

Tape 1 Side B Cheyenne McGriff

...undergrad from UNL, and Cheyenne McGriff from Forest Service. We will be talking today about the homesteading, and what Cheyenne has to share with us about homesteading in the area. So let me thank you for participating in this important project that seeks to honor our nation's heritage by preserving knowledge about the history of homesteading on the great plains and the formation of the USDA Forest Service National Grasslands system. The history of homesteading and the national grasslands systems are tales that are inexorably intertwined. The goal of this project is to unearth and preserve information that demonstrates the relationship between these two stories. The primary objective of this research is to obtain local knowledge. I will now ask a series of questions meant to informally guide this interview. The interview will be limited to approximately one hour. At the conclusion of my questions, please feel free to add any additional information you have on homesteading or the national grasslands system.

[Interviewer]: (...So just start off by explaining who you are and your connection to the area.)

[CM]: Alright, like you said, my name is Cheyenne. I am originally from Wasta, South Dakota. So, right now we are in Wall, so my home is about 20 miles from here. I grew up on a ranch in Wasta that my dad currently runs with the help of his hire man and my grandmother. It's been in my family for about five generations. And, I guess that's pretty much just an overview.

[I]: (...Do you have any particular homesteading histories on the grasslands in the surrounding area, or do you have any particular knowledge?)

[CM]: I have a small bed of knowledge. What I know is that my – like I said, the ranch has been in my family for five generations. My grandma's grandparents met because of homesteading. We live west of the Cheyenne River. And, what would have been my great great grandparents, they each had their own claim on the farmland, and then they had met through having those claims. And then so this created the land that we have now.

[I]: (...Do you have any specific, or any kind of information on the area where your grandparents' grandparents homestead would have been.)

[CM]: You know, I don't have a ton of specific information. I just have bits of memories from what my family has told me. ...But they've told me stories about – because there's railroad tracks right behind – so they had stories about people jumping off the railroad tracks and trying to steal stuff from them. Or they would wake up the next morning and find people sleeping in the barn. They had told me – and I don't know exactly – but there was some hinting at, you know, trying to get the land and, like there was burning of people's land around, trying to secure specific lands. Or burning of people's homesteads or barns or anything like that. And that's just really like brief knowledge that my family has told me. ...And they said that, along the time, they had - this is probably not the great technical term but- but like, people like gypsies would come through, and they would try to steal things from them. And they would have to ward them off. I knew that there was a big flu epidemic, or something to that extent, and my family members that needed to get supplies – we live about six miles from town – and so, the man of

the house wouldn't let anybody else go to town. He would just take his pack, go to town and get all of the supplies, and ride all the way back, and never let anyone else go in because of the sickness. ...And, I'm trying to think of other little stories like that. I know like, my great grandma was born in the house that is on the land now - and then now just kind of like – then her kids were born in there. And so, its just kind of a bunch of random collections of stories I know. Sorry, I don't know much more.

[I]: (Oh no, that's perfectly fine. If there are any particular stories while we're going through this that you can think at the top of your head, just let us know.)

[2nd Interviewer]: (The thing about the burning – do you know who they were going after?)

[CM]: No, I don't. I'd have to ask my dad, because I think he might be able to know a little more.

[I]: (Is there really any other information from the homestead era that you have. It doesn't necessarily need to be a particular story that you know from your family. Anything in general?)

[CM]: You know, not particularly that I could tell you with 100% confidence.

[I]: (Okay, that's fine. ...Did people ever talk about artifact locations that they might have known, that might have been associated with Native American history?)

[CM]: No.

[I]: (Okay. ...Well the stories about the burning were really interesting. And your grandparents were living out there – what exactly were they doing for like, do you know what they were doing for living arrangements, for survival, or all of that?)

[CM]: I just know farming and ranching, like everybody else. And we've just continued to manage a ranch. Not a ton of farming, just because its not really that great. Our family hasn't had great luck with it.

[I]: (...Well then, one of the last things I can ask is: can you really think of anyone that might be willing to share more stories with us?)

[CM]: ...My uncle, which I kind of talked to you about seeing if I can get some more information from him. And then also the pieces about them meeting – how I said that they had their different farm claims and then they met – that was from my grandma. She told me that. And then my dad – I might be able to get some more information from him.

[I]: (Thank you for your time and the stories that you've been willing to share with us.)

[CM]: Yeah, thanks.