

EDWARDS, ELSIE      INTERVIEW

7571

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Fort Gibson  
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Living Conditions

## EARLY INCIDENTS

An interview of Elsie Edwards, daughter of Tustenuggie Jimboy, of Ke-cho-ba-da-gee town (tulwa), Weleetka, Oklahoma. Age 84.

Billie Byrd, Interviewer  
Indian-pioneer History  
9-17-37

Somewhere upon the banks of the Grand River near Ft. Gibson lies an old grave of an old lady whose name was Sin-e-cha. I could lead you to that grave today. Sin-e-cha had come with her tribal town of Ke-cho-ba-da-gee during the removal to the new country. When the events, with never no more to live in the east, had taken place, she, too, remembered that she had left her home and with shattered happiness she carried a small bundle of her few belongings and reopening and retying her pitiful bundle she began a sad song which was later taken up by the others on board the ship at the time of the wreck and the words of her song was: "I have no more land, I am driven away from home, driven up the red waters, let us all go, let us all die together and somewhere u on the banks we will be there."

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When the war of the south was in progress, it has been told that those of us that lived along Wod-ko Hu-chee (Coon Creek), which is between McAlester and Crowder City, went to the south to escape the war. The neighboring people were so excited that they were just running around getting ready to go somewhere. Men folks were fixing up the wagons while the women folks were busy getting the quilts ready, gathering up pots and other cooking utensils, and loading up the wagons. Ropes were made of cow hides cut in long strips and these were used to tie small bundles. They loaded up the light articles, such as mattresses and quilts, upon the horses and securely tied with the cow hide ropes.

At that time Jackson Barnett, who has been considered the richest Indian of recent times, but is now dead, was my playmate. He was in the same group that I was in when we went south and we stayed in the same group all the four years that we were away in the South. Swatt Grayson was the main leader of the group on the trip with the aid of Tustanuggie Jimboy (Jim Topler who had been named after his father, Jim Topler). Jimboy was my father.

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I traveled to the south on a horse and a mattress ~~which~~ had been placed on the horse and tied with the cow hide ropes. Most of the trip I rode with Jackson Barnett, as both of us were small then.

I remember that we made our camp across the Red River near a high hill. The people made shelter in any way and out of anything that could be used, but most of the people made their crude houses out of bark which was usually of hickory bark. Some covered their shelter with twigs and covered it over with cow hides. The children never did anything but eat, play and sleep, and the men would usually go hunting. They never would let us small ones out of the camp.

The bark houses were arranged along a street like clearing with the houses opposite each one and in the center of the street was dug a long ditch, running the length of the street, and this was used to build a fire in it and cooking was done over the fire in the ditch. Stout sticks would be stuck into the ground on each side of the ditch and a long pole fastened or laid between the forks of each stick

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and the pots could be hung from the pole directly over the fire and slow cooking done.

At one time during our stay in Texas, there was fighting right near our camp and we had gone to a high hill to hide while some of our men stayed in camp to protect the camp but a good many of them were killed, but General Cooper in command of the Confederate Soldiers was forced to retreat when reinforcements reached the place.

The Jim Crow law had not yet been made so that the whites, Indians, negroes and half-breeds just mixed with one another and there was no law against the number of wives that man wished to have. My father had four wives, two being Indians and two negro women.

After we had returned to Ft. Gibson upon government orders, before we returned to our homes after the war ended, we were given rations, but were finally permitted to go to our homes.

Oxen teams made long and slow trips from Texarkana, Texas, to Ft. Smith and also, they came across from Tishomingo going to Ft. Smith.