

HERRADON, QUINTUS

INTERVIEW

#12518

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Hazel B. Greene,  
Journalist,  
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An Interview With Quintus  
Herndon, on driving cattle  
through and settling in the  
Indian Territory in the 1880's.  
Hugo, Oklahoma.

I was born May 4, 1861, near Wilton, Arkansas; my first wife, Rosa Pebworth, a quarter-blood Choctaw Indian, was born in 1871 and died in 1912. I was about eighteen years old when I left home and went to U'tima-Thu'e, Arkansas, in 1879. I stayed there and worked for Mr. Dollarhide five years. He had a store, gin, plantation and lots of stock right there on the Arkansas-Indian Territory line. He also had the contract to carry the mail from U'tima-Thu'e to Atoka, Indian Territory. He employed boys to carry it in relays. They boarded along the route and rode Mr. Dollarhide's ponies. These boys were supposed, of course, to keep their board and feed bills paid but Mr. Dollarhide was responsible for them, or at least, he felt that he was. One boy would carry the mail as far as he could easily in one day and return, then another would carry it on from there the same way. So he had about four boys between U'tima-Thu'e and Atoka.

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Once some of the boys got behind with their board bills, and Mr. Dollarhide told me to go over the route, pay the bills, and get some new carriers. I had to take the mail, too, this time. I would ride until I would meet a boy and we would exchange ponies and so on until I had reached the end of the route, at Atoka. I spent a night at Lukfata, one at Doaksville and one at Goodland Post Office, and one seven miles west of Boggy, with Jim Jerry. I got into Atoka on Sunday morning, nearly a day late, owing to high water and snow. It was in February, and there was snow on the ground almost all of the way. That postmaster at Atoka blessed me out for coming in there on Sunday and said he had a mind not to give me the mail but he threw the mail bags out at me anyway.

There was something wrong with the regular carrier pony, so I had to ride a mule. The post office was right beside the railroad tracks and that old mule just refused to cross the tracks. I turned him around and backed him across and on the quarter of a mile or more to the top of the hill on the route. When we got to the top of the hill, I tied the mail sacks on securely and got a club.

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I ran and trotted and beat that mule along the entire twelve miles to Jim Jerry's place where I left him and gave Jim \$1.00 to loan me a pony to carry the mail on to Nelson, a distance of seventeen miles. He was a pretty little sleek, grass-fed pony and was just about worn out by the time I had gone ten miles. I had to pet and coax him along and we got to Colonel Nelson's at the Nelson Post Office in the night away late. I am not sure that Colonel Nelson was postmaster there but I am sure he had a pretty good store there and a nice home. The next night with a fresh horse, I made it to Wheelock, the next day to Jeff Gardner's at Eagletown. Gardner was postmaster at Eagletown. The river was up, so I was late getting home next day. There was no ferry at that time so I had to wait for the water to run down. I got home and made a vow then and there that if the Lord would forgive me for that trip I would never again ride with another bag. I had had so much trouble and the trip took about two weeks. E. W. Tims was postmaster at Doaksville, I believe.

This country has changed so much. I know that in 1883 I bought a bunch of cattle, two hundred and twenty-five head I believe, at Arkadelphia, and drove them from

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there to a place close to Stillwater, a distance of perhaps four hundred miles, and we crossed only one railroad on the trip. That was the M. K. & T. at Atoka. After I got up there I hired out to a rancher and stayed there several months and rode a line fence. I rode thirty miles each day. I had a cabin in which to camp all the time.

But back to my drive up there. We drove the cattle by Ultima-Thule, thence to Doakville, then across Miami River at Rock Chimney Crossing, thence to the Jack McCurtain place a little southeast of Nelson. We stopped there and stayed a week, letting the cattle graze and rest up. We just camped and rested up, too. Jack McCurtain had a store there on his ranch and that was something that we hated to leave because stores were few and far between and when we did get to one, we could get supplies that we usually did not carry along on the trail. Then, too, we would renew our tobacco supply at each store. They didn't call those places ranches in those days, it was just Jack's, or Bill's or So and So's place. There were three of the McCurtain brothers, and everyone of the them was Governor of the Choctaw Nation at a different time.

We left Arkadelphia, Arkansas, in May. We were on the road a couple of months or more with that bunch of

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cattle. We just grazed them along and took our own good time about it. There were no fences to hinder our progress and if we came to a stream that was on a rise we simply camped and grazed the cattle there until the water ran down.

