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Robert H. Boatman  
April 12, 1938  
Investigator.

Interview with James A. Stephenson  
Blanchard, Oklahoma

I was born in the state of Mississippi, December 23, 1856; I was removed to Texas at an early age by my parents, where I remained till thirty-six years old.

In 1892 I came with a team of horses and covered wagon, along with a group of other families, in a caravan consisting of some eight to ten wagons to the Indian Territory. After entering the Territory I settled some five miles east of here Ardmore now is, near Red River at the old Browns Ferry Crossing. This was a ferry or tug boat crossing on Red River on an old route known as a feeder line of the old Chisholm Trail. Practically all travel through that section of the country was over this route which came from Fort Smith, Arkansas, via this Browns ferry crossing and led on to Denison, Texas. There was also an old stage line route. All transportation was by wagon and team or stagecoach which was crossed here by the ferry or tug boat. The operator collected a fee of 50 cents for wagons and 25 cents for a man on horseback.

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This old ferry boat continued in operation for several years and was not fully abandoned until a permanent road was established and a new bridge took its place. Cattle, of course, never crossed on the boat. Herds of from 1,000 to 5,000 head crossed here; they always just jumped into the river and swam across.

After I had settled down in my new home my first business was to secure some kind of employment. I got a job as a cow puncher, riding range and cutting out strays; pushing the herd along from one section to some other after the first had been grazed down. The herds would be grazed east almost to the Arkansas line and then west to the Wichita mountains. I was placed on the western route and we had several skirmishes with the Comanche Indians. At first I never thought very much of it. Usually somewhere along the route from two to three Comanches would ride up and one of them would say, "Want beef meat." Our foreman would say, "Which beef?" and they would then point out some certain steer, which was cut out of the herd and given to them. This generally satisfied that bunch, though we probably would not graze more than two miles

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until another bunch would want beef meat. This was a constant occurrence. We continued grazing along. We hit a good section of range grass just south of where the town of Marlow now is and here we decided to hold our cattle for several days. One day some of our boys were stealing a little nap, others were just sitting in their saddles watching the cattle graze at leisure; it was along in the evening. Then up rode a band of Comanche Indians; we never knew how many there were of them, but I guess from twelve to twenty. One of them said, "We want beef", and held up four fingers, which indicated they wanted four head of cattle. We knew if this was to continue that pretty soon we would not have any cattle, so we sent them away without any beef. But not for long, for they soon returned and this time from a different direction. Soon one of them gave a loud whoop and the arrows began sailing and their tomahawks were in position for active use. Cowboys began ducking and taking to cover behind trees, horses or whatever came handy that would protect them from the fusillade of arrows which these Indians were pouring into our midst.

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as soon as possible we began to let them have an exchange from our six shooters and winchesters. When the battle was on. Some of the Indians had guns, but seemed rather to rely on their bows and arrows. The battle lasted throughout the rest of the day, with the Indians falling back at intervals only to return again with renewed energy. As night began to fall the Indians retired with the darkness and we saw no more of that band of Indians. None of our boys were hurt and if any Indians were killed they were taken away by the rest of the band.

I have spent my life riding after cattle and in the livestock business. Today I am physically unable to do any kind of work, so I have had to retire from active service. I live four miles southeast of Blanchard.