

INDEX CARDS:

Choctaw Nation  
Log Cabin  
Choctaw Customs  
Ferries and Fords  
Ranching  
Horse Racing

Dovey Heady,  
Interviewer  
June 22, 1937.

An Interview with Budd Conn of  
Indianola, Oklahoma.

I was born January 28, 1876, in Pope County, Arkansas. My father, John Conn, was born in Mississippi. He died and was buried in Pope County, Arkansas.

I came to Indian Territory, in 1888 and settled at Poteau,

Jack Wisenaut, my uncle, and his family came with us. We traveled in covered wagons, drove about twenty head of cattle and ten or twelve head of horses. We farmed at Poteau two years then moved to McCurtain,

farmed there two years and moved to Indianola, where I have lived since.

Our first house in Indian Territory was a two-roomed log house with puncheon floors and a board roof. This was at Poteau.

There were many Choctaw Indians at Poteau, but they were very peaceable. They had no trouble with the white people but a little trouble among themselves. The white people knew little of what was going on among the Indians because they told a white man nothing, unless he was a very close friend.

There were not many Indians at Indianola when I came

CONN, BUDD

INTERVIEW.

6408.

-2-

here but there were plenty across the Canadian River. They were Creek Indians and had a reservation at Eufaula. I have been to many of their camp meetings. They always had a big feed and dance. They wore blankets around their shoulders, their hair braided in two braids and tied at the ends with bright colored strings. They wore bright colored beads and large ear rings I never did know how they made their beads and ear rings.

The Indians had very few ponies. What they did have were small. They had what they called "kak". This was a home-made saddle made of rough hides. These saddles were rough and caused sores on the ponies' backs. Sometimes they used hides or blankets in place of a saddle. Some Indians rode bareback. Most horses and mules were brought to Indian Territory by white men.

The Choctaw Indians had small patches in cultivation. These were called Tom Fuller patches. They also made what they called Tom Fuller bread; this was made from ground meal and baked on hot rocks. They ground their corn into meal with a mortar and pestle. I can't tell exactly how this was made.

Their weapons were bow and arrow and tomahawks. The bows were made of Bois-d'arc, cedar and oak. The arrowheads

-3-

were made of flint rock.

They made their dishes of clay, by molding the clay in the shape of a bowl and then baking this in the sun until thoroughly dry, then dropping in cold water. They sometimes painted these bright colors by rubbing different colored flowers on them while they were still wet.

The Indians used hides for mattings or rugs. They also made mattings by taking strips of white oak bark and weaving it the desired size.

#### Game and Hunting Places

There was plenty of game in Indian Territory when I came, such as prairie chickens, fish, turkey, deer, squirrels, rabbits, wild hogs (what we called "razor-back" hogs). There were a few wild cows. No buffalo, they were all back in western Oklahoma and across Red River in Texas. Plenty of fur bearing animals, such as coons, opossums, gray fox, beavers, skunks, martins and minks. Also lots of "varmint," such as wolves, panthers, and bob-cats. Once in a great while we heard of a brown bear. They were very scarce.

#### Ferries and Fords

I used to cross the Abner Brassfield Ferry between Eufaula and Broken. There was a ford crossing there too. It was called the Brassfield Ford, about one-fourth mile

-4-

southwest of Brooken. Mr. Brassfield charged ten cents to cross with one horse and twenty-five cents for a wagon and team. This was across the Canadian River.

There used to be the Thurman Ferry about six miles northwest of Indianola, across the South Canadian River. There was also a ford crossing close to this ferry, but I don't know the name of it. There was the Standing Rock Ford, also a ferry about a half mile west of Standing Rock Ford. This was across the South Canadian River close to Eufaula. I remember once we were taking about 1,700 cattle to Kansas City to market. We had about ten men and one chuck wagon. The chuck wagon carried our food and clothing. We were all day crossing the South Canadian River at Standing Rock. We put the chuck wagon of food and the team on the Ferry and took the cattle about a half mile down the river to Standing Rock Ford. All our men were drunk but myself and one other. We were having a terrible time getting the cattle across and looked up the river and saw the Ferryboat, chuck wagon, team, and all coming down the river. The ferryboat had broken loose and the man on it couldn't control it. We and the other sober man roped it and dragged it to the bank, saving our team and rations.

-5-

In round-up time in the Spring each man had his own mounts which consisted of five or six horses to a man. About twenty-five or thirty men would start out to round-up cattle to take to market. These were cattle that had been previously bought and branded. Most of the cattle were bought around Poteau, Oklahoma. We would start with the cattle in the Spring and graze them through the Territory. By the time we got to market with them they were fat. This usually took about three months.

#### Race Tracks.

There used to be a lot of straight race horse tracks, these were usually one-fourth and one-half mile tracks.

There used to be one-fourth mile race track at Dead Man's Crossing where Scarface Jim (outlaw) was killed by a Choctaw Indian. I don't remember his name. This was a mile and a quarter west and three miles south of Indianola.

The Willey Adams track at Fairview, was about the longest track I know of. It was a one mile track.

George Choate also had a straight race track at Choate Prairie, called the Choate Race Track. Only two horse could be run at a time on the straight tracks. Everything

-6-

a race

was bet on/ from household goods, stock and land to money. We always had a good time at this race track. Families came for miles around and brought their lunch.

## Old Roads and Trails.

I used to know of the ~~Santa Fe~~ Trail through Ardmore, where cattle were driven through to Saint Louis to market. There were many more old roads but I can't locate them now.

Later, after the Indian Territory was pretty well settled by white people, game was beginning to be scarce and people began going to the hills to hunt. The Indians were very conservative with the game. They never killed more than they could eat at one time but the white men killed all they could carry home. The Indians cured some meat which they called jerked meat. They cut the meat in strips and dried it on top of the house.

After game became more scarce, hunters went into the hills and carried the game home on mules or dragged it, if it wasn't too far back in the hills.

I have seen deer in bunches of ten or twelve head where Indianola is now.