

HUNTER, JOHN W.

INTERVIEW

12721

42

HUNTER, JOHN W.

INTERVIEW.

12721

Alene D. McDowell
Investigator
November 23, 1937

Interview with Colonel John W. Hunter
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

I was born May 18, 1859, in Hancock County,
Illinois.

My father, Colonel Thomas Hunter, was born in Loudon County, Virginia, in 1823; died at Blackwell, Oklahoma; and is buried in Sumner County, Kansas. He was of Scotch and English descent. His father died a few weeks prior to his birth and his mother died when he was six years old. He made his home with a family in Pennsylvania until he was fifteen, then came to Ohio and settled at Cincinnati. He was on the first fire department in Cincinnati. He tried to enlist as a private in the Civil War but was not accepted on account of his physical condition. He was offered a commission as Colonel by President Lincoln but refused this commission. He was always known as Colonel Hunter.

My mother, Elizabeth McKee Hunter, was born in Brown County, Ohio, near Cincinnati, and is buried in Sumner County, Kansas. She was of Irish descent. She was reared in the same neighborhood with General Grant and

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-2-

knew him well.

My parents married in Brown County, Ohio, where they lived for several years. In the winter of 1871 and '72 we came to Sumner County, Kansas, when I was twelve years old. We made the trip from Hancock County, Illinois, in a covered wagon caravan, with four wagons, three horse teams, and two yoke of oxen. We came to Wichita and camped in a rendezvous for campers. My father was looking for a location to establish a mercantile business and finally went to Wellington where he established a general store in the latter part of the winter.

We had no bridges and when we crossed the Arkansas River at the ford, where Douglas Avenue is now located at Wichita, one of the wagons was stuck in the river and all the teams were hooked to it to pull it out. These wagons held our entire worldly possessions. We finally drifted fifteen miles south to South Haven, where my father took a claim of 160 acres. This claim was in Sumner County, just three miles over the line. The Santa Fe depot now stands on this land.

-3-

Our house was one room 12 feet square, built of cottonwood with a board roof. When it rained we sat up in the bed with an umbrella over us to keep dry. The sun had warped the cottonwood and the cracks were large enough to throw a cat through. The next year my father built a four room frame house.

When I was twelve my father gave me a shotgun and a six shooter and I soon learned to shoot. I have sat up all night with a rifle over my knees and guarded the house against the Indians. The Osages were a wild, treacherous tribe and would sneak up on the house in the night and we had to be on guard day and night.

The first trip I made to Caldwell, Kansas, was with my father in 1872. Caldwell was known as the greatest cow town in southern Kansas until the settlement of Oklahoma put it out of reach of the trail herds.

I can remember when cattle were snipped from Abilene and Newton but that was before my cowboy days.

My father hunted wild buffalo in Kay County in 1873 and I saw a few of them on Deer Creek when I accompanied him on one of these trips. He always took six or eight

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-4-

men with him on these trips on account of the Indians. There would be two men to the wagon. Each man would furnish a horse, usually one horse was a trained buffalo horse used to shoot buffalo from. My father always had an understanding with each man that they take both the front and hind quarters of the buffalo, for some people would take the hind quarters and leave the front quarters. One buffalo was hauled in each wagon. He made two trips a year into the Indian Territory on these hunts.

A few days after our arrival in Kansas, I met Pete Slaughter, a Texas cowman, who was bringing a herd of 1200 head of Texas longhorns up the Chisholm trail from Texas to Wichita, Kansas. He gave me job handling the drag end of the herd at \$22.50 per month and my board. We met the herd near the Cimarron River. Pete's brother, John, was one day behind our herd with another herd of 1200 head. We camped twenty-five miles southwest of Wichita for several weeks while awaiting shipment. The railroad had just been completed into Wichita that year and we had to wait our turn at the stockyards. There were about six or eight good cowboys in our outfit.

-5-

Pete Slaughter was about thirty years old and had only been married a short time. His wife traveled with the herd in a covered hack and drove her favorite pony, a little grey buckskin. Mrs. Slaughter favored me and sometimes let me ride her pony.

