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Interview with

Mr. W. A. Hancock

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By H.L. Ramage Field worker.

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→ Tomb's office, 4th + wall street

Mr. W.A. Hancock was born April 28th, 1866 in Tate county, Mississippi. Come from S anatovia , Mississippi, to Pryor, Oklahoma September 1891. My brother come to Pryor in 1889 two years later he wrote for me to come which I did.

After arriving at P ryor I went into the cattle business. A ll the cattlemen held a round up in June of each year. We would meet at the Nevins Ferry at the mouth of Grand river and plain our round up, would have three to four camp wagons, sending one up Grand river on east side and one on the west side and one up Virdegris river, each wagon would have forty to fifty cow boys, each out-fit would round up all brands, after they gathered all the cattle the cow boys would drive them to a selected spot and then out each brand to its self. The round up would amount to from five to thirty thousand head of cattle for each owner. The cattle country covered the territory, from Grand river to the Osage Nation and from the Arikansaw river to the Kansas line. The whole Cherokee strip was cattle country , other than cattle, Mercantile was the only business at that time.

Most of the cattle ~~were~~ shipped to this point, were from Texas, in March or A pril each owner had a range, there were no fences, cow boys rode the dividing lines and kept the cattle on their own range. All cattle from Texas would start feeding and drifting south, never had any trouble with them drifting north at all.

I would go to Texas in the fall of the year and buy cattle, bought two year olds, shipped them to Pryor then feed and graze them until they were four years old, then ship them to the market at St. Louis and Kansas City.

The cattle men from Texas began coming in pretty fast and was <sup>137</sup> not giving the Indians a fair deal and in 1890 the Cherokee council at the Capitol at Tahlequah passed a law that no one except a citizen could run cattle or have a private business in the Cherokee Nation. There were no taxes payed in the Cherokee Nation.

In 1832 the United States Government bought the Cherokee out in Gorgia for a million dollars and moved them to what was later the Cherokee Nation.

The Chief, assistant Chief and other officials were payed by and from the interest payed by the Government on the debt owed the Cherokee people. In the Cherokee Nation there were nine districts, which are now known as Counties.

White men was not citizens of the Cherokee Nation and could not vote or do private business in his own name, although there were some that handled cattle in other persons name.

If a white man married a Cherokee woman, he then became an adopted citizen. He would then have equal right and could then vote and go into business for himself.

There were no such a thing as ballots in those days, when an election was held, they had what was called the tally, when voting you sign your name on the tally, and the voting was over.

The Cherokee Indians were honest people, for an example. When the Government bought the strip in 1893, there was six merchants, C.Haden being one of them and from the time of the sale and until the the payment, Mr. Haden had \$115,000 credit on the books. When the Indians were payed Mr. Haden collected all but \$700. and that was later payed. Each one of the family drew \$267.00 when the sale was made each man and boys first purchase was a new saddle, winchester and

six-shooter. The saddles were never taken into the store, when the merchant received them he would open the shipment sell them before he had time to place them in stock. For this credit they did not sign notes or any thing, the merchant would just put the names down in a book also the childrens name.

In 1893 Henry Starr and two of the Chaney boys come to Chateau to rob the 900'0 lock north bound passinger train , but arrived just as the train was leaving the station. They then held up the station agent and four passengers that got off the train , getting \$180.00 from these victoms. They, then come to C. Haden's store where I was employed and which did some banking for the cattle men and we usually had five or six thousand dollars in the safe, but the day before I had taken the money to Vinita and placed it in the bank, in the hold up they only got \$390.00. Henry asked where the hell is the money and I told him that I had taken it to Vinita the day before. A s a rule rule about the time of night the hold-up occured, there were some of the town boys that would come to the store and eat oysters, I was going toward the front door as the out laws approached, thinking them to be the town boys, I was going to unlock and let them in, as I come to the door, having the key in my hand I pointed ~~it~~ at them, it was almost dark in side and Henry Starr thought it was a gun, and smashed one of the front windows in with his winchesger as he did this I grabed the gun and about that time one of the Chaney boys smashed another window, getting the drop on me with a six-shooter, just as he did that some of the town boys <sup>who was near the store</sup> warned me throw up my hands and I did it promptly.

The following week Henry Starr held up a Katy passenger train at Fryor, this time having seven in his gang. They went through the

train robbing each passenger, no one was injured in any way.

My parents was born in Mississippi, my father was born at Ohulahoma, Mississippi in 1830. He was a farmer, owned a plantation which, consisted of a section and quarter of land and owned forty slaves, our mother died (date of death, unknown) when we were small. One of the old slaves we called mama raised us, she was set free in 1848, and died in 1870, never left home after being freed.

We only bought grocery supplies twice a year, in December again in April. It taken three to four days to make the trip, we would take four or five bales of cotton, the money would go for supplies, the groceries which, consisted of six barrels of flour a one barrel of sugar one barrel syrup one barrel of coal-oil, these were the main items. Before we made the trip to town for supplies the sheep would be sheared and the wool taken in and shipped to Bowling Green, Ky. and there made into cloth, the mills would take part of the wool instead of cash for the work.

Father joined the Confederate Army in 1862. He lost his right arm in the battle at Gettysburg, going two days with out any medical aid. He was later taken prisoner and taken to Andersonville Prison. When the war was over he came home and continued farming until his death December 24th, 1904.

Mother, whos maiden name was Mary Ann Hundley, born in 1834 and died in 1913.