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Ethel B. Tackitt
Field Worker
July 23, 1937

Lillie V. Tackitt, Lone Wolf, Kiowa County, Oklahoma, gives information regarding Jester Cave-- Family legend and personal information.

I came to Greer County in July, 1887. Like many pioneer families the married children remained with the parents, thereby giving protection and prestige to all members. This was needed in that early day and had been the custom in our family as far back as we have records, which is in 1803, in the Tackitt branch of the family.

My father-in-law, Captain James Tackitt, who had served ~~Texas~~ as a Ranger since 1854, was the acknowledged head of our family and to him we all looked for direction and information.

The cave on Station Creek, as it was known in 1887, gave every evidence that it had been on the site of a ranch. Close to the well-like opening which is located on East 1/2 Sec. 26-T 7- R 24- Greer County- was a hole in the earth where a dugout had been. The roof was completely gone at that time but there was a chimney in the back which

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was turned toward the well-like opening.

Near the door of this dugout was a natural tunnel which led into the large tunnel which has an opening at each end, one of which opens into the boulder strewn canyon which in turn opens into Station Creek where there are numerous small caves.

There was an abundance of water flowing through the cave and this western tunnel was high enough at that time so that ^a horse or a number of horses could have been led into it.

This well-like opening was some twenty feet deep and something like twenty feet across and round like a well but it was all a natural formation in the gyp rock.

A good sized hackberry tree grew over the mouth of this cave and there were a great many grape vines and currant bushes growing round about it.

On a ledge of rock some ten feet from the floor of this well, and so narrow that it looked impossible that a man could stand upon it, there was cut into the rock face of the wall "Frank James, 1870", in large letters.

My father-in-law, Captain James Tackitt, told us that in 1870 this cave had been the site of a horse ranch belonging to an uncle of Frank and Jesse James, who had been known by Captain Tackitt.


A few hundred yards west of this cave there was a running spring of "gyp" water so cold that it was like ice. The stream ran about thirty feet and poured over a bank about twenty feet high into Station Creek.

The rocks surrounding the spring were of snow white gypsum and looked like marble. In these rocks were dates, brands and names.

We were familiar with many of these names and brands but some of the dates were of so remote a time that we had no knowledge of them.

In 1889 the ranch was moved from Turkey Creek on the North Fork of the Red River to a place one mile west and half a mile south of the cave which was in a pasture.

Every day someone from the ranch would ride to all the sink holes in the vicinity of the cave to be sure that no stock had fallen into them.



It was often the case that stock did fall into one of these sink holes and had to be helped to get out.

In 1900 my husband, Tom Tackitt, built a ranch house about one hundred steps south of the well-like mouth of the cave for our home.

The rock on which Frank James cut his name fell while we lived there, but part of the name can be yet seen, if one knows where to look.

In the winter time, while we lived so near, we often observed steam coming from the warm water in those sink holes.

The first time we noticed it, was early one morning when my husband saw what he thought was smoke from a fire in the pasture and rushed one of the cowboys to see about it. The cowboy returned with the astounding news that ^{the} steam was coming out of the sink hole.

Bats by the millions, came out of the cave after sundown making a roar like that of an engine. They returned before daylight usually about two o'clock in the morning.

My children had a play house in the mouth of the tunnel of the cave and I kept my milk in the cold water

which flowed over the white rock bottom.

One morning I called to a young cousin, Jimmie Culwell, a cowboy who lived with us, telling him to run down to the cave and get the milk for breakfast.

In a few minutes he returned dumfounded and called to everybody to come down to the cave.

There had been no rain that we knew about but the cave was running full of water to the roof and it was thick with river sand. This sand was left in great banks in many places and had a very queer appearance but it was washed into the cave not hauled in there.

Many people have always visited the cave and one group freshly from Missouri, came while we lived there and announced that they were going to find the cave's eastern outlet.

We told them that we had never known of an eastern outlet but lent them a lantern and they were gone so long some of the cowboys thought of going to hunt them but after several hours they came blinking to the top about three hundred yards from the place where they entered. There is a

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place called the Horse-shoe Bend where one will turn round and come back out. If they do not know how to go on past.

Some men came and asked permission to dig for treasure which they believed was buried about the cave.

My husband granted permission but regretted later that he had done so, as all they accomplished was the destruction of a fine old elm tree, a hackberry tree and some cottonwood trees. These men also dug into some of the drift sand inside the main cave.

The main cave had its walls well-marked with names and brands when the cowboys of our ranch first entered it in 1888.
