

McCord, JOHN A.

INTERVIEW

9467

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

#9467

McCord, John A. INTERVIEW.

Field Worker's name Zaidee B. Bland

This report made on (date) December 20, 1937

1. Name John A. McCord

2. Post Office Address Altus, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day _____ Year 1872

5. Place of birth Illinois.

6. Name of Father J. J. McCord Place of birth Illinois

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Emaline Oliver Place of birth Illinois.

Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____.

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An Interview with John A. McCord, Altus, Oklahoma.

By - Zaidee B. Bland, Journalist.

December 20, 1937.

I was reared in Willbarger County, Texas.

One July 4th, there was a big picnic staged at old Navajo with lots of Indian features, so Father and I decided to ride over and have a look around. The river was up and we had a time getting across but we had given ourselves several days for the trip for we wished to spy out the country a little so did not worry. The picnic was to be three days with lots of free things to eat and drink. Beef barbecue was a big feature and an Indian dance. We arrived, spent the days meeting people and talking about the country, asking questions and enjoying ourselves generally. After the picnic was over we drifted around until we found ourselves back at old Nine Mile Springs. There we decided to locate and we went west from the springs until we found the land that looked best to us. We staked our claim and recrossed the river for home to get things ready and to bring Mother and the family over.

The land was alive with birds and animals that were

good to eat. If we brought enough flour, sugar and coffee to do us, we did not have to worry about the meat. There was also a lot of wild cattle and there were several large cattlemen grazing cattle from whom one could get a job of riding if a little ready cash was needed and one was a good rider.

We settled and fought prairie dogs and rattlesnakes for possession of the land and lived on wild meat. I killed nine of the biggest coons I ever saw in my life in one tree over on Otter Creek one time. There was no danger of starving if one liked wild meat. Wild turkeys went in droves like cattle. Prairie chickens, quails, doves, more big birds than I know the names of, besides coons, possums, squirrels and antelopes were there in abundance.

All the years I was proving up on my claim I never failed to help some of the corners when roundup time came around and the dry years when nothing was raised at all I would just take my string of horses and hire out to Waggoner mostly. A good cut-out horse was as necessary to successful branding and separating of cattle as was a good rider. A man had to have four

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or five good horses to get a high price for his work as extra during the branding of the large herds. Round-up time was twice a year, in the Fall and in the Spring. The job was not hard until all the stock from all over the range was brought together into a large corral, then the cutting out began. There were three cut-outs. The she stuff was cut out and turned back on to the range; the young stuff branded - we always put the brand on the calf that was on the mother cow whether it was our brand or not. That was a courtesy all big cattle men extended to each other. Then we cut the cattle ready to market or to be topped off for market. Around the chuck wagon and the campfire at night we were a happy lot. I have never enjoyed the farming life like I enjoyed the life on the range looking after cattle.

One thing I always had was a good string of horses. I bred some of my horses and some I caught wild and some I bought; but only tops in horses were allowed on my farm and to bear my brand. Waggoner branded his cattle DDD - (three D). His horses carried one 'D' on a hip and 71 on

the neck. Sometimes we branded an animal too deep and had trouble with the wound but rarely ever. We were very careful for we did not like to burn the beasts deeper than necessary to make the mark plain.

We used to have some blizzards to be remembered in this country. Range cattle were never fed in the winter but subsisted on the dry grasses and if there came a snow that covered the grass the cattle sometimes got very lean and there were a lot of deaths among them. Sometimes a cow with a calf would get so weak she could not get up and we riders would have to look out for all such critters and give them a helping hand.

Once I was over at Vernon with my wife and baby. We were in a hack driving two good horses. ~~There came up the~~ biggest blizzard and froze everything over. I stayed several days and decided it had thawed enough to get the family home. A lady school teacher wanted to ride out with us. We got to the river and the sand had blown onto the ice and froze until it looked sandy. I drove in, not suspecting that the river was up. The horses broke through this crust of ice and went under. I had to get out in this icy water to my

neck, almost, cut my horses loose, drive them out, wade back and bring out my wife and baby on my back, then the teacher. I drove my horses four miles for a cable to pull my hack out. I drove them in a trot and running behind them I soon got up a sweat that kept my clothes from freezing on my back. Got the cable, pulled my hack out, drove home sixteen miles farther with the wet clothes on, with never a cold from the experience. I had on tall boots and they were full of water. As I ran the water would slosh out the top and freeze as it ran down the legs.

There is a lot of talk now about law and order but in those days when everybody carried a six shooter and was a law unto himself, we had fewer laws and what laws we had were obeyed promptly and to the letter. Of course we had our out-laws as we do now, but we concerned ourselves about them not at all unless they got some of our cows or a horse, and then such an outlaw was strung to the nearest tree and forgotten about as soon as possible.

Riding, roping, hunting, fishing, live hard, love much; I won myself a wife above the price and jewels. My life perhaps lies largely behind. Each age shall have its joys, tasks, sorrows, as the days. So be it.