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Ethel B. Tackitt,
Interviewer.
August 30, 1937.

Interview with Robert Carson Carroll
Lone Wolf, Kiowa County, Oklahoma.
Born February 25, 1880
Father-Samuel B. Carroll
Mother-Martha Mashburn Carroll

I was born near Bentonville, Arkansas, February 25,
1880.

In 1887 my parents, Samuel Baker Carroll and
Martha Mashburn Carroll moved our family to Texas and
Father went to work on the Worsham Ranch in Clay County;
their brand was *STV*. We lived in Texas until the
Fall of 1889 and then we moved to old Greer County which
was called Texas at that time, and settled on a claim
near the little post office of Looney at the head of Boggy
Creek.

There were very few settlers in the country at that
time as almost all the land was under the control of cattle-
men and there a number of big outfits which had ranches and
line camps all over the country. The *TX* outfit was owned
by the Dallas Land and Cattle Company and Jesse Gibbens
was boss. The *OM* (O M) outfit was owned by Sam and Joe

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White and the Swerenger Brothers, and Sam White was boss.

We were like most of the early settlers; Father worked for the ranchmen and we did a little farming but as a general thing it was too dry to raise anything. Native grass grew high where there was blue sage grass in the valleys, while the cat-tails and stem grasses grew to the height of a man on horse-back along the banks of the North Fork, the Elm Fork and the Salt Fork of the Red River.

The stock wintered on this grass, which on account of the usually dry climate was cured like hay and the green grass underneath furnished ample food for all animals, antelope and deer as well as for horses and cattle. There was so much range that the curly Mesquite grass of the high lands had not been eaten off as it now is and this Mesquite grass grew to a height of six or eight inches.

The dread of fire was uppermost in the minds of both cowboys and settlers, for when a prairie-fire once got a start after the grass was cured, there was little chance of stopping it until it reached some river too wide for the wind to blow some dry burning cow chips across and scatter sparks. These fires were generally started

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by hunters who came into the country and camped along the rivers in the Fall. These hunters were not careful like the cowmen and settlers, who watched these hunters wherever they made camp.

A cowboy would ride for miles to see if a camper had left any fire.

I have seen these prairie fires burn a strip miles wide from North Fork to Red River, while the cowboys and settlers fought it by killing a full grown cow, cutting it open tying a rope to each front foot and then a cowboy on each side would fasten the rope to the horn of his saddle and drag the dead beef down the line of fire while others followed on foot with wet sacks and whipped out the tufts of grass which were left burning.

Water was scarce and only to be had at a spring or along some little branch and it was not always easy to get a wagon and barrel from the ranch or from a "Nester's" dug-out. I have drunk water from a cow track in some little gully where there was a seep spring and was glad to get it. Nobody ever heard of a germ, but there were lots of wiggle-tails in the rain water which stood over the prairie.

The springs and water holes were land marks over the country. My brother, John Alvin Carroll, is four years older than I, and he and I roamed the brakes and prairie in every direction, always mindful though of the rattlesnakes which infested the country.

The first person to be buried in the Liberty cemetery which is five miles southeast of the present town of Hollis in what is now Harmon County, was the daughter of J. O. Hill who was bitten by a rattlesnake. At that time there was little that could be done as it was miles to a doctor and nobody else seemed to know how to treat a rattlesnake bite. It was the custom of many cowboys to kill every rattler and I knew one who owned a collection of more than four hundred sets of rattles.

Collecting the rattles of rattlesnakes became an obsession with John Alvin and me and one day while we were enjoying a stroll over the brakes about two miles from home, we saw near the mouth of a gyp sink hole, about two feet wide, an enormous rattlesnake stretched in the sun, and John Alvin said that we must have his rattles. We decided that if we hit the snake with a

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rock which was the only thing we had,,the snake would more than likely get into the gyp sink hole before we could get the rattles.

