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INDEX CARDS:

Chisholm Trail /  
Doan's Store  
Fort Cobb  
Amos Chapman  
Mud Creek  
Anadarko

FIELD WORKER LINNAEUS B. RANCK  
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INTERVIEW WITH JOHN W. WHITE, ET.AL.,  
Shattuck, Oklahoma

#### THE CHISHOLM TRAIL

Authors of historical information have not always agreed on certain data of their subject matter and in the case of the famous Chisholm Trail it is found they are not in agreement as to the exact route of this Trail across Oklahoma or at what point on the Red River it crossed.

In this connection should not the old cowpunchers who drove many herds over the Chisholm Trail and over the other once great cattle trails extending from the heart of the Texas cattle country north be regarded as authorities, too, as to the respective routes of these old cattle trails. They rode these trails before the historians ever wrote about them. They made the great cattle trails from Texas to points in Kansas. Therefore, it seems but logical that their word and recollections as to the routes of these trails deserve equal credence with the historians' statements on the same subject.

2

Thoburn and Holcomb in their History of Oklahoma say that "In the spring of 1865, Jesse Chisholm laid out a trail from the present site of Wichita, Kansas, to the Wichita-Caddo Agency, where Anadarko is now located." Accordingly, this was the original Chisholm Trail. And we can readily perceive that its course from Wichita into Oklahoma was southwest, more south, however, than west. Since Jesse Chisholm died in March 1868, just three years after he established the trail bearing his name, it is only logical to conclude that he had little or nothing to do with laying out the trail that extended on south from the Wichita-Caddo Agency and into Texas. Therefore, a fairly sound inference could be that the cattlemen themselves established the southern end or lap of what became known as the Chisholm Trail, that portion of it extending south into Texas from the Wichita-Caddo Indian Agency.

In a History of Oklahoma by Buchanan and Dale it is stated that the very large part of the gigantic cattle movement from Texas north to points in Kansas was over a route

3

through western Oklahoma and "far to the west of the lands of the Five Civilized Tribes". The same history says that there became four great trails leading across what is now the State of Oklahoma and the farthest west of these trails crossed Red River at Doan's Store; and that next east of these four trails was the Chisholm Trail etc. In part these authors corroborate what I was told by two oldtimers of this section, Tom Taylor and John W. White.

Hulbert in his History of the United States gives a map of these famous old pathways of the trail drivers and the one he designates as the Chisholm Trail crossed Red River at a point about where Doan's Store used to be and winds east of north through what is now Oklahoma.

However this all may be, I took occasion to question Mr. White and Mr. Taylor particularly concerning the route of the Chisholm Trail. Both of these old fellows were with many a herd of cattle on these old trails and claim to remember them well. They contend that the Chisholm Trail, as it was known during the days of the big cattle drives north from Texas, was the one that crossed Red River at Doan's Store. According to White's story it

crossed the Washita at a point about where Fort Cobb is now located and there it angled northwest and was known as the west prong of the Chisholm Trail. In its northern course it crossed the South Canadian River about the site of Texas old Trail and near the present site of Camargo. It crossed Wolf Creek about half way between the towns of Gage and Fargo. And up on Otter Creek, some eight miles southwest of the present town of May, Oklahoma, there remains to this day a very plain trace of this once great cattle trail. It was pointed out to me many years ago as such and at that time about thirty years ago, it was plainly evident. Mr. White says that what was known in the early day as the east prong of the Chisholm Trail angled northeast from where he claims the main Trail crossed the Washita River about where Fort Cobb now is.

Both White and Taylor claim that the majority of all the cattle driven north out of Texas crossed Red River at Doan's Store. They said that herds over the trails farther east and through the country of the Five Civilized Tribes

had constant trouble with those Indians even though they had long since abandoned hostilities toward the white men.

At Doan's Crossing on Red River is where Mr. White first met the intrepid scout, Amos Chapman. The latter was stationed at Doan's Store by the United States Government serving as one of the regular group of scouts maintained there to pilot each trail herd through the Indian country. White claims to have "bunked" with Chapman many nights on the trail and one anecdote he tells of Chapman is that the entire outfit became infested with body lice every trip Amos Chapman made with them.

Digressing from the main subject, Amos Chapman was a "squaw man", having married a Cheyenne woman I think, either a Cheyenne or Arapaho. Chapman was a real and genuine old frontiersman, and an outstanding and unique pioneer of Oklahoma. Many years of the latter part of his life he spent on his large ranch on the North Canadian River north of Seiling. A son of his, Frank by name, I think, was still living in the Seiling vicinity of late years.

6

Some have claimed that the Chisholm Trail crossed Red River at the mouth of Mud Creek. If this were true the Trail was routed over somewhat of a detour, as we would say today. Mud Creek converges with the Red River well to the center of Oklahoma's southern boundary in what is now Love County. If, as claimed by some, the Chisholm Trail crossed Red River at the mouth of Mud Creek, it necessarily followed that from this crossing on Red River it coursed directly northwest in order to connect with the original Chisholm Trail in the locality of Anadarko and Fort Cobb on the Asanita River. Such a route would seem improbable and could it not be possible, yes probable, that it was one of the other once great trails that crossed Red River at the mouth of Mud Creek. A trail crossing at this point on Red River would fit in with the route of the old Shawnee Trail better than with the Chisholm Trail.

At any rate, Mr. White and Mr. Taylor, both old timers and men who were over the great cattle trails year after year, contend that the old trail crossing on Red River

WHITE, JOHN W. ET.AL. INTERVIEW.

8485

7

at Doan's Store was to them during those days always known as the Chisholm Trail. They say, too, that during the latter years of the great cattle moving period from Texas most of the herds crossed at Doan's Store on Red River.