My night horse, "Soap Sticks" was an old broken down cow horse about twenty years old. He had been a good cow horse in his day but was getting too old to run and I was worried about what I would do in case of a stampede. I decided that I would run my horse to one side and try to get behind the herd. One night I had the chance to try this method. I was night riding the herd when my nose started bleeding. When the cattle smelled the blood they became restless and before I knew what was taking place they were on a stampede. "Soap Sticks" carried me out of danger for he did just what I had in mind. After this happened Mrs. Slaughter objected to my night riding and told Pete I was too young so I didn't stand guard any more.

Mrs. Slaughter's cousin, Bill Cheek, was the cook. He drove two yoke of oxen to the chuck wagon.

-6-

He was a good friend of mine and had a chance to prove it one day. There was a young cow hand in the crew, about twenty-two years old. He had an overbearing disposition and because I was a kid he tried to bully me. The only shade we had was under the center wagon and when the boys came into camp for a few minutes they would crawl under the wagon. One day I was under the wagon with the cook when this fellow rode up, threw his bridle reins over his horse's head and joined us. When he was ready to leave he ordered me to get his horse that had wandered a short distance away. I crawled from under the wagon where he couldn't reach me and told him to get his horse himself, that I was not waiting on him. In those days we settled arguments with six guns and when he started for me the cook came around the wagon with his shooting iron drawn, and told him to "lay off". About the same time Pete Slaughter rode up and pulled his gun and told the fellow to get back to the herd where he belonged. From that time on he was the most unpopular cowboy in the crew.

-7-

After this drive I returned to my father's farm at South Haven where I stayed for a while. I then went to work on a small ranch over the line in the Indian Territory, on the Chickasha river. My boss kept me more for company than to work. He owned two fine rifles and one day a soldier, who had deserted the army and was traveling through the country, killed the buffalo. The boss was in a terrible rage when he discovered what had happened. He left me alone and went after the buffalo killer. He was gone two or three days and when he returned I asked him if he killed the man and the only answer he gave me was, "He won't kill any more buffalo."


There were trading posts along the Washita Trail at the stage stations in about 1875 to accommodate the cattlemen along the trail. Six or eight herds would pass in one day. The cattle had to have water every day and a herd was seldom driven after July. The water holes were usually dry by that time and until the fall rains came it was not safe to drive cattle. An ordinary trail herd numbered about 1,000 head. We watered the cattle between 12 and 2 o'clock. It took about two hours to get

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-8-

them all watered. When the cattle were swimming they would mill around in the water in a huddle and nothing but their heads could be seen. Sometimes 100 heads could be seen.

The courts had no jurisdiction in the Indian Territory when I first came here but later the Territory was put under the Arkansas jurisdiction and court was held at Fort Smith. United States deputy marshals were then stationed in the Indian Territory and the prisoners were transferred to Fort Smith by these marshals.

Jim W. Hamilton owned and operated the Open A Ranch located about forty miles southwest of Hunnewell, Kansas, on the Chikaskia River. This ranch was later moved to Pond Creek, in Grant County, at the mouth of Salt Fork River. The Open A brand was  and they shipped about 10,000 head a year. Jim Hamilton was at one time Treasurer of Kansas and later was agent for the Santa Fe system. I worked for the Open A and the Running W ranches for twenty-five years.

When I was sixteen I was considered a top hand and rode the south line. The best men rode this line and

-8-

that was my beat for some time. When I was seventeen I rode, roped and broke bronchos with the best of them.

John Paul Kratky, a German who bought and bred Spanish horses, offered me a job taking 100 head of wild bronchos to Minnesota, but I did not accept the offer at that time. Mr. Kratky had made the gold rush to California in 1849, settled there on a ranch and learned the horse business. My chum heard of the offer I had been made and wanted to go, so we finally hired to Mr. Kratky and in May, 1876, we took the bronchos from Kansas, across the corner of Nebraska, through to Iowa to Minnesota. By the time we reached our destination the horses were broke ready for use. We sold part of them along the way, the pick of the herd for \$100 each.

