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LIFE OF A COWBOY ON THE CHISHOLM TRAIL

Charles Oman was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1864. When a boy of fourteen he sauntered down to the shipping docks, and there met a man who had bought two passports for North America. As the time drew near for the ship to sail one of the men decided not to go but didn't know what to do about his passport, so I spoke up and said I would go to America, so he fixed me up and we boarded a boat named White Star.

We were thirteen days at sea before we landed in New York and after landing we could not unload as the immigrant traffic was so congested they had to sail up to Philadelphia where they unloaded and went through all the government requirements of an immigrant, including vaccinating for the smallpox, which took about five days.

I boarded a train in Philadelphia for Texas but I don't remember the name of the railroad. I think I only made one change.

I landed in Round Rock, Texas, April 10, 1878. I got work on a farm for two years and started breaking sod with a yoke of oxen.

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In the spring of 1880 I went up in northwest Texas, known as the Panhandle. I stopped several days at a Stage Stand and Postoffice, called Kirkland. While there I met the foreman of a ranch that belonged to the Forsythe Land and Cattle Company. He asked me if I would like to go to work on a ranch. I told him I came up here for that purpose, so we closed a deal at \$15.00 per month, board and bunk. We went out and got in the chuck wagon which was full of food supplies, and drove to the ranch.

The next morning the foreman gave me the brand of the horses and cattle along with some instructions and started me riding the range. The brand was OX on the left side.

In the spring of 1884 we started rounding up and branding all the calves and cutting out all four and five year old steers which were thirty-six hundred. We drove north on the Chisholm Trail across Red River and up through the Cherokee Strip and delivered them to the Turkey Track Ranch near the mouth of the Cimarron River. We stayed there about three months cancelling the OX brand and rebranding with the Turkey Track brand.

One day about noon the Dalton outlaws rode up to the ranch, dismounted and leaned their winchesters against the ranch house and took their horses to the corral, undaddled

and fed their horses. The foreman asked them in to dinner, which they accepted. During the conversation at the table Emmet Dalton told the foreman there were three U. S. Marshals following them but were about three hours behind and that when they arrived to tell them if they wanted them they would be at the Robbers Roost in Bear Canyon.

In a few hours the marshals rode up and asked if they had seen anything of the Dalton boys. The foreman said, "Yes they took dinner here and left a message for you." He then delivered the message. The marshals said they knew where their hide out was and headed their horses that way. The next day the marshals passed back through but did not have any of the Dalton boys with them.

I asked the foreman why didn't we arrest the Daltons while their guns were leaned against the house and we all had guns on our hips. The foreman said, "Well, they have not bothered anything on this ranch and they are welcome here as long as they don't bother us, and it is up to the marshals to catch them."

They never bothered ranches as they were out for big hauls such as banks and U. S. mail trains.

After the branding was over we rode back to the ranch

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in Texas. We passed through what is now Oklahoma City, but at that time there was only the section house on the Santa Fe Railroad. We cut across the country from Oklahoma City to the north fork of the Canadian River, then went up the river to the Chickasaw Trail crossing. From there on we went down on the South Canadian and crossed near a trading post called Silver City, which consisted of one general merchandise store and postoffice.

The streams were bank full and one of the government "pay wagons" had been camped there several days. When we rode up we asked if we could help them cross. They said they would appreciate it. They were past due in snadarko with the pay roll to pay off some Indians.

We cut some dry poles which we tied under the pay wagon with ropes. Two of the boys fastened their ropes to the wagon tongue in front of the wagon team and started the lead in swimming our horses. The wagon floated across without any mishaps. Some of the other boys did our chuck wagon the same way. We had about ninty head of saddle horses to swim the river.

Murphy Johnson was a noted Chickasaw Indian in that neighborhood. He had a large ranch near the Silver City

crossing and was a large horse and cattle breeder.

- In the spring of the year we would leave Texas with three trail herds. There were about three thousand cattle in each herd. We used nine cowboys, a cook on the chuck wagon and a horse wrangler. The duties of a horse wrangler are to get up first in the morning, round up all the horses that are to be ridden that day and feed them.

The chuck wagon is a covered wagon with a large box in the back end of the wagon shaped something like a piano box, which is used the same as a kitchen cabinet in the home. The other food is kept in cans and boxes in the wagon. The cook is notified about where to stop to prepare a meal, generally near a running stream or spring in the shade of trees; but very often they have to eat their meals on the prairie in the hot sun. They eat out of tin plates and tin cups, but have plenty to eat. When they are camped at one place for several days they butcher a fat calf or a deer to have fresh meat.

In the spring of the year we would leave Texas with three trail herds which averaged about three thousand to each herd. The first herd crossed the Red River at the regular Chisholm Crossing, which was northeast of Henryetta, Texas. From there we drove through Chickasaw Nation, where we crossed the Canadian River. Going north we would hold the first herd and

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graze until the second arrived, and had to graze according to our government permit for grazing while passing across Indian Reservations.

After the third herd showed up we bunched the three herds and cut out all the steers, which were driven and sold to the Turkey Track Ranch. The rest of the herds, the cows and calves, were bought up by ranchers from western Kansas and Colorado.

After the cattle were delivered we headed back for Texas.

Mr. Forsythe leased a large tract of land through an Indian Agency in western Oklahoma, during President Cleveland's administration, in 1888. This lease was the west side of the Caddo and Wichita Indian reservation. There they established a ranch on Cobb Creek, near Fort Cobb.

In the second year the President ordered all non-citizens to vacate the grazing land. When we received the order to move it was late in the fall and we had no place to move to.

Mr. Forsythe made a deal with a Doctor Sturm, a citizen of the Caddo Reservation, by transferring a blind title over to Mr. Forsyth and getting a permit from the Indian Agent to give the cowboys two weeks to gather up their horses. We

carried our permits and sometimes we would be stopped by Indian police and questioned. At such times we presented our passes. Most of the policemen could not read, but were satisfied when they saw the government seal, and in this way we were able to stay there eighteen months. While we were here I witnessed my first and last attempted war dance by the Comanches, Kiowas, Apaches, Cheyennes, and Arapaho Indians. Such dances were prohibited by the government.

They were to have held this dance northwest of Fort Cobb, in a bend of the Washita River. They had everything complete except a buffalo head to be placed on top of the medicine pole. They found out they could get a buffalo head from Charlie Goodnight near Clarendon, Texas, for eight hundred dollars. This sum of money was made up and an Indian was sent for the head. The Indian agent got the news and ordered Charlie Goodnight not to make the sale. This made the Indians mad, so they went to the Indian agent at Anadarko and told him they were going to dance or fight. The commanding general was called from Fort Sill by the Indian agent of Anadarko.

The chiefs of each tribe were at the Indian agent's office demanding that they be given food or they would fight. Just at the time the Commanding General stepped in and told

them to disperse and go to their homes or he would call out the soldiers and confiscate all their belongings and make them prisoners the rest of their lives. The next morning at nine o'clock there wasn't anything left at the dance ground but the medicine pole, which was decorated with shells, tin cans, bows, arrows, ropes, bridles, spurs, and many other trinkets, which they had left behind. This was about the middle of July, 1890, and was the last war dance ever attempted by the Indians.

In 1890 we moved down the Washita River to the Chickasaw Nation, about where the town of Chickasha is today.

In 1882 Mr. Forsyth transferred us to Muskogee and started a ranch about three miles northwest of Oktaha.

From that time on I have lived and reared a family in this part of the country and I now live here in Muskogee. I am seventy-three years of age.

Sherwood.