

EPPS, CHARLES

INTERVIEW

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An Interview with Mr. Charles Epps, Waurika.

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The first time that I was in Oklahoma was back in 1869. I was working on a ranch for the Gentry outfit. Then we had to drive all our cattle to market in Kansas over cattle trails. The trail we took was the Old Chisholm Trail, in fact it was the only trail through Oklahoma.

We crossed the river at a place they called Old Spanish Fort. It took us almost all day to get across Red River. There was a creek that was pretty big then and I believe they called it the Verdigris. I was there not long ago and it seemed to be filled up and very small.

We came over a big mound or hill and I found out later that they called it the Monument Hill and it had been built by the Indians.

There was another creek called Cow Creek that was hard to cross; it was farther up the trail. We had a great big wagon just crammed full of supplies for we knew it would take a long time for us to get

over to this market.

Every time we came to a stream a bunch of us cowboys would help the team with the "chuck" wagon as we called it. This wagon went ahead and stopped to prepare for camp and we had to have a cook along too.

It was^a wild looking country and often Indians would come to us and want to eat; we could not understand them as they made signs. We would give a crowd of Indians a beef once in a while.

In those days creeks and rivers were not named but we crossed the Washita just east of the town of Chickasha, then turned a little northeast to the Canadian River. There was a cabin or half dugout there in which an old Mexican lived. He made bridles and repaired saddles and also made quilts for the cowboys when they stopped here.

That trail followed closely the ninety-eighth meridian through Oklahoma.

We saw a few buffalo scattered here and there.

The white men came on hunting parties up through here and killed buffalo just for their hides.

I was afraid of the Indians on this first trip but afterward they did not frighten me at all.

The man who picked the route for the trail was a good leader. This trail led over the higher ground and stayed out of draws and canyons. I imagine early cattle drivers kept out of draws and canyons in order to keep from being attacked by the Indians.

By keeping out in open country the cattle drivers could see if the Indians were coming after them.
