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BRYANT, JOHN

SECOND INTERVIEW

7296

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An Interview with John Bryant, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

By - W. T. Holland - Field Worker.

August 25, 1937.

I came into what is now Oklahoma in 1884, landing at Tulsa.

Aunt Jane Owens was running a boarding house in Tulsa which faced the Frisco Railway on the south side of the track, west of what is Main Street now. There were no streets then, that is, the streets were not named, in fact Aunt Jane had a hog pen where Main Street now is, just south of the tracks.

My principal work for ten years after coming here was that of a cow-hand. I worked for Bluford Miller. His ranch was south of Red Fork, extending from Red Fork south to Okmulgee and the Little Deep Fork Creek.

Of course there were no fences and no way to define the boundaries as it was all open range. However, we tried to confine our cattle within these limits.

Miller handled, usually, around five thousand head of cattle per year. These cattle were of the long horned variety, bought in Texas, and generally shipped in. Their horns were so long that eighteen or twenty head constituted a car load.

Jim Tallen and Jim Willis were two of the cowhands whose names I now remember.

We led a typical cowhand's life, riding the range, sleeping in the open and eating from the chuck wagon. We had our round-up each spring, and cut out our brands,

and other ranchers cut theirs out, for as it was open range, the cattle naturally would mix up, and this round-up was for the purpose of each man getting his own cattle.

Miller always fed out quite a bunch of cattle each year. This was done at Red Fork where pens had been built for that purpose, with racks for hay, and troughs for corn. He would bring corn on the ear by the car-load and we would cut it up and feed it to the cattle. There were thousands of grass-fat cattle shipped from the pens at Red Fork each year at that time. Red Fork was the terminal of the Frisco Railway.

Red Fork had only one store when I came here. I have lived here since 1898 - thirty-nine years at the same place.

J. M. Hall owned and operated the store, which was

a large one, probably forty by sixty feet, filled with everything needed by the people.


Ranchers and farmers came in here and freighted out goods and chuck wagons came in off the ranches to stock up on bacon, coffee, sugar and beans, or whatever they needed. The Indians, too, especially the Osages and Creeks, came in great numbers and traded with Mr. Hall.

This place had a number of brushes with bad men. Bootleggers were here in abundance and I remember one night when United States Deputy Marshal Hogan came here to intercept a shipment of liquor which he understood was to be shipped in. He became weary and laid down to rest, taking off his hat and placing it on his knee. These outlaws were watching him, unknown to him, of course, and biding their time to shoot him. They found this to be an opportune time, or at least they thought so and fired at his hat, thinking it was on his head - hit his hat all right, and also his knee, wounding him pretty badly. This occurred at a place within a half mile of the place where I now live.

In the early days there was little enforcement of

what few laws we had, for the Territory was so vast that the Marshals and deputies couldn't be everywhere when needed, so the better citizens would often take matters into their own hands and mete out punishment.

A man known to be committing offenses would be visited by a committee and given warning and if this warning was not followed the culprit would be later caught and tied up and given about twenty-five lashes; for the second offense probably fifty lashes and at the third offense the punishment was sometimes very severe. This punishment helped to keep down lawlessness to some degree.

Later on I worked for Charley Clinton on his ranch west of Okmulgee. He was the father of Dr. Clinton of Tulsa and had several other children. Charley Clinton was a fine man to work for but he didn't handle as many cattle as Miller. Mr. Clinton's herd was usually around a thousand head. His ranch was named the Circle S, and this  was his brand. This ranch joined the Miller ranch on the southwest.

Bob Atkins, a Creek Indian, was a hand on the Circle S



Ranch and Mr. Clinton married Bob Atkins' sister.

Mr. Clinton as well as the other ranchers bought their cattle in Texas, and almost always Texas cattle were very thin when shipped in, which was generally in March, and many died in the shipment.

I remember Jeff Monday shipped in eighteen cars of cattle one raw March day, unloaded them here at Red Fork after night and that night there came an icy cold rain and the next morning practically all of his four or five hundred head of cattle were dead.

I have seen many stampedes of cattle. These stampedes could be caused from almost anything such as a sudden noise, the howl of a wolf, or the bark of a dog. It would take us hours to round up the cattle and quiet them after a stampede.

Travel was done by trail, and the Turkey Trail ran right through the place where my yard and house are now here in Red Fork. The Turkey Trail started here and I was familiar with it as far as Cushing. It meandered as trails do and people traveled over it by wagons or

on horseback and they drove cattle over it.

No one took the pains to remove a rock from a trail but just drove around it.

I filed on a claim about a half mile from Ingalls, near Signet in Payne County and was living there when the famous fight between the Federal officers and the Doolin boys or Doolin gang took place. In fact, I've fed these boys, the Daltons and others. They never molested me.

I knew all the early settlers of Tulsa and Red Fork.