In the fall after I returned from Minnesota, Jim Hamilton of the Open A Ranch came to my father's house in Kansas and wanted me to drive 500 head of steers to Caldwell, Kansas, and put them in the feed pen there. I asked him for a week's rest as I was tired from the long trip from Minnesota. His cattle were dying from Spanish fever when I arrived at the ranch. - I had heard that coal

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-10-

oil would cure this fever so I went to Caldwell and bought two ten gallon cans of oil and we tried this remedy, drenching them with a pint of oil. I don't know if this helped or not but we did not lose any more cattle. Jim's brother, Frank, and I were about the same age and he was to help me with the herd, so we started to the state line with them. The cattle were restless and hard to handle. One night they became frightened and stampeded. I have helped with larger stampedes but was never on one that was as hard to handle, for we rode for six days and nights before we rounded up what was left of our herd. We lost about half of them and our horses were worn out. Frank had plenty of nerve but did not have the constitution to withstand the strain and died the next week. I lost one of the best pals on the range.

The Running W Ranch was located thirty miles due south of Caldwell and forty miles southwest of Lunnewell. It was owned and operated by Billy McLawly. Their brand was *W* and they shipped about 15,000 head a year. When I was seventeen I was herd boss for this ranch, and was

-11-

round-up boss, the most responsible position on the ranch, when I was nineteen. I was made ranch boss at the age of twenty-one. In the winter months I rode line with the other boys.

In 1885 I was made ranch boss for the Faint Horn Ranch. This was a small ranch and we only shipped about 2500 to 3000 head. They shipped from Hunnewell and Caldwell. Their brand was a dab of red paint on the cattle's horns. This brand was hard to keep on for the cattle rubbed it off.

A branch of the Santa Fe Railroad was built to Hunnewell from Wichita in 1880 and I helped to pen the first cattle shipped from Hunnewell. Captain Ikard, a Texas cowboy, was driving a trail herd from Texas and he arrived at Hunnewell and learned there were twenty-one cars to be there the next day. He decided to make the first shipment from Hunnewell. His cattle were stationed on Sand Creek but he did not know the location of Sand Creek. He was very excited and was anxious to locate his cattle. Upon inquiry he learned there were two Sand Creeks along the trail which complicated matters

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-12-

for him. He did not know the country and was at a complete loss. Andy Robinson, a gambler at Hunnewell, informed him he knew a kid who could tell him where Sand Creek was located. He came for me and I explained to him that one Sand Creek was on the west side of the trail and one on the east side. One ran into Crooked Creek and the other into Wild Horse Creek. He said if I could find the place at night he would hire a rig and we would try to locate the herd. About four o'clock the next morning we located them forty miles south of Hunnewell. He gave orders to put them on the road and crowd them, to drive all night if necessary. The cow hands were ordered to take their slickers and "slicker" them but the trail boss said that was useless for they could not make it in "one day." We herded that night and drove the next day, herded the next night and drove them into the pen at Hunnewell the next day. The two days hard drive had taken off all the fat that had been put on the cattle on the entire drive from Texas.

The Bar X Bar Ranch was located in the northeast corner of the Creek Nation, in the forks of the Arkansas

-13-

and Cimarron Rivers, south of where Cleveland is now. Their brand was -X-. This was one of the largest cattle companies in the country. I was shipping superintendent for them one season. There was an outlaw cave about ten or twelve miles from this ranch, about one hundred yards over in the Creek Nation where Lagoon Creek ran into Horse Creek.

One night while we were camped with a herd owned by Captain Stone, about 200 Osages rode up yelling, and stampeded our cattle. In trying to mill the cattle, Stone got in front of the herd and to save his life, he jumped the horse off the bank. The cattle followed him over the bank. He was seriously wounded but survived. Wash Thompson, a cow hand, was also wounded in this stampede. We lost about thirty head of cattle.

When I worked on the "Open A" and "Running W" ranches the Osages would come to the ranch raising "Hurrah" and the cowpunchers would fight them, but we never had any casualties. We never knew who killed the Indians that were found after a battle. The Agent sent men to the ranch to investigate and we showed him the dead Indians

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-14-

but, of course, didn't know anything except that they were dead. After an investigation one man said, "I don't blame you, if I lived in this country I'd kill them, too."

While I rode for the "Open A" outfit I worked with the notorious outlaw, Bill Doolin, and never knew a more likable fellow. In my early day life in this wild country I met and knew many outlaws and will say here, while they were men to be feared when angered, they were men who lived by a strict code of their own and some of them kind men at heart; however, some were desperate killers. In spite of their many escapades many of these men died natural deaths. Till Lincoln, a notorious killer, worked on the running when I did. He died from tuberculosis.

