

MILLER, LEE (MRS.) INTERVIEW.

#6545

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Field Worker	Wylie Thornton July 2, 1937.
Interview	William Boyd, Jay, Oklahoma, at his death.
Born	March 7, 1850, Washington County, Arkansas.
Parents	William Boyd, (father) Washington County, Ark., Served as Confederate soldier.

William Boyd (1850-1928)

William Boyd was born in Washington County, Arkansas, March 7, 1850. It was here that he married Miss Alice Harden in 1881. The couple moved to Indian Territory, the part which is now Delaware County, Oklahoma, in 1893.

His father, also named William Boyd, served as a soldier in the Confederate Army. He had two brothers, Francis and Albert, who also fought on the side of the Confederates in the Civil War.

His mother was a one-quarter Cherokee Indian.

At the time William Boyd came to Indian Territory, a brother, Albert Boyd, and a nephew, Benjamin Stone, settled in the same locality. Each of the three men reared a family and lived in what is now northeastern Oklahoma the remainder of their lives.

William Boyd has said of his experiences:

"When I came to Indian Territory I came into contact with many fullblood Cherokee Indians. My first task was to make friends with these natives. This I did by being friends with them and treating them as my neighbors.

"The country then was a vast wilderness, overrun by all kinds of wild animals. Those most common were, deer, hogs, wolves, turkeys, foxes, racoons, and opossums. My greatest pleasure was in hunting. I never failed to provide my family with the best of wild meats. My children once captured a small fawn, which they tamed and kept as a pet for many years.

"The only roads through the country in those days were trails made by stock, usually following a creek, or leading from one spring to another. For many years the wagon roads were made by blazing the trees along the way; then by travel, on foot, in wagons, and on horseback, these roads were developed.

"There was very little land in cultivation at this time. The largest tracts would not exceed two acres. The only crops were corn, beans, and tobacco.

"Almost all of the houses were built of logs, with clay and mud daubing between them. The better dwellings had two log rooms about eight feet apart with one roof extending over both rooms and the hall between them.

"I established my claim and built my first home about seven miles west of what is now ~~Kansas~~, Oklahoma. I cleared a few acres of land each year, and within a period of ten years I had about forty acres in cultivation. I saw the many advantages of the free range for stock, so I managed to keep a large number of hogs, a few cows, and several head of horses on the range. I kept several mares to raise colts, some of which grew up in the woods and lived to be old without ever having a bridle or halter. Although there were no laws, my stock was seldom molested.

"The Cherokees had their religious worship in the form of preaching, singing, feasting, and dancing--all combined. These meetings would usually last four

days. My family would attend these services during the daytime, but we would always return home before night.

"The first school house in our section was built near our home. Each year, a white woman from some eastern city was sent to teach the school. As there were few whites in the neighborhood, she usually boarded at my house. However, my children never went to school. Their mother and grandmother taught them at home, until the first Lutheran mission school was established near what is now Kansas, Oklahoma. My oldest boys started in the fourth and sixth grades.

"My family established its membership with the Lutheran church. The Lutheran pastor, a Reverend Nelson, came to my home and preached to a large congregation, assembled under the shade trees in summer, and crowded in the house around the big fireplace during cold weather.

"The gatherings were always very peaceable. Although there were no written laws, every law abiding man was an enforcement officer. We carried our guns wherever we went and slept with them by our beds. The doors were

always barred at night. Corn, meat, canned fruit, and everything of value was locked safely each night. But in order to be certain not to be surprised by thieves, I always kept at least two good watch-dogs. Thus, by protecting my family and property, exercising our rights and privileges, and simply taking care of my own business and learning to leave the other fellow's alone, I lived in peace and harmony with my neighbors.

"If an Indian at any public gathering would get drunk four or five men would catch him, hog-tie him and carry him off to himself, and leave him probably till the next day.

"Finally we had the traveling courts which would come through the country and camp for a few days in the various neighborhoods. Citizens would make out complaints at this time against law breakers, who would be arrested and immediately brought before the judge for trial.

"Later, marshals were located throughout the country. They were disliked by most of the natives, who resented having strange white men come into their midst and tell them what to do. For this reason, the

first two marshals, Henry Veras and George Gillstrap, were killed by the Wycliff brothers, near my home. All the natives protected the Wycliffs and their followers. They gave them shelter and food because they believed the Wycliffs were protecting the country from intruders. However, the Cherokees were peaceable in their own ways of living. The trouble between them and the whites was that the Indians did not want to change from their ways of living to that of the white man.

"My greatest ambition was to do all that I could to bring about this change in social conditions. I realized this need of change because I was bringing up a family of children. My mother-in-law, Mrs. Lou Hardin, who made her home with my family, often told me that it was a sin to raise my children in this country. I sometimes thought she was right, so consequently my good wife and myself tried our best to teach our children at home, not only the fundamentals of learning, reading, writing, and arithmetic, but to be clean, honest, and industrious. I taught them to be as God made them and to make a living by the sweat of their brows.

"Our struggle for a better, higher class of citizenship was a hard one, but I felt that in my last years of life my hopes were somewhat rewarded.

I had lived to see my children grow to man and women. All of them had fairly good educations. Five of them attended Northeastern State Teachers' College at Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Two of them graduated there.

"I was happy to see that the country had developed into a well-organized state. Yet it was a pleasure to remember the 'good old days' when I not only hunted and fished, but would go out into the woods and cut down a bee tree and bring home an abundance of rich honey. The most unpleasant memories of these days were those times of severe sickness in which we needed a doctor but could not obtain one. Fortunately we had very little sickness. I learned from the natives how to do my own family doctoring by the use of herbs. The best purgative I have ever used was black root tea. I also learned to extract teeth very successfully. I had two

pairs of forceps which I had brought with me from Arkansas. It was not at all uncommon for someone to wake me in the dead of night to pull a tooth for him. I did a great deal of work in a ten or twelve-mile radius. Of course, my services were free.

"At the time of statehood, I moved to Jay, Oklahoma. There I took quite a part in the county seat fight. I was on the side of the "Old Town Site" people. For years the struggle was very bitter, but finally those who favored the Old Town Site won out. A new courthouse and jail were built, and churches and schools were established in Jay. A great degree of peace was established, and I had lived to see my dreams of thirty-five years of struggle materialize."

Mr. William Boyd died at Jay, Oklahoma in 1928.

This information was secure from Mrs. Lee Miller, daughter of William Boyd.

Mrs. Miller was born in Kansas, Oklahoma, April 22, 1895 and now lives at 225 West Shawnee Street, Tahlequah, Oklahoma.