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FIELD WORKER-----LENA M. RUSHING

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Merrimac, Oklahoma

I came to Oklahoma from Kansas when I was about thirteen or fourteen, and I started in cowpunching soon after I landed. After working for various ranches for several years, I joined up with the 101 ranch. Mr. Miller, who owned the ranch, had been given one hundred and one thousand acres by the Indians of the Ponca tribe. He in return was to look after their tribal affairs and business. Three of his brothers were also on the ranch.

The Indian reservations then had no fences; they were a wide open cattle range. We herded our cattle over a large area. In the winter when a cow had a calf, we had to pick up the calf and take it back to the ranch. We always simply slung them over the horse's neck, and let them ride that way.

In the late spring we took the cattle to market. Our trail took us up west of Ponca City until we hit the Chisholm Trail around Kingfisher, and traveling on to Hutchinson, Kansas. Sometimes we went as far as Fort Dodge. It was often called the toughest cow-town in the middle west.

We never hurried the cattle; they grazed along toward our

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destination, and we saw to it that they stayed together, and kept stayed together, and kept moving in the right direction. Back of the herd came the chuck wagon. Whenever we crossed a river where there wasn't any ford, we never had any trouble in making the cattle swim across. The trouble lay in getting the chuck wagon across. We had to make a raft by tying logs together. Then we attached a rope to it, and threw the other end across the river. After doing that, the chuck wagon was driven onto the raft, and pulled across by the rope.

At night we bedded the cattle by circling the herd on our horses. After awhile one lay down, and that seemed to be a signal for the rest, because within five or ten minutes the whole herd was settled.

There was quite a bit of danger in a stampede since cattle are easily exciteable, so two watches were kept during the night. It always took longer to fix breakfast and eat it than it did for the cattle to get ready to start. This necessitated the morning shift starting the cattle as soon as they were awake at early dawn, then coming back to eat after being relieved by a fresh crew.

We, of course, staked our horses at night, and some of the cowboys had four to six "stringers"

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These horses were called this only because they were led in a string behind the saddle horse. The cowboys used these stringers as gambling stakes often, but their main purpose in being taken was to sell in the bigger markets.

A very small thing was apt to stampede the cattle. A pistol shot or some unusual sound quite frequently did. If you were in the path of the herd, the best thing for you to do was to get out of the way. The quickest and best method of stopping the stampede was to ride around the outside of the herd shooting. For some unknown reason that always stopped them.

It was east times in those days. We never ran short of anything to eat. If the supply ran low, all we had to do was to go out and kill another beef.

The fall round-up was interesting to an outsider, but for the cow-hand it was hard labor. We singled out all the cattle belonging to our ranch which had no brands in order to brand them. Each one had to be tied down so we could hold him, then the red-hot branding iron applied. Some of the cattle got so mad that they gave a merry chase for many a mile, and sometimes charged the first thing they saw, whether it was man or beast. Others became so frightened that they passed out of the picture.

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Horse-racing was one of the main sports of the cowboys, and a lot of betting took place. It took the form mostly of one cowboy's betting another that his horse could outrun the other's. Guns, boots, saddles, hats, and frequently the horses themselves were put up.

There were many Indians at all times around the trading posts, and my contact with them was mostly through the posts. The 101 Ranch was one of their trading centers.

Salt Fork was a dangerous and tricky river. It didn't look like it would amount to anything, but at the least shower it would overflow its banks.