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INTERVIEW

#12243

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Mary D. Dorward, Investigator,
November 18, 1937.

Interview with Arthur Antle,
1628 N. Denver, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Arthur Antle, born in Missouri in November, 1867, came to Indian Territory in '93 with the opening of the Cherokee Strip.

I made the run into the Strip starting from Wharton, north of Guthrie. I did not secure a claim but had gone with a party of friends, one of whom was an old man who had "soonered" into the Strip a few days before the opening and had staked us all a good claim, but there was another fellow smarter than we were and by the time we had gotten there he had pulled up our stakes and put in some of his own and was riding around on his horse. His horse was dry though and we knew he had not ridden there after the gun had been fired. I didn't contest it because I couldn't have gone into court with clean hands myself.

There was so much dishonesty in making the run that I have always been glad I didn't get a claim. Almost every claim was contested, and there was so much hardship

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in proving your claim that I have never been sorry.

One instance of a fellow "soonering" was that of a man who was seen on the streets of Guthrie on the morning of the opening wearing a bright red flannel suit and cap, and afoot, not even on a horse. Later after the opening the red suited man was seen on a claim which he had staked out and still walking, and at a point many miles from the border. Undoubtedly the man on the claim was a double who had the same kind of a suit but had soonered. The alibi would be that he couldn't possibly have been in two places at once and the suit was so conspicuous that anyone who saw him would remember that he was seen in Guthrie before the gun.

I came on to Tulsa and got a job in a store where I managed to pick up a little of the Creek language. It was really not very hard to learn for the Indians would come in and ask for what they wanted and if I couldn't understand, they would point to what it was and it would

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not be long until I would understand. If they couldn't see what it was they wanted they would dramatize it and sometimes it would be a real show to watch them.

Soon after I began working on cattle ranches. We used to let the cattle wander over the open range for there were not any fences then. In the spring we would have a roundup, when all the cattle owners for miles around would hunt up all the cattle and bring them to what is now the town of Broken Arrow. There we would pick out our own cattle. There would be sometimes twenty-five or thirty different outfits represented. Each rider brought his own bedding and we followed the chuck wagon. Our food was beans, coffee, bacon or salt meat, sometimes with some fruit. Occasionally some nearby rancher would give us some fresh beef, or if there were any mavericks we sometimes killed these for the chuck wagon. We gradually worked toward Muskogee where we shipped them out.

The thing we dreaded more than anything else was a stampede. Cattle will stampede at almost nothing if it

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is out of the ordinary. To stop a stampede we would try to get them to milling, or going around in a circle. The leaders would start going round and round and the others would follow, getting their heads closer and closer together and holding them away up high. Then after we got them all to milling we would fire off a gun close to the outside of the circle, and those nearest the sound of the shot would start off in that direction, the others following in the same path unwinding just like a ball of yarn, and the stampede was broken.

Cattle which had once been stampeded were always excitable afterward. They never seemed really to get over it.

There was such a thing as honor among the outlaws. Bill Doolin was one who had a good streak in him. One time he happened to be at the 3D ranch, owned by a man named Freeman. The Freeman ranch was up near Hominy, probably thirty-five miles from Tulsa. Freeman's little girl was sick and it was necessary to have medical

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attention for her, but the nearest physician was Dr. S. G. Kennedy in Tulsa. The only way to reach him was to go for him on horseback and the only person free to go was Freeman himself. Doolin was there getting his supper so he said, "I'll go for the doctor, Freeman. You are needed here with the little girl!" Doolin rode all the long distance to Tulsa, picked up the doctor and accompanied him back to the ranch. It was near morning by then and as they approached the house several men mounted on horses were seen close to the house. Doolin said, "I don't believe I need to go any further with you. I'll tell you who I am. I'm Bill Doolin and those men may be looking for me", and with that he rode off.

Another time I was working cattle over near Mingo when a gang of five rode up one night. They were a green gang and two of them stayed outside while the other three ate, then the three stood watch while the other two ate. They had been in some trouble over near Wealaka Mission and a day or so later they met up with some officers and were killed.