

[Farming with Oxen]

Customs - Occupational lore Interview [Folkstuff?]

Writer: Alex Hampton, [??]

[Marshall, Texas, Harrison Co. Dist. #1?]

F.C. No words: [750?]

J. Eugene Matlock, Local [?].

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[TERRITORY ASSIGNED: DISTRICT #1?]

SUBJECT: FOLK CUSTOMS FARMING WITH OXEN

[HARRISON COUNTY?]

Donald [Griffen?], a fifty-four year old Negro tenant farmer who lives nine miles southeast of Marshall, on the Elysian Fields Road, has made a crop with one yoke of oxen since 1938. Following is Griffen's own story of why he is using oxen instead of mules:

"I have been a tenant farmer of Harrison County for the past fourteen years. In 1931, like many other tenant farmers, I was heavily in debt, with my mules and most of my farm implements mortgaged. That year I made a "short" crop and was unable to "pay out". My creditors would show no mercy, and foreclosed, taking the mules and most of my tools. All I had left, in the way of work animals, was two head of one year old steers. As a boy I had gained a fair knowledge of training oxen from my father who operated an ox-drawn wagon-truck line from [?], Louisiana to [Douglass?], (now [?]) Texas. By breaking and planting

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time of 1932 I had my steers broke and trained, made yokes for them and rigged me up a wagon and enough tools to make a crop with. I have been using those oxen ever since, plowing C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 and hauling with them. I work them singly or double and find them just as serviceable for general work as mules. In fact, they give one advantage, I can plow much deeper with them than I could with mules. This year (1936) I worked fifty acres [?] of land and produced four bales of cotton, [120?] bushels of corn, [3445?] lbs of [?] hay, [1040?] lbs of [peas?], [3895?] lbs, of potatoes, 300 [bundles?] of sorghum fodder, and [1070?] [?] watermelons. I began keeping a farm record two years ago to show my friends what I could do with oxen.

[??]

[M.F. Brown?], living eight miles northwest from [Gilmor?], in the [?] Community, has the most [publicized?] yoke of oxen in Northeast Texas today. This results from the fact that he, after having been on "relief", rehabilitated himself by training and using a yoke of yearlings - (growing them into a nice yoke of oxen in three years), and thus reestablishing himself on the farm. He is doing all of his plowing and hauling with those oxen, bringing himself to where he no longer needs, nor will be accept[?] "relief" from any source. To reach his place, going from Gilmor, go west on Buffalo Street one-half mile, turn Northeast to Cross [Roads Store?] , take right hand [300 ?] around hill to Brown's place.

Roy Conley, living three miles west of [?], on the old [?] and [?] Road, uses ayoke of oxen to plow and haul with.

In [Britchett?], just across railroad tracts near the depot, 3 lives Dick Lockett who owns a farm on which his tenant John Plant, works oxen to haul and plow with. Sometimes he works them singly, plowing in his crop.

Roy R. Mackey, a neighbor of Mr. Lockett, apparently recognized as a trainer of oxen was given the job of training this yoke for Mr. Lockett, three years ago. Mr. Mackey, himself, owned a yoke of fine oxen, weighing about [1200?] lbs. each. When one of them died,

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he continued to plow the other single. Occassionally, when Mr. Lockett is doing heavy freighting, Mr. Mackey hitches his large steer in the lead of the Lockett yoke, making a lead ox of him. While doing hauling for himself, Mr. Lockett works his ox singly to a cart. [MORRIS COUNTY?]

Jess Crowder, a successful Negro farmer who lives three miles southeast of Raingerfield on State [??], and one mile (S) of the highway - (near CC Camp. Charles Jenkins place) has two yoke of oxen, which he uses for plowing and freighting. He works them singly or double. Of course these oxen are handled without the use of lines or reins only a long whip.

[?] COUNTY

Richard Kaufman, of the Holly [?] Community, also has two yoke of oxen which are used in logging and farming.

Robert Miller, a farmer living one mile East and four miles North of Pittsburg, on U.S. #271 farms with a yoke of oxen, often using them singly.

TITUS COUNTY

In the Stonewall Community is a Mr. P.H. Block who has 4 two yoke of oxen that he uses on his farm for plowing and handling. [??]

Oscar Hughes, North Ave. three blocks from Post Office, [Gilmor?], Texas, engaged in taxidermy, sometimes does tanning of hides, and often come to the market. Only recently he offered for sale home-[?] hides of "leather" to Mr. D.J. Franklin, shoe repair man of Pittsburg. It appears the Mr. Hughes learned the tannery business from his grandfather, who operated a tannery. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

By Interview:

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Donald Griffin, Marshall, Texas

Claude May Gilmor, Texas

B. C. [?] Gilmor, Texas

Field worker [md?]

Consultant [md?]