

HARKRIDER, J. H.

INTERVIEW

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FIELD WORKER GRACE KELLEY
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INTERVIEW WITH J. H. HARKRIDER
506 North 11th St.
Henryetta, Oklahoma
Born 1873, Arkansas

Father's name J. H. Harkrider
Mother's name Mollie Tew.

SALLISAW IN 1899

When I came to the Indian Territory from Arkansas, I stopped at Sallisaw which had a population of about a thousand. There were ten or twelve stores; three doctors, S. B. Jones, Woods, McKee and a hypnotizer; two dentists, Powhatan and Perry.

I went in the shoe, harness and saddle business. Selling new, and fixing their old shoes and saddles. The saddles sold for from twelve-fifty to seventy-five dollars, but the most popular saddle sold for thirty-two and a half dollars. It was a good, but not fancy saddle.

When I first went there I thought it was the wildest and wooliest place on earth. There was always somebody getting drunk and shooting or having fights. Three times in one day I hid in the bathtub. One time two men had an argument at night, the next day one of them was sitting on our porch about two feet from me when the other rode up.

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My boss called me in the store and told me to stay out of the way for there would be a killing before one of them rode away. When the fellow rode up the first one was sitting with his head bowed looking at his feet, he didn't raise his head even though that other sat there looking at him for ten or fifteen minutes. He finally got tired or disgusted and rode away, saying that he wouldn't shoot any man that couldn't look up. Neither of them ever killed the other. The fellow who rode up was a mean one and the other knew that if he raised his head he was dead, he didn't have a chance to draw and knew it so he did the only thing possible. They weren't outlaws.

I organized the first band and we thought we had pretty good music.

When Sallisaw got a fire department, they made me their first fire chief, and I had the best bunch of volunteers a chief ever had.

There were hardly any ranches around Sallisaw they were out quite a distance from there.

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DRAKE STAGE STAND

The Drake Stand was eight miles south of Sallisaw.

INDIAN FRIEND

This old indian was a good man when he was sober but when he was drunk there was nobody who could do anything with him, and I was afraid of him myself but he would do what I told him to do. Whenever he came to town he would come to my place and take off his gunbelt and lay them on the counter, and sometimes his whiskey. I'd take them and put them up and keep them until he called for them, sometimes until the next time he came to town. Then he would leave and if he got into trouble someone would come to me and tell me that if I couldn't get him away there was going to be worse trouble. I'd go and tell him that it was time for him to go home, he'd been there long enough and he would say, "All right, if you say so." Then he would go home without any further talk. I don't know why he would mind me because he wasn't afraid of me unless it was because he liked me better than he did the other men.

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One time I was at his house I'd been fox hunting, and he was standing and I was on my horse and we were looking at a good looking dog. I commented that I would surely like to own him. He told me that was a dog nobody had touched; he was wild and if I could catch him I could have him, but that he didn't think I could catch him. I'd seen him hunt and he was fast. I'd blow my horn and he'd howl, and I'd blow my horn and he would come closer and howl. I just stayed in the saddle and I'd pat my leg and talk to him but didn't try to put my hand on him. After awhile he reared up on my leg and I slipped my rope around his head. I had a time, but I got him home next morning and put him in the kennel with the other dogs.

We organized the Sallisaw Fox Hunters Club, I remember W. O. Rooten, Dr. Jones and Bill Stewart. I owned forty-two dogs, two that were imported from England, that I had traded a good saddle for when they were pups. The first time we went hunting it was cold and icy, not a dog barked and we rode over those mountains until four o'clock next

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morning. The next time we had the same luck but the third time we started around a mountain that was three miles around, the dogs hit a trail at eight in the evening and ran that fox all night until six in the morning when they put it in its den. You couldn't follow the dogs in that country for it was too mountainous, you'd go from one mountain to the other and dismount and sit around. Each man knew his dogs' bark and could tell just about what was happening by the barks. They would bark entirely different when on the trail than when they had put the fox in a den or when they had caught it, and were fighting. And if they were chasing a strange dog it would be still different. After they had caught the fox, we'd hardly ever be in on the kill, so we would get on the horses and go home. Sometimes we would have to carry a few dogs when their feet would be sore from running, or if some didn't come to us we would leave them there but the next morning they would be in the kennel. I had one that wouldn't come out of the kennel by himself but he would go in. The kennel was six feet high with tar boards for floor to toughen their feet. We got a few scraps from the hotels to feed them but their main

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food was corn chops without cooking, just like a horse eats them. That makes them tough while soft food makes them soft and they can't run long nor fast. We had match races with the Muskogee Club, I only remember Dr. White and Dr. Fite of Muskogee, Ours were always a little better than theirs, in fact they were the fastest in the state. Old Roscoe always won the match but he wouldn't bark on his run. One hide or fox was four feet long.

There were wolves, too, but no deer for that was too close to town.

NEW TWO OUTLAW STARR AND FLOYD

I guess the first thing Pretty Boy Bloyd ever stole was from my grocery store. I had some little cakes in boxes and they kept disappearing. I marked some boxes and watched to see where they went. He was just a kid at that time, and came in the store and stood around and left. I counted the boxes and one was missing. I got an officer and we went around to the alley and he was there eating some cookies. I asked him where he got the cookies and he admitted getting them out of my store, after I showed

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him the mark. We tried to scare him up and show him he shouldn't steal, and let him go.

The other outlaw I knew was a Starr and I believe his first name was Henry. A young boy shot him when he was captured. One day he brought me a saddle to fix and waited around while I was fixing it. After he left one of the men asked me if I knew whose saddle I had fixed and I said that I didn't so he told me it was the outlaw Starr. Well I was surely frightened at what might have happened. About a month later he came back and I said, "Good Morning, Mr. Starr," He said, "Good Morning." "My name is Harkrider." "Mine is Starr and I'm glad to know you." Then I told him I was glad to know him and how afraid I had been when I had found out who he was; he told me that I didn't need be afraid of him for he didn't mean to harm anybody. I want to say that he was good looking, clean, and wore good clothes and in every way was a perfect gentleman. He was in there many times, but the officers didn't try to catch him, and he always

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conducted himself in a gentlemanly manner. When he was captured and everybody was talking about how mean and ugly he was I just told them that they didn't know what they were talking about for that was all lies.

VAN OSSLER OFFICE

Jim Bohannon put in the first drug store and Mr. Druger bought him out. Each person had a canvas bag with his name on it (that is the ones who lived on the mail route did). Their mail was put in these canvas sacks and delivered by pony riders. Mr. and Mrs. Allen were the carriers to Hart, which had a school, a Masonic hall which was used for a recreation hall by everyone, three stores and post office.