I made two trips to Kansas with cattle. The first one was in 1881. I was at Arkansas City, Kansas, when news of the assassination of President Garfield was brought there.

Where the Chisholm Trail crossed the Cimarron River is the place where I first saw blanket Indians. They were Cheyennes, evidently going to the Agency for supplies. A big bunch of them with wagons and teams and on horseback were just traveling across the prairies, not pretending to keep in a road or trail. We didn't get near them because I was afraid of them. A few days later when we had lost some cattle and another fellow and I were sent out to hunt for them; we emerged from a thicket on a hill and saw a big bunch of those blanket Indians down there in the valley barbecuing beeves, but we didn't go over near them or ask them any questions. I felt like our quest was at an end, so we returned to camp. I was glad when I got back to the Choctaw Nation; I felt at home here.

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I never heard any of those Cheyenne or Comanche Indians do anything but grunt and make signs. I never heard them talk. I don't believe they have a written language. The Cherokees have an alphabet all their own. The Choctaw language has been printed and several "Definers" have been printed, among which is the one written by Cyrus Kingdon which was considered one of the best. Judge Ben Watson at Tukfata wrote one, too, which was considered a good one. Judge Watson was a white man who came to the Indian Territory and married a full-blood Choctaw woman and became a leader among the Indians. He came here in 1872. He ran a store, raised stock and acted as an attorney for the Indians until he became a District Judge.

My first wife was one-quarter Choctaw Indian, Rosa Pebworth. I believe that that Mrs. Belle Airington, at Broken Bow, is the grandmother of my first wife. Her mother was an Airington. I mean the Indian Belle Airington who is a hundred and seven years old.

In 1887 we came right here, just about a hundred yards from here just about four miles southeast of the present town of Garvin and with Bill Stanley and his wife camped

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here in the woods and began making our homes. It was to us the prettiest country in the world. There was an old log house not far away that had been built fifty years before we came along. It was made of hewn red oak logs. I bought the logs for \$5.00 and cleared a place to set them up, and began building our mansion. I hauled flooring and lumber for doors and window shutters eighteen miles. We were contented in that house, but our rapidly growing family seemed to need a larger one, so we built the one I live in now, in 1895. The old one is still standing out there on the hill in fair condition, in spite of its hundred years of use. People live in it now.

I hauled the lumber for this house from Dr. Ben Denison's mill at Bokhoma, twenty-three miles and a two days' trip.

Soon after we settled on this place I built the school house and we called it Forest Hill school and church and cemetery. They have built a fine school house and call it Herndon near Forest Hill. I was school trustee here for twenty-two years. A thankless task. I have resided here most of the time for fifty years. It has always been home, even during the few years that I operated



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and owned stores at Kullituklo and Lukfata; I still considered this place my home.

The first trip I made to Wheelock was in '88'. Jimmy Gardner had a store there and he resided a mile east of there at the old Mickale LeFlore place where LeFlore had built a good home. When LeFlore lived there he had a little store and a horse gin, the kind that was worked by a horse hitched to a lever which went around and around. The press was a big wooden screw.

When the Civil War broke out the school at Wheelock was headed by a fellow by the name of Edwards, who was a Northern man and he got away as quickly as possible. Then he returned about 1883 and probably was the one who promoted the rebuilding and resuming of the Mission School. At any rate a decision was made to re-build the buildings that had fallen into decay; some of them had been burned, so Tobe Wright and John Cooper put up a sawmill on Clover Creek, expressly to furnish lumber for those buildings. The old stone walls of the church were standing, tho the roof was gone, windows broken out, the floors were rotted away, bushes, briars and even one big tree had grown up within the walls. But they were all cleaned out and the

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church rebuilt. There was still one old residence there and west of there, about a mile and half was the Jerry Gardner place, right where Millerton is now; a big double log house.

The nucleus, I guess you might call it, of the present administration building was built and the school was opened again in about 1884. The present administration building is built around the original one that was built about 1883.

The Reverend Mr. Edwards married my first wife and me, under the Choctaw law. In those days it was the law to have twelve signers to a petition for a marriage license. Then the petition was sent to the District Clerk who happened to be Ben Watkins then at Lukfata. Later, he was District Judge and held court at Alikchi. A marriage license cost \$100.00 but one could pay for it in county scrip and buy that at from 50 to 75 cents on the dollar.

I had an interest in a store at Kullituklo for twelve years, and lived there four years. I have been prosperous; I was second Vice-president of the First National Bank of Idabel for years. I also had stock in the bank at Haworth. I am broke now. My wife and I are receiving old age assistance.