

NAVE, JOHN CALVIN

INTERVIEW

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John Calvin Nave, (White)
212 South Main St., Muskogee, Oklahoma.
Interview-December 31, 1937
Jas. S. Buchanan, Investigator.

I was born June 26, 1875, in Boone County, Arkansas. My father was John C. Nave, English-German descent, a native of Arkansas. My mother was Marguerite Bingham Nave, English descent, a native of Missouri.

My father died shortly before my birth and when I was about three years of age, my mother married a man by the name of Harrison Robnett of Missouri.

When I was about eleven years of age I went to live with my grandfather, Jacob Nave, who lived a short distance from my birth place. I lived with him about two years, and during that time my step-father and mother moved to the Indian Territory, stopping near Muldrow. In the following spring, in 1889 when I was fourteen years of age, I came to my mother in the Territory. We farmed near Muldrow the year of '89, then moved to a place near Wagoner where we lived one year. The following year the Cheyenne-Arapaho country was opened up for settlement and my step-father went to El-Reno, filed and made the run. He staked a claim about seventeen miles west of El Reno. Soon thereafter we moved to the claim which was only open prairie with grass as tall as a man's shoulder and our only shelter was the covered wagon,

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until we constructed a dugout.

Shortly after we got located on the claim, I left there and went to Kansas where I worked on a farm until after the harvest. That fall I returned home and spent the greater part of the winter hunting with my step-father, as there was an abundance of game in that country at that time, such as deer, wolves, turkey, prairie chicken, etc.

The following spring I went down into the Chickasaw Nation where I went to work in the old Grass Root silver mine, which was located about three quarters of a mile southeast of Paoli. This mine was not a shaft or slope, as the ore was dug out of the side of a slope of a hill on the surface; hence, the name Grass Root. I worked at that mine about three months, but being a boy of eighteen years, I could not stand the idea of spending too much time in one place, so I left there and went to a place called Ryantown, Chickasaw Nation, near the Texas line. There I went to work on a farm for a man by the name of Oscar Conway, where I remained until after the thrashing season. Leaving there, I returned home where I spent another winter hunting. Near the approach of spring, my step-father told me if I would stay at home that year I could have all I raised and I could have all the land that I

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could break and properly tend. Never having had an opportunity to engage in anything on my own part before, I gladly accepted his proposition. He furnished me with a team and I went to work, breaking prairie sod, and breaking raw prairie sod is a tough job, but I stuck to it until I broke about fifteen acres and prepared it for planting. Preferring to be exclusively to myself in the project, I went to a small patch of timber a short way from the claim and cut poles and hauled them to the place and built me a little pole cabin, in log cabin fashion. I lived in this cabin, batching, and planted a crop of corn and kaffir corn. Fortunately it was a good season and I raised a fine crop and when it was harvested and sold, I had more money than I had ever possessed at one time in my life. I bought myself a pony, saddle and Winchester rifle, an outfit I had coveted since I had been old enough to notice that it was the regulation equipment of a Territory citizen at that time. Being near of age at that time and possessing all that I thought a man really needed, a pony, a good saddle and a Winchester, I decided I had been there long enough and I went back down into the Chickasaw Nation to Oscar Conway's place where I had been before, and picked cotton for him that fall. When the cotton

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picking was through, I returned home, it being near Christmas.

There were very few roads or trails through that country at the time-mostly cattle trails-and if I followed the trails it would compel me to ride several miles out of my way, so I decided to ride directly across the country on a direct line towards home. I started out across the country, as none of it was fenced at the time and a person could choose his own route or direction of travel. Late in the afternoon as I approached the Washita River my attention was attracted by a large flock of wild geese on the river. I stopped, dismounted and crept into a good shooting distance with my Winchester, selected a fine large wild goose and killed it. I got my goose and tied it to my saddle and proceeded on my way.

After crossing the river I noticed a dim trail which I followed and shortly I came to a Wichita Indian village. It was between Chickasha and the old Military crossing on the South Canadian River. I rode into the village before I noticed it, and the Indians seemed to resent my presence in the vicinity. At least they were astonished at the sight of a white man riding through their camp, especially at that time

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of the day as it was almost sundown, and there was no white settlement near there at that time. I became alarmed at the action of the Indians, all coming out of their tents and looking me over as I passed. Knowing I had to camp soon for the night, I rode until it was almost dark so as to get as far away from that Indian hunters' village as I could. When it was almost dark, I noticed a desirable place to camp under some trees by a rock ledge; also an old log by which I built a fire as the night was chilly. I unsaddled my pony and tied him on a short rope so that he would always be close to me, and spread my blanket down by the fire and there I spent the night with my Winchester in my arms, as I was really afraid of those Indians. I was always of a disposition to be alone in everything I did. I never took up with anyone as a companion in my running around, being rather a "lone wolf" type. I always thought I could come nearer keeping out of trouble by keeping to myself and being concerned in no other party's business. Obtaining food was no problem in traveling around in the territory at that time as plentiful as game was. If I became hungry I could kill a prairie chicken and roast it over a fire providing a good meal.

The next day, after spending a very restless night near the Indian village, I was on my way at dawn and arrived home

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with my goose in time to celebrate with a wild goose dinner that evening. I spent the remainder of that winter at home with the folks, hunting and helping my step-father about the place. The following spring I returned to the Cherokee Nation, spending the spring and summer in the vicinity of Wagoner.