Linn Shipman, a desperate killer, was a good friend of mine and a few days before he was killed we were sitting around the camp one evening after supper and he handed me a beaded hatband his Indian sweetheart had made for him. He told me to keep it for he would get bumped off some day and he would like for me to have it. He left

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-15-

the ranch and a few days later we heard of his death. I have this hatband.

I knew Bill Brooks, an outlaw, who was hanged at Wellington; Joe Kellis, Bob Ross, Narrow Gage Kid and Billy Rader. Rader was with the Doolin gang and was captured and died in the "pen". He was badly shot up in a gun fight on Mission Creek once but survived and was later captured.

I have seen many men killed at Hunnewell. I was watching a gun fight on the streets of Hunnewell one day, where I received the closest call I ever had. A bullet went through a man, killing him, whizzed between my arm and body and I nearly died from fright.

When I rode for the Open A, one evening about five o'clock I saw a smoke in the distance and, with Jim Hunt, went to investigate. We rode about five miles and discovered a fire that had been left by a bone picker. We had to fight fire all night to save our range.

Once I was visiting my parents in Sumner County, Kansas, and one of the neighbors had a Texas cowhorse that had become an outlaw when he was a colt, after he

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-16-

was stolen by the Comanche Indians. The owner was afraid of him and had run him on a picket rope all summer. I saw he was a good mustang and wanted him. I traded a three year old I was driving for the outlaw. My older brother was with me and I felt pretty safe with his help. We were driving his horse with the three year old to a wagon. We had a negro horse breaker on the running a ranch and I had learned many pointers from him. We ran the wagon up to the side of "Rattler" and hitched him in with the other horse. We drove him hard all the way home. He was soft from standing idle all summer and while he was tired from the hard drive home, I saddled him and after a hard fought battle he was conquered. He was a fine cow horse and he and I saw many hard trips together. I was running him after cattle one night, jumped him over a bank and hurt his back. I thought he was done for but after a long rest and plenty of care he recovered. I loaned him to a friend one day and Rattler knew the fellow was afraid of him. When he led him up to the snubbing post, Rattler reared up, fell back and broke his neck and I lost one of the best

-17-

little mustangs in the Indian Territory. I have ridden him many times twenty-four hours a day when trouble occurred at the ranca.

While I worked for the Saint Horn Ranch we had the worst storm I ever witnessed. It lasted six days. It took all hands to hold the cattle and we were all worn out. The first clear night was sure welcome and I thought one man could ride herd all alone. We all retired early and knew nothing until morning. A storm had come up in the night and the cattle were restless from the long strain and were ready for excitement. The night rider was afraid to leave them to come for help so he held the herd all night alone. The storm had come up so fast he did not have time to come for help.

When I was round-up boss for the running, Charlie King and Sam Stanley, negroes, were the horse breakers and they were the best. Charlie was my "nigger" and went with me to the round-up. He was born a slave and knew his place among the white men. He always made my raw-hide ropes for me. Sam was much different for he was

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-18-

overbearing and had to be put in his place. He often asked me to take him to the round-up but it was a custom of all ranches never to take the negroes in one outfit. Charlie lived in the Chickasaw Nation and worked on the ranch in the summer. One fall when he returned home he found another negro in the cabin with his wife which resulted in a shooting scrape. Ling was killed and we lost the best horse breaker on the range.

I had trouble with a Mexican on the main horn ranch. He was cooking for the outfit and one day I went to the chuck wagon to hurry dinner. He was cooking beans and I lifted the pot lid, which was an insult to the cook, but I was in a hurry and did not think until I saw him go for his Winchester lying on a box near him. He was usually armed but had laid his gun on the box, to my advantage, for it gave me time to beat him to the draw. When I said, "stop" he did.

Every ranch had a race horse and many dollars were lost on the horse races. We always bet on our horse but sometimes it didn't win. I had a little Indian pony that had never been beaten. One of the boys raced her

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-19-

again to a Morgan horse and because he didn't know how to ride her, she was beaten. The boys wanted to run the race over but the man refused. I was not there but the boys lost their time and money on her that day.

The late J. C. Salisbury of Darollesville rode for Lanning and Lundy at the same time I worked on the Open A.

