

WATERS, B. W. (Wick) INTERVIEW 4349

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Eunice M. Mayer.

This report made on (date) June 9, 1937

1. Name B. W. (Wick) Waters.

2. Post Office Address Mangum, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 201 Kentucky.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December. Day 17 Year 1861.

5. Place of birth Denton County, Texas.

6. Name of Father Ben Waters Place of birth Georgia.

Other information about father Great cattleman.

7. Name of Mother Dena Adams Place of birth Indiana.

Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and history of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 8.

Eunice M. Mayer,
Field Worker.

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An Interview With B. W. (Wick)
Waters, Mangum, Oklahoma.

The disastrous flood of 1891 which swept six feet of water into his home, leaving it isolated in a lake of water two miles in width, was one of the thrilling early day experiences of B. W. (Wick) Waters, who first came to old Greer County in 1886.

With eight neighborhood young men Mr. Waters came to old Greer County from Young County, Texas. The nine men had several thousand head of cattle and with these cattle, they planned to open a small ranch.

A half mile below the mouth of Horse Branch, they built a crude one-room dugout and turned their horses loose to wander the pastures of Horse Branch. The outfit drove the last herd of cattle into the section in November in 1886.

Two of the nine, Jim Larrimore and George Reynolds, were employees, but the remaining seven each had separate outfits. Mr. Waters and his brother, Jack, had the J. H. Diamond outfit; Z. J. and P. C. Harmonson branded J. H. C. Charley Neals was the H. Cross H. outfit; Jack Harmonson, the 3. H. and Laut Griffen, the T. M. T.

As soon as the last herd of cattle was driven in early November, five of the owners returned to

their homes in Texas leaving Mr. Waters and his brother and two cow punchers to ride the line during the winter months.

While by 1896 a good many settlers had arrived in scattered sections of Greer County, the Horse Branch vicinity was sparsely habitated. Fox Chambers and George Mobley had a camp at the mouth of the branch. There was not a woman on Horse Branch.

A few lived at Frazer, the nearest postoffice, and by that time several families had settled at Mangum. During the winter Mr. Waters came to Mangum a few times, but most trading was done at Quanah and Vernon.

The dugout in which the four resided during the winter was typically of the one-room design. The furniture consisted of a crudely constructed fireplace and some bedding. The kitchen utensils were a skillet and lid, a frying pan and a tea kettle.

With the lumber bushes found on the branch, the men constructed beds which hung down from the dugout ceiling. Wood was plentiful, and the fire place which consisted of a hole cut in the wall, served as a cook stove and a heater.

The winter was a pretty cold one, but the men rode the line every day.

A heavy snow fell before Christmas covering Horse Branch with a coating of ice. Visitors were few and during the winter

the men never saw an Indian. They had no trouble of any kind.

Cattlemen generally made no effort to keep their stock within range boundaries after Christmas and the advent of cold weather. Cattle were permitted to roam over the range and were often found as far south as the Red and Pease Rivers at the beginning of the spring roundup.

At the beginning of the spring roundup about May 1, riders with the cow camps were sent south to cut the J.H. Diamond brand, belonging to the Waters brothers. They were assisted by cattle men along the line, and some times as many as six chuck wagons would be represented at one roundup.

Another group of hands would be dispatched to the Altus territory to cut out stray cattle, and others would be sent to Jaybuckle, Lake Creek, Navajo and Turkey Creek; probably two weeks would be required for each trip and finally the "drifts", as the strays were called, would be assembled for the general roundup.

About June 15, the camp would begin another roundup, and brand all calves with the J. H. Diamond mark. Beginning July 15, a third roundup was made and calves for use in the chuck wagon were cut out and corraled. Then the herds were driven up the trail to Woodward and shipped to

Kansas City. The route was through Cheyenne, across the Canadian River, through the "hackberry" country and to Woodward.

The steers being taken to market were never driven over ten or twelve miles a day. Some times the herd was simply permitted to graze its way in the direction of the shipping point, since forcing the cattle to move made them in a bad condition on arrival.

The next spring the men threw the outfit in with another one and moved to Nine Miles Springs, which is located nine miles this side of Doan's store. Mr. Waters stayed there for three winters.

In the meantime M. H. Kellum and family of Waco, Texas, with O. T. S. cattle, joined the outfit. Mr. Waters fell in love with Mr. Kellum's daughter and on December 19, 1889, he was married to Miss Pheobe Kellum.

That year Mr. Kellum constructed a home and the newly-weds lived with him. In 1890 Mr. and Mrs. Waters built a two-room home on Turkey Creek, four miles southwest of Duke. The dwelling consisted of one-room below the ground and the second above.

It was in this dwelling that the disastrous flood struck in June of 1891. "Absolutely the whole earth looked as if it was covered with water", Mr. Waters described it. Heavy rains had been falling early in the night and by

twelve o'clock the headrise struck. The bottom of the house was covered with water. It ran six or seven feet against the side of the house. The night was as dark as pitch and between flashes of lightning nothing but solid water could be seen. It appeared to be a mile wide on each side.

Mr. Waters and his wife remained in the upper room through the night and until two o'clock the next afternoon before rescuers carried them safely to dry land. Three persons had lost their lives a short distance below their home. It was the worst flood in the Creek's history.

The next year Mr. and Mrs. Waters built their home farther back from the creek.

A new kind of difficulty brought them worry, however. A cyclone, late in the night, struck with sudden swiftness; luckily their home escaped the fury of the blast. But Mr. Kellum's home, nearest them, was moved fifty feet. Several homes in the vicinity were demolished. This time four lives were lost.

As the years passed the group of men located in the cattle business gradually sold out. In 1896, with Mr. Kellum, Mr. Waters moved to the Cheyenne territory where he remained ten years. Upon his return, Mangum had grown into a thriving city.

Shortly later, with Mr. Kellum, he constructed a rock building on the northwest corner of the courthouse square, the present location of Richard's Drug Store. It was one of the first modern buildings in Mangum.

Since his return from the Cheyenne territory to Greer County in 1906, Mr. Waters has made Mangum his home.