

NICHOLSON, W. J.

INTERVIEW

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September 3, 1937

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Interview with W. J. Nicholson
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On The Chisholm Trail - 1880 - 1889

Colonel D. R. Fant of Goliad, Texas, who had a large ranch west of Corpus Christi, had a contract with the United States Government to supply beef to the Indians at the Darlington and Anadarko Agencies (1885-1893). I was in charge of distributing this beef at these respective points and consequently was called 'Wo-Haw'-- Indian word for 'beef-chief.' I gathered up herds of from three to five thousand head of cattle in Texas, part of them for delivery to the government, the rest to be taken on over the Chisholm Trail to Hunnewell, Kansas. I had from 15 to 20 cowboys under me, according to the size of the herd.

The Chisholm trail was the great Texas outlet for the cattle industry--an almost straight trail north from Red River Station on the southern boundary of Oklahoma to Hunnewell, Kansas, the railroad connection on the northern boundary, a distance of 220 miles.

The Chisholm Trail began at Red River Station on the Red River - a place near where Oscar is today. There was a ferry there - the cattle swam across. Cow Creek was a sizable stream, headed near where Marlow is today, and ran into Red River just below Red River station. The Trail followed the divide north along this stream--furnishing ample grazing and water for the cattle.

We had our chuck wagons loaded with enough staple supplies to last until we could get to Cook's Station on the Washita. We made from two to five miles a day and never more than ten miles. We let the cattle graze every morning and afternoon--in that way they fattened on the way. Our first camping place was at Rush Springs owned by a man named Rush who was part Indian. We had good food of the staple variety, plenty of beef - beans and sourdough biscuits. Once our supplies accidently contained a case of canned pumpkin. Colonel rant happened to be along that time. In his characteristic way he said, 'Who the h-_____, ever heard of pumpkin pies in a cow camp!' Maybe that was the reason they tasted so good.

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North from Rush Springs across the little Washita, then to Cook's Station on the Washita was our first supply store after leaving Red River Station. Then directly north to the crossing of the South Canadian River at Silver City just east of where Kinco is today, was a supply store. At this point we were entering the 'un-assigned lands; Public Domain of the United States, which were government patrolled. We had to have a permit to pass through this land which extended from the South Canadian River north to the Cherokee Strip. An agent always went in advance to Fort Reno where permits were issued, and had our permit ready. We had to make two miles per day through this domain. (There was a rumor that Lincoln, when he was President, had set aside this domain, which later became five leading counties of Oklahoma, as a refuge for negroes.

On directly north we crossed the North Canadian where Yukon is today. All cattle bought by the government for agency delivery were turned west at this point to Fort Reno - for delivery to Darlington Agency, one and one half miles northeast. The beef was distributed to the Cheyennes and Arapahoes at this point. The delivery for the Kiowas and Comanches was then sent south on the Trail

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from Fort Reno to Fort Sill, and to the Indian Agency at Anadarko.

The herds for Kansas delivery were taken on north to the Cimarron River, crossing southeast of where Dover is today; on across the prairie north touching on the eastern boundary of where Enid is today; north to Pond Creek on the Salt Fork of the Arkansas, just south of where Jefferson is today, was another supply store. You understand all supply stores located on this trail were licensed by the Government, from Pond Creek north to the Kansas line to Hunnewell, the railroad shipping point.

(I understand there is a movement on hand among an Old Settlers' Association of Enid to place markers along the entire route of the Chisholm Trail).