliver Bagby. He ride it dun pony all over this country, and more too. He roll more pill, than all other doctors. He live long time, just die in 1937.

'Bout seven or eight years 'nother white doctor came, name B. F. Fortner. He practice little while, and fore long Dr. Bagby find out pretty good man to whittle on man, and he take it in, for partner. Then Dr. Bagby roll pill, and Dr. Fortner cut it up. Nother mans what was here when I came was Bob Ironsides. He had little store on east side of Katy track, and later built it, first theatre in Vinita. He marry him, my daughter, Jim Davenport. He name Birdie Davenport now and my husband is big judge Oklahoma City town.

Two more mans run store, 'mong first one in Vinita, named Frank Cass and Arch Goodykoontz. After while sell out, and go into cattle business. Both of 'em start

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west, and camp out on little river, call it Verdigris, close Catoosa this side. That night, slip up on it negro and kill it both men and bird dog, and rob it. Two negroes take buggy and hack and go Okmulgee town, where catch it some men, and hang it in Wichita, Kansas.

Others who were here, in early history of Vinita were: Felix Cowan, John Britt, Bob and Jim Tittle, Sam Ridenhour, Lucien W. Buffington, W. C. Patton, S. S. Cobb, J. O. Hall, William Little, Bill Halsell, Bill, Arthur and Beecher Chamberlain, and too many, I can't tell it now.

EARLY SETTLERS NOW LIVING.

Not many of old timers, I have just named, still living. Some whom I remember, mighty few are: Mrs. L. W. Marks, Lula (Poole) Kelley, Mrs. R. M. Swain, Mrs. Billie Miller, Sam Ridenhour, Felix Cowan. I do not believe there is any more old timers now living, who were here when I came, except one man, close my neighbor, by Estella, call it John Franklin.

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WOMAN KILLS MY BOY.

My oldest son, Charley Longtail marry Cherokee woman, named Fannie Humphrey Longtail. He just married it few years ago. She bad woman, get drunk, fight and go on party. One night, about three years 'go her and Charley go somewhere and have car trouble; hire taxi bring it home. I guess been fussing them two. Wife go in house to get money to pay taxi, but stay so long Charley started in house to see bout it. He met wife at door with pistol, and she just shoot it down, that boy right in door. He stick it in pen, that court, for life.