The last herd I drove was 400 head from the Salt Fork River and put them in the feed pen at Caldwell. Uncle Jim Moore was the foreman on this drive.

The Chisholm Trail, also known as the "Chissum" and the Abilene Trail, was its place in history. In many places all trace of the trail has been ploughed up, but in other places it was worn too deeply to ever be erased. The railway lines and hard surfaced highways now parallel and occasionally cross its course. This trail ran from the Red River in Texas, north through the Indian Territory to the shipping points in Kansas. The Sill Trail branched off from the Chisholm Trail at Hackbury, near Hennessey, to Iowa, another shipping point.

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-20-

The town of Hennessey was named in honor of Pat Hennessey, who was killed by the Cheyenne Indians during the Cheyenne Indian war in 1874. He and seven other men were freighting for the government when they were rushed by the Cheyennes. The freighters, with the exception of Hennessey, un hitched their best horses from the wagon and tried to make their escape but were soon overtaken by the Indians and murdered. They were buried near the trail and their graves are all within a radius of seven or eight miles. Hennessey did not run but tried to protect his property. The Indians rushed him, tied him to the wagon wheel and burned him. I have put rocks on his grave many times when I passed.

The Osages were the most treacherous tribe and, like many other tribes, would ride miles for a scalp. When I was about fifteen, three other boys, Masonic Jim, "Curly" Curry, Red Bill, and I organized a band to fight the Osages who came over the Kansas line looking for trouble. We were known as "Hunter's Hell Hounds" and our ages ranged from fifteen to seventeen. I was known as "Little Colonel". We were always ready for a scrap

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-21-

with the Indians. When an Osage died a mourning party was sent out after scalps, for a scalp was buried with the dead. We made mighty sure it wasn't ours.

The government brought part of the Kickapoos from Kansas and settled them on a reservation on Bitter Creek, in what is now Lincoln, Oklahoma, and Pottawatomie Counties. The old bucks, squaws and papooses were brought to the Indian Territory and the warriors were taken to Florida. Williams was the Kickapoo Indian Agent at that time.

In 1874 I enlisted in the Indian war and went with the Kansas Militia to Fort Sill to fight the Cheyennes. J. P. Whitaker was our captain and later J. R. Musgrove was put in charge of our regiment. Many thrilling experiences occurred during this war.

In the summer of 1885 the Southern Cheyennes became greatly dissatisfied and there was evidence that there was danger of a serious outbreak. The settlers in southwestern Kansas implored the military authorities of the Federal Government for protection. Soldiers were moved into the Indian Territory and along the northern border as far as the railroad could transport them. I

-22-

organized a company but the war clouds soon disappeared and we did not fight. The Cheyennes had also caused trouble in 1878 but nothing serious came of this.

The Government furnished muskets and carbines. The best gun on the plains was the Sharps needle which carried a 50 caliber ball and was used to hunt buffalo.

I have lived among the Caddos, Wichitas, Iowas, Missouris, Pottawatomies, Choctaws, Pawnees, Chickasaws, Creeks, Sac and Fox, Cheyennes, Osages, Cherokees, Delawares, Seminoles, Kickapoos, Arapahoes and Comanches. The Kaw Agency was across the river from where Blackwell is now. The town of Blackwell was named for a white man, Blackwell, who married a Cherokee and became an adopted citizen of the Cherokee Nation. He served a term in the "Pen" for counterfeiting.

The Cheyenne Agency was at Darlington on the east banks of the North Canadian River near El Reno. Fort Reno was situated on a hill northwest of Darlington, near the agency at El Reno. This was the headquarters for the army regiments.

Fort Sill was located in what is now Comanche

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-23-

County and was another military fort.

On account of my military record in the Indian wars, Governor Haskell appointed me as Colonel of the military staff. The late Judge Vandeventer of Bartlesville, who was first Representative of this District, used his influence to obtain this appointment. Governor Walton also recognized this appointment.

Ed Marks, United States Deputy Marshal, caused me to make two trips to court at Fort Smith. The Kelly gang, a band of outlaws, stole five of my horses and we had some trouble. Marks arrested them and with sixteen or eighteen other prisoners started for Fort Smith. He came by my place but I wasn't at home. They stayed for three days but the boys had let me know he was there and I stayed hidden out. When he left with his prisoners he gave the boys a letter to deliver to me. It was a summons notifying me to appear at Fort Smith as a witness. I had caught one of the outlaws on one of my horses and coaxed him off with a six shooter. One of the outlaws was wounded and died. I got all of my horses back and I was not interested in making

HUNTER, JOHN W.

