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ARMSTRONG, W. H.

INTERVIEW

8100

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BIOGRAPHY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

8100

ARMSTRONG, W. H.

Field Worker's name Eunice M. Meyer

This report made on (date) July 27, 1937

1. Name W. H. Armstrong

2. Post Office Address Mangum

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 20 Year 1874

5. Place of birth Polkstation, Mississippi

6. Name of Father George Armstrong Place of birth Maryland

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother Martha Jane Isabel Place of birth Mississippi

Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached \_\_\_\_\_.

Eunice M. Mayer  
Interviewer  
July 27, 1937

Interview with W. H. Armstrong  
Mangum, Oklahoma

Mr. W. H. Armstrong came to Greer County from Lockhart, Caldwell County, Texas, in the fall of 1892. He was only a boy of eighteen, but boys grew up early in those days. His parents settled in what is now Harmon County, in a section near the present site of Wellington, Texas.

Quanah was the principal trading post, since Childress and Memphis were then undeveloped. To Quanah the early settlers went for their coal and lumber, also to have their wheat ground into flour.

The family later returned to Collingsworth County, and Mr. Armstrong got a job with John and Jarret James, who maintained a large herd of cattle near old Jaybuckle, west of the site of Salton.

Later, he changed outfits, accepting employment with the Rocking Chair Cattle Company, operated by an English syndicate. The company maintained cattle over an area thirty miles square, comprising a large section of Collingsworth County.

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Mr. Armstrong then decided to stake his own claim, and filed on a tract near Salt Fork River, near the O. M. Ranch headquarters. This ranch is recalled by several pioneer cattlemen among whom are O. P. Melton and John Beavers. The late Hub Mathewson was interested in the O. M. Ranch venture, Mr. Armstrong recalls.

The tract of land which the youthful emigrant from Texas chose for his homestead was near the D. O. Z. springs, which consisