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ARMSTRONG, LEWIS

INTERVIEW

7522

INDEX CARDS

Catching Wild Horses

ARMSTRONG, LEWIS. INTERVIEW.

#7522

Interview with Lewis Armstrong
By Field Worker, Pete W. Cole
September 16, 1937

In the sixteenth century adventurers, from Spain, roaming over what is now the American Southwest, passed through Oklahoma and spent several months in the Wichita Mountains, looking vainly for silver and gold.

In the seventeenth century there is a tradition that a Spanish trader named Bravel made a trip up the Red River where his party prospected for gold. Later the Indians, hearing the noise, which was like the explosion of a cannon, believed it to be made by the spirits of these early-day Spaniards working in their treasure mines.

Even down to the present time, there are rumors of the "Lost Spanish Mines."

It is believed that the early Spanish explorers brought the first horses to the Indian Territory, for it was at this time that the Indians owned horses and some at that time had fine Spanish saddles and bridles

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showing that they had been trading with the settlements.

Often when a rider would stop late in the day at a place with a stream nearby to camp for the night and would hobble his horse to feed on the grass which was abundant and higher than a man's head, the hobbled horse would stray off never to be seen again by its owner.

It was after the horses became wild and traveled in herds or bunches that an exciting time was experienced in "ringing the wild horse" as it was called. The way this was done was that when cowboys would ride up where they could see these horses feeding, a certain number of men would post themselves at equal distances apart, ride around the herd, forming a large circle of about two miles when someone would frighten the horses by riding toward them and would start them off and as they ran to the first bunch of riders they would be chased back. Backward and forward the horses would

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race, trying to escape and now and then some horse would break through the line and get away, while others continued to break out until they wore themselves out and would be panting when the fresh riders would rush in and lasso them.

Another way of catching wild horses which was most common in those days was to cut down young trees and saplings until a space was cleared of about one mile at the mouth and at each end riders would be placed. After the horses would approach in this direction, the men riding after them would scare the horses into the pen and upon reaching the other end where there was a small lot, the gate would be closed and the horses would be penned in.

It was after the horses were corralled that the fun took place. There was usually a competition as to who was the best rider and upon terms and agreement when a man was spilled from his horse he lost his chance of claiming the horse that threw him. When a horse

was to be ridden, the rider lassoed the horse, placed a halter and saddle on his back and led him out of the corral into the open spaces and rode him without help from anyone. If a rider could not control the horse or could not put the saddle on him without help, his chance in claiming the horse was forfeited and someone else must try to ride the horse. Such was the way that wild horses were ridden and were broken to ride and to work. The customs of the riders or cowboys of the present are altogether different.

If a man wished to claim several horses to own and to work with, he would pick out the horses he wanted and would hire riders to break these horses to ride. The rider's fee was usually from two and a half to five dollars, depending upon how wild the horse was.