INTERVIEW.

12721

-24-

any more trips to Fort Smith so made it up with Powell Clayton, United States Prosecuting Attorney, to dismiss the case. Kelly, leader of the gang, swore he would kill me on sight, but I never saw him. All the cowmen in the country were on the lookout for him but I don't think he ever returned to this vicinity.

In April, 1889, the Unassigned Land, or better known as Old Oklahoma, was thrown open for settlement and my father, brother-in-law and I joined the multitudes to cast our lots with farmers, professional men, laborers, gamblers, adventurers and sharpers. We made the run with a team and wagon. I wanted a claim located on Stillwater Creek, so did four others, and after a quarrel I gave up and let them have it. My brother-in-law secured a claim near Sheridan, in Kingfisher County.

I made the run into the Cheyenne country April 19, 1892, but did not get anything in this race. I made the run for experience.

One year later the Cherokee Strip was opened for settlement and I took seventy-five head of horses from the "Half H" Ranch from Texas to the opening. I sold

HUNTER, JOHN W.

INTERVIEW.

12721

-25-

them for \$25.00 a head. One of these horses won three claims. I knew the Strip country like a book and had a location spotted for my claim. I led a party of Texas cow punchers into the Strip and they each got a claim.

At noon, September 16, 1893, the excitement of the vast crowd was at the highest degree. I made the run on horseback, starting from east of Hunnewell. I was more fortunate than before and got a claim in the western part of May County, the Northwest quarter of Section 30, Township 27, Range 1 West. This claim was located on Stink Water and Thompson Creeks. I secured my water supply from a dug well. Our principal food consisted of beans, bacon, coffee and sour dough bread baked in a Dutch oven.

The early day stage line was along the Chisholm Trail from Texas, through the Indian Territory to Kansas. A stage line ran from Fort Sill to Wichita. One day they drove a four horse stage and the next day the mail was delivered in a buckboard. There was a relay station about every twelve miles where they changed horses. The trip was made from Wichita to Caldwell in one day, then from Caldwell to Pond Creek the next. There was a relay

-26-

station at Pond Creek, Hole Cat Creek, Caldwell, Wellington, Wichita, Red Fork on the Cimarron River, Bull Foot, and Kingfisher. I received my mail at Pond Creek about every three weeks, as that was about as often as the farmers went to town.

One day I had been to town in the spring wagon and when I arrived at the Salt Fork crossing the water was up and the buckboard that carried the mail was held up at the crossing. They were not allowed to drive into deep water with the mail. The driver tied the mail sack to the seat of my spring wagon to keep the mail dry and followed me across in the buckboard. The water was over the body of the buckboard.

There was a ferry across Salt Fork River near White Eagle, south of Ponca City, that was used temporarily during floods.

There was a large ferry that crossed the Arkansas and Illinois Rivers at Lebbens Falls, at the Muskogee-Sequoyah County line. This boat was poled across by four Indians. I crossed on the ferry one day when there was a four horse stage with twenty-seven passengers, a

HUNTER, JOHN A.

INTERVIEWED.

12721

-27-

wagon and team and four men on the boat. This was a heavy load and there were three men at each oar. The oars were long poles with a big board nailed on the end. There was a snag in the river and it was all the cursen could do to pole the ferris up to miss the snag. I thought it would surely upset. The stage driver unitched the lead horses and tied the lines in case of trouble so they could swim out. He was driving a roan and a sorrel, quantrell and greenback, both good horses. I decided to hold to the tail of one of these horses if he upset for I knew he would swim out. This was in 1830.

There was a ford over Salt Fork River, on the Sill trail, one-half mile below the mouth of the river. This was on the Chisholm trail and we crossed with the trail herds at this place. I forded the Arkansas River at Pulsa in 1830.

My father had a trading post at Seminole in the early days where he sold merchandise to the Indians. There were lots of wild animals in that section of the territory for it was thinly settled. There were mountain lions, a few bears, bob cats, grey wolves, often called

lobo wolves, deer, antelope and a few buffalo.

