

DANDRIDGE, CZARINA SAMUEL. INTERVIEW #6702

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Etta D. Mason,  
Interviewer.  
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An Interview With Samuel Czarina.  
Dandridge, Atoka, Oklahoma

I was born in Smithville, Indian Territory, April,  
1884.

My father was Steven Samuel who was born in Indian  
Territory near Le Flore. My mother was Sofia Watson,  
who was born near Smithville, Indian Territory.

My father was a farmer who farmed with oxen. We  
raised corn, cotton and vegetables; also stock.

We were Choctaws and lived in an Indian Village.  
We marketed our crops at Cane, Arkansas. We forded the  
Mountain Fork River to get there.

There was a large rock in the middle of the river  
that marked the crossing. If half the rock was visible  
the river was fordable.

Our marketing was done in ox wagons. My mother and  
most of the other Indian women dried vegetables and  
fruits and gathered dried beans and peas. The country was  
full of deer and wild turkey, and my father killed one  
bear.

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Our house was built, as were the others in the village, from hewed pine logs, cut from the farms. The men helped each other build the houses. The farms were fenced with rails made on the farms and carried, or hauled by the men.

Sometimes there would be real rail carryings. The women would prepare food and after the rails were carried, and the fence built, there would be a feast and dance at one of the homes.

Our water came from mountain springs, and we drank from a gourd. Gourds were also used for other purposes. In the kitchen they were used for salt, meal, and coffee, and as bowls on the table.

We had camp meetings, and as my father owned the only ox wagon in the village he would first take his family and leave them at their camp, then he would go back to the village and bring others to camp till all were established in their camps.

The Indian church was called Lukfata.

The Indian women would cook for days before the meeting began. There would be barbecued beef for all who came.

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The Indians were all very religious and all were Presbyterians. Our minister was James Dyer, an Indian. He did not need an interpreter for there were no white people in our settlement.

Songs were lined and sung by the congregation. Two lines were read by the leader and sung by the congregation, then two more lines were read and sung till the song was finished. The singing and preaching comprised the service.

The young people enjoyed these camp meetings, too. It was a get-together time for them and many happy gatherings were planned for the future.

The older women wore shawls on their shoulders and a shawl or colored handkerchief on their heads. The girls and young women wore bright colored dresses and red ribbons on their heads. Of course one was never really dressed properly if he wore no heads.

Sometimes our dresses were beautifully beaded. Colored stockings and gloves for the children in the village were spun and then knitted by my mother. The thread was dyed with poke berries, bois d'arc, and sumac.

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When there was to be a wedding the women of the village would prepare a wedding feast. All the relatives of the bride and groom met at a camping place the day before the wedding, and feasted. When the time for the wedding came all the male relatives brought a gift and placed it on the bride's head. After the wedding they divided the dowry among her women relatives. At the feast the women ate the food which the men had brought; and the men relatives ate the food which the women had brought. Much fun and frolic and dancing followed the wedding.

Those were happy days for us youngsters. We rode, paddled canoes, ran races, played ball, and many other games.

There was a watermill at Smithville, where we had our corn ground and there was a cotton gin also at Smithville.

In time gasoline and electricity took their rightful places and the watermill and the ox wagon were no more needed. The village was broken up for as the Indian learned the ways of the white man he needed more room

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for farms and better houses. Schools and churches  
were built and Indian civilization moved on.