

TALLANT, B. S.

INTERVIEW

#4431

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Field Worker: John F. Daugherty
June 12, 1937.

Interview with B. S. Tallant
Sulphur, Okla.

Born February 4, 1865,
Pontotoc, Mississippi.

Parents Thomas Tallant, father,
South Carolina--farmer, shoemaker
Mandy Thompson, mother,
South Carolina.

Life of a Pioneer Cow-man.

My father was Thomas Tallant, born in South Carolina and my mother was Mandy Thompson Tallant, also born in South Carolina. (Dates unknown) Father was a farmer and shoe maker. There were sixteen children in our family.

I was born February 4, 1865, at Pontotoc, Mississippi. Father moved to Texas when I was four years old and I was reared on the frontier. I worked with cattle.

In 1883 my bosses, Jackson and Coker, decided to establish a ranch in the Indian Territory. I was sent with the cattle to this ranch on Hamilton Prairie on Mudd Creek.

west of the present site of Ardmore. We crossed Red River at Delaware Bend and got to this ranch in the Chickasaw Nation, with 1800 head of cattle, March 1, 1883.

Our ranch house was a log room with a puncheon floor, one door, no windows, and a cat chimney. The bunk houses for the hired hands were three half dug-outs. My bosses paid the Chickasaw Government a five dollar permit, and ten cents per head for the cattle.

There was plenty of game and lots of Indian spotted ponies. I have seen fifty and a hundred head in a bunch.

There were about thirty-five men on this ranch. Each spring there was a general round-up. Each ranch sent some of its men to other ranches to round up the cattle which had strayed from their range during the winter. Each ranch hand knew the brand of his ranch and each would cut out and round up his own cattle; then drive on to another ranch and do the same thing, until they had quite a large herd to drive back to the home range.

Each year, about the first of March, we would start up the Chisholm Trail toward Kansas City, with about eighteen hundred or two thousand head of cattle. We drove them all summer, and grazed them as we went.

We reached Kansas City about the first of September. Our boss met us there with the pay for seven months. I received thirty-eight dollars per month and board, and eight horses to ride. He asked us how much money we wanted. We would take what we wanted and he would give us an I.O.U. for the remainder. He took the money he received from the stock and went back to Texas and bought cattle with it. We could get the ^{balance of our wages} any time we wanted it. We stayed in Kansas City for a few days, usually spending all of our money before we left. Then we would start back to Mudd Creek. This trip required about two weeks. We had a chuck wagon, but we usually tried to spend the nights at ranches along our trail. We were always welcome. We never asked if we might stay. We rode up, hobbled our horses, went in and sat down to wait for supper. We were never asked any questions, and when we left the next morning, they always invited us back. There was a great hospitality and friendliness among cowboys and ranch men.

When I was riding the range I often found a man skinning a beef which he had killed. I never asked any

questions, but always got off my horse and helped him skin it. Then I took a quarter of the beef and departed for camp to have it cooked. Sometimes neither of us would speak during the time we were working with the beef.

Every summer we boys would build a big brush arbor and have a circuit rider preacher come and hold a big camp meeting.

We had to go to Texas for our mail. One of the boys was sent once a week. I often made this trip. There were no banks, and when we wanted money one of the bosses went to Gainesville and brought it back on a horse.

I married Alvira Mills, and went to farming near Goodville on Red River. We lived in a house built of cottonwood lumber. We got our mail from Gainesville once a week.

I have lived in Murray County for nine years.