The Kansas farmers hauled freight to Fort Bill and on the return trip their empty wagons were filled with dry buffalo bones which were shipped from Wichita to the Eastern Market where they were made into fertilizer. They received \$10.00 a load for these bones. These bones were not heavy and a great deal of fertilizer could be made from one load. We traveled light because the roads were rough.

The Indians would not fight in the winter when they couldn't get grass for their war ponies. The Cheyennes were good fighters and would fight in the open but the Osages were a sneaking tribe. I have seen 500 Osages in a group with their faces painted red and with red mud all over their bodies. When the wild Indians were on the warpath they only were a c-string.

When I was a kid my father gave me a colt and I trained him for a cow pony. When he was four years old I rode him during the Indian war. We had a sod port between Shoo-Fly Creek and the Chikaskia River,

-29-

used as our headquarters. We patrolled six miles of the State line to keep the Indians from invading our homes. I was only fourteen but I had to stand guard with the rest of the boys. One night five other boys and I were sent to stand guard. The other boys dropped off to sleep. I had learned it was best to stay awake when night riding on the range and not nap, so I did not sleep. I knew if the Indians made an attack they would come from the South so when I heard a noise from the North I didn't know what to think. It came nearer us and I'll admit I became frightened, and called the other boys. While the noise did not sound like savages I was satisfied it was Indians. We waited with our guns ready to fire at the first sight of the enemy. We discovered our enemy to be a big iron gray mule that had scented our horses. He gave a big bray every jump he took and his hoofs beat the ground in the stillness of the night, loud enough for a whole regiment of Indians. ~~When we reported to the commanding officer the next~~ morning and told our experiences of the night we were an embarrassed bunch. The boys had slept part of the

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-30-

night and were a drowsy looking crew. It is much easier to keep awake and a fellow feels better if he does not sleep while on duty.

I believe I am the oldest living cowboy in Oklahoma who rode the old Chisholm Trail. I began this career in 1872, when I was twelve years old. The late Bill Martin of Blackwell drove the trail when I did and Frank Canton, who served as Adjutant General under Governor Haskell, drove the trail in 1873, one year after I did. Frank was the fastest gunman I ever knew. B. Dunn, an outlaw, sent him word he was out to kill him and they met near Pawnee. Canton was the fastest on the draw and killed Dunn.

I came to Bartlesville in 1902 and roomed and boarded with Joe Mitchell at the old Adams Hotel for two years. I bought the property at 6th and Delaware where I lived for fifteen years. At the time I bought this place there was nothing east of Shawnee Avenue and the only house north of Seventh Street was the William Johnstone farm home.

I was a stockholder and on the Board of Directors

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-31-

of the Bartlesville Petrified Brick Company and in 1903 I was elected Secretary and General Manager of the business. I sunk \$1,650.00 in the old shale pit on West Third Street. When I resigned to take a position with the Barnsdall Oil Company, H. J. Holmes took my place. I worked for the Barnsdall Company for several years.

I served as Deputy Sheriff for three terms in Washington County. I served under John D. Jordon, C. F. Reed and Andy Henderson and was Special Deputy under our present sheriff, Jim Masters. While I was deputy under Henderson there was a race riot in Tulsa and we were afraid there would be one here. Mr. Henderson was out of town and Givens and Manning, two trusty negroes, reported the condition of the situation in their district, every hour to me. Our deputies helped to transport the refugees from Tulsa to the Kansas line. I had also served as Deputy Sheriff in Sumner County, Kansas, in my earlier life.

Part of my history has been written up in Charles Foster's Oklahoma History. Mr. Foster established the

HUNTER, JOHN W. INTERVIEW. 12721

-32-

first business college in Bartlesville.

I guess I am hard to kill for I have been shot at many times by the Indians and have had many narrow escapes. I was in the Rainbow Cafe on Second Street about three years ago, when I was stricken with a paralytic stroke. They thought I was dead and sent for John McCallister, the undertaker, and I was taken to the morgue. Mr. McCallister discovered I was still breathing and revived me and here I am, although I am crippled to the extent that I can walk only a short distance. I am glad I lived to give this story for I have often thought I would write an account of my life but have been too busy. I believe the future generations will appreciate their State more if they may read of the early history of the country given by the people who witnessed the growth of our home state OKLAHOMA.