

WRIGHT, LOUIZA JANE.

SECOND INTERVIEW. 12686

443

WRIGHT, LOUIZA JANE.

SECOND INTERVIEW

12686

Hazel B. Greene
Journalist.
January 1, 1938.

Interview with Louiza Jane Wright
502 South Second St. Hugo, Oklahoma.

We just lived all around in that county around Eagletown, but I didn't go about any graveyards, because one of my neighbors told me that always when she went to a graveyard to a funeral, she would have to go again in about three months to bury some of her own folks--so I would not go to a funeral. I'd go care for the sick and do all I could for the bereaved family and wash and lay out the dead, but never go to see them buried, if I could help it. The most of the people just buried their dead close to the house, anyway.

There was an old full blood Choctaw, named Harrison, who died on the hill in his cabin home just across the river from Eagletown and was buried in the yard. His pony was shot and killed on his grave, and the Indian was buried with a bag of salt, so that when he reached the Happy Hunting Ground he would have salt for his meat.

This Indian had an old white woman housekeeper, by the name of Grimes who lived there just like those full bloods

WRIGHT, LOUIZA JANE.

SECOND INTERVIEW.

12686

2

did. She made her pallet on the floor before the fire and slept just like they did.

Those full blood Choctaws were the cleverest people in the world; if they liked you they'd divide the last thing they had with you but if they didn't like you they would not even look at you.

I helped take care of the two year old baby of Jefferson Gardner while it was sick and when it died I washed it and laid it out. I don't know where they hauled it to bury it, but guess they took it to wherever its mother was raised. She was a Christy and was raised over across the river somewhere.

Mrs. Gardner's brother, Nelson Christy, was the ferryman when we moved to Eagletown. I was simply scared to death-- it was my first trip across a river on a ferryboat.. They oared it over for they didn't have any cables those days. I begged them to take me over in a skiff, because I was used to skiffs, but they would not, so our wagon and yoke of oxen and children and two horseback riders all loaded on that ferryboat.

WRIGHT, LOUIZA JANE.

SECOND INTERVIEW

12686

I just looked to the other side and prayed to the Lord to take us safely over.

After we got over there, my husband and my brother worked for Jeff Gardner at the grist mill, the sawmill and the ferry. They didn't have to ferry Mountain Fork all the time. When it was low they could ford it, but when it was up my husband and brother would have to quit their work at the mill and set folks across. My husband was Jim Wright and my brother was Bill Blackwood. They tell me that the old burrs or grind rocks are still lying in the yard of the Gardner mansion.

I guess the reason they moved the mill to the east side of the river was because the timber gave out on the west side. The mill workers naturally followed the mill, and that built up the new town which was about two miles east of the first Tagletown. The cemetery was just about a quarter of a mile up the hill from the new town and was called the Howell Cemetery. Just anybody buried there if they wanted to do so, but they "hailed" the most of the

WRIGHT, LOUIZA JANE. SECOND INTERVIEW . 12686

4

dead to the Prannan Cemetery, across the road from the Howell Cemetery and just about a mile further on the road towards Ultimathule; I believe the Prannan Cemetery is older than the Howell Cemetery.

Near the Prannan Cemetery stood a two-story log house. When I lived in it, there were several big rooms, stack chimneys, and glass windows. The rooms were lined inside with plank. It was called some sort of an Indian Academy building, but I've forgotten the name. It was said that it was haunted, because several had been killed in those rooms, and when we lived there in about 1885 an old negro woman who lived in one of the cabins close by said she was fifteen years old when the Revolutionary War was ending and that she could remember it.

We lived further down Mountain Fork in what had been a fine house, but nobody wanted to live in it, because it was said to be haunted. They said somebody had been killed in it, too, and I know there was one door which we could never make stay shut; even though we would thumb-bolt it, it would swing open again. And at night there were sounds

around the house that sounded like somebody running a spinning wheel. The house was so big that two families of us lived in it and sometimes at night I'd think I would hear the other woman spinning and she would think she would hear me running my spinning wheel. Some Hudsons had lived there and a baby of the family died there and it was said to have been buried by the fireplace under the floor, then the Hudsons moved away. It was no uncommon thing to bury the dead under the floor or out in the yard or garden and put palings all around the grave and a roof over it.

There were lots of fine old homes around Tagletown, some of which were abandoned after the Civil War and some were deserted because the children had grown up and the older ones had died.

A good many white people were coming into the Territory about that time and they would occupy those fine homesteads which were made by the more aristocratic of the Choctaw families.

In later years the white people got to taking five year leases from the Indians. They would simply dig a well, build a crib and build a log cabin and keep all they would make on the land that they would clear. After the five years were up they would have to pay rent, a fourth of the cotton and a third of the corn.

WRIGHT, LOUIZA JANE.

SECOND INTERVIEW

12686

6

I remember once, my husband was paling in a big garden for some Choctaw not far from our house. They quit and went off to do something else for a day or so and left that paling unfinished and they would get no pay until the fence was finished. We had no meat to eat and my sister-in-law had no meal, so we went down there to finish that fence if they would let us so we could get something to eat. The Indians would not let us finish the fence. That old Choctaw woman just stood there and would look away off and shake her head. We got an old negro woman to interpret for us but the Indian would not let us nail those palings on, ~~on~~ even after we made her understand that we were hungry. Then we asked for her washing or ironing but she said next week. However, she gave us some meat, meal, and syrup to take home with us and we got our buckets and went out and picked huckleberries too. There were always lots of those and blackberries along Mountain Fork River. And bee-trees! They said that at one time there were thirteen swarms of bees in the limbs of that old big cypress tree on Mountain Fork.

There used to be a whipping tree at Eagletown, then they moved the court to Sulphur Springs, which was a desolate looking

WRIGHT, LOUIZA JANE.

SECOND INTERVIEW

12686

7

place. There I saw my first buffalo, a vicious looking thing.

Judge Jackson Hudson lived close to that old Academy building and he must have been a sort of a Circuit Judge, because he would go to other places all around and hold court. He had a fine home, too, and lots of land and lots of cattle.

James Dyer was our preacher. He was a full blood Choctaw Indian, but because there were always a few white people scattered through the congregation, he would preach in Choctaw and then in English. He was also a carpenter.