So John Alvin cut a long stick with a fork on the end and instructed me what I should do. He then got on the bank above the snake and jabbed the stick down, so as to fasten the snake, so it could ^{not} get into the hole. He caught it about three feet from the end of the tail and the head end went in the hole. According to arrangement I hit the head end with a big rock and continued to pile rocks into the hole fastening the head end down but it was not dead; rattlesnakes are hard to kill.

After the snake was covered in the hole I went upon the bank and held the fork down on the body until John Alvin took his pocket knife and cut off the rattles, which were twenty-two in number. He then tied a long buckskin string which he had in his pocket to the tail of the snake and told me that when he started to jerk the snake out of the hole, he would start to run with it and for me to take the fork off and hit it with a rock. I did as we had agreed and it all worked out as ^{we} had planned

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and we finished killing it and dragged it home to show what we had done. Father measured it and it was six feet long but we did not tell for years how we got the rattles. for we knew we would get a licking for taking so great a risk. We collected more than three hundred rattles.

There are few rattlesnakes in the country at this time.

When I was fifteen years old I went to work for the ~~OX~~ (O X) cow outfit as a horse wrangler. Ford was wagon boss. My duties were to look after the saddle horses for the outfit and to help the cook in making camp, and to look out for water holes.

Later I worked for the Matidoe outfit. The ranch was in Texas but the range extended all over the country. The brand was ~~MAT~~ (M AT I) on the cattle and 50 = (Number 50) on the right hip of the horses. I was a full fledged cowboy then and I worked for the ~~Mill Irons~~ (Mill Irons) outfit. Their ranch was also on the Texas side of the river and Colonel Hughes was boss. I

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was working for this outfit when the town of Pampa, Texas, was laid out. A cowhand did not stay around the ranch. He rode the range and often was in a line camp, many miles away from the ranch and sometimes would not be on the ranch for months.

In 1898 I worked for Bill Henry and rode the range in Greer County, east of the present town of Hollis.

One day John Byers, deputy sheriff, and Walter Pendergraft, field deputy of Greer County, with the sheriff of Childers county, came to the ranch and told Bill Henry, who was a Peace Officer in Greer County for many years, that Chief Quannah Parker of the Comanche Indian tribe had reported to them that thirty-five or forty Indian ponies had been stolen and among them was his fine race-horse and he believed that two Mexicans were driving the ponies.

Bill Henry told them that I rode the range for him and to wait until I got in and find out if these ponies had crossed the range. I had seen a band of ponies driven by two Mexicans, a young man and a man who looked older and I pointed out the trail to them and they followed this

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trail which took them over on the Mill Iron Range.

The Mexicans began to fight and would not surrender; John Byers and the oldest Mexican got into close quarters, Byers trying to make him surrender but the Mexican got behind a large bridge timber which had been set in the ground for a pasture gate post. The Mexican was armed with a Winchester, while Byers had a forty-five six-shooter.

It was hard to shoot around the post and at last Byers thought the Mexican had hit him as something had struck him on the cheek just under the eye and he thought it had gone through his head as the blood spurted all over him. Someone shot the Mexican and Byers called to Walter Pendergraft to come and feel the back of his head where he supposed the bullet had come out, but an examination Pendergraft found that it was not a bullet at all which had hit Byers but a knot which had been shot off the post. This was a joke on John Byers as long as he lived.

The officers got all the horses except Quahah Parker's racehorse. The young Mexican was riding that horse and got away on it. Bill Henry, John Byers and Walter Pendergraft

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are among the pioneer peace officers of Old Greer County and of Western Oklahoma.

As the country settled up the large ranches were cut up into smaller pastures and many of them were fenced until the Government forbade the fencing of the outside land. The cowboys had either to go on west to New Mexico, Arizona or Wyoming or settle down on claims and try to make their living by raising only the number of cattle for which they had range and which they could feed in winter.

That did not go very well for a man who had done nothing in his life but ride a horse. A cowboy cannot walk and follow a plow very well, but I farmed and raised stock and later bought a farm near Lone Wolf in Kiowa County where I have since made my home.

I am now a State ranger, looking after the Fish and Game of Oklahoma and helping to impress upon the people the necessity of preserving the wild life which is left in our state.