In 1895 I was married to Alice Barr, a Creek girl, the daughter of John C. and Matilda Barr of near Wagoner. Five children were born to us and all are now living. The first two years we were married I worked on farms for other people. During that time our first child was born. The next year we settled a new claim four miles west of Coweta. It was timber land and we built a two room log cabin which was our first home of our own and where our other four children were born. Living there and improving that claim was the happiest part of my life.

THE KILLING OF LOUIS COX.

Louis Cox was a very prominent and progressive Creek Indian of the Weer community. There was another prominent Indian family in that community of the name of Childers. There had been a family feud between the Cox and Childers families for several years. July 4, 1899, there was a big

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picnic and stomp dance at the old Weer stomp ground about five miles south of Broken Arrow and there were members of both the Cox and Childers faction there. There was quite a bit of drinking going on, and in the afternoon about 3 o'clock Louis Cox passed me with his gun in his hand, and as he passed I heard him say "By God! I mean business," and from his general appearance I thought so too, so I gave him plenty of room as I felt there would be trouble. He had gone a short distance when I heard the shooting begin. I looked around and saw Louis Cox and Silas Childers both fall. After Cox fell, he made an effort to get up, and another fellow shot him through the head, then the shooting ceased. Cox was considered a dangerous man and as soon as he was killed you could hear those Indians gobbling in the brush in every direction. Silas Childers recovered, and as he was a deputy officer, he assumed full responsibility for the shooting at the trial and was acquitted of the murder.

Weer was a little town at that time located about five miles south of where the town of Broken Arrow now stands. Weer was established in the early 70's by a white man named J. E. Weer. He built a store there, later, a saw mill, grist mill and cotton gin. It was the only town in that community,

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in those days, and the next nearest town was Coweta where the Creek court of that district was located, about twelve miles east and a little south of Weer.

Eventually J. E. Weer became bankrupt and the little town of Weer passed out of existence and at the present time there is nothing on the location where Weer was situated to indicate there was ever a town located there. But during its time I know it was the toughest place I ever saw, as a shooting, scrape and killing was no unusual occurrence at Weer.

I remember a killing that took place in a side room of Weer's store, which Dr. Askew, who was the community physician, used as his office.

There was a blacksmith at Weer named John Fenton, who was considered a dangerous man. There had been ill feeling between Fenton and a farmer named Ed. Scarver and Dr. Askew for some time. The day of the killing, Fenton saw Ed. Scarver in town. He obtained a gallon of whiskey and acted friendly with Scarver and they got to drinking, took the jug of whiskey and went to Dr. Askew's office where they all were supposed to be drinking in a friendly party to heal their troubles over. During the time they were drinking someone locked

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the door, and after they had been in the room for some time, the people in the store heard the rapid fire of many pistol shots in the office of Dr. Askew in the side room, and when it ceased and the door was forced open, they found Askew and Ed Scarver both dead and Fenton not injured. There was also another man in the room, I can't recall his name, but he was a worthless sort of a fellow who loafed around Weer, drunk every time he could get the whiskey, and when he saw a fellow with some whiskey, he would follow around to get all he could to drink, and when anyone had any whiskey he generally knew about it and was on hand. So this day he saw Fenton and Scarver with the whiskey and followed them into Askew's office, and naturally he would not leave as long as the whiskey lasted; therefore he was in the room when the shooting started, and could not get out as the door was locked and the key out of the lock. When the door was opened he came out of that room like a maniac and it was like capturing a mad man trying to stop him. He was almost scared to death and he stayed sober for quite awhile thereafter. I could never imagine how he escaped being shot as many shots were fired in that room. There were bullet marks in all four walls and when the door was opened the smoke was so dense

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you could not see in the room. I heard him say afterwards that it was no trouble for him to climb the wall like a cat but he could never find a hole through which he could escape.

Another instance I remember, I was at Weer and I saw a stranger there who had a good wagon and team and two or three other horses and my attention was attracted by the fact that he was bickering with another fellow on a horse trade. He left Weer that evening before I did, and on my way home I saw the same man camped by the roadside a short distance from Weer. The next morning I was on my way back to Weer and as I approached the place where I saw the man camped, I noticed several men gathered. They saw me coming and came out to the road and stopped me and asked me if I saw the man there the evening before when I went home. I told them I did but there was no other person with him, or at least I saw no one else. They then informed me that he had been murdered. I went out to the wagon with them and there witnessed one of the most horrible sights I ever saw. The man had been murdered and placed under his wagon, and leaves and brush piled over him and set on fire, but from the general appearance, a severe wind and

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rain storm which had occurred late in the night, happened just after the crime was committed. It blew in under the wagon and extinguished the fire, though he was severely burned about his body but his face was not burned, and on that face I saw a more horrible expression of fright than I ever saw on the face of a live person. He was searched for some form of identification, but there was none found. There was about \$60.00 found hid in the front end of his wagon. The \$60.00 and his wagon and horses were consumed by the expense of a respectable burial. No clue was ever discovered that would justify an arrest for the murder, though a Creek Indian who later died in the penitentiary serving a term for another murder was suspicioned of the crime. Therefore, it was soon passed on as one of the many unsolved murders of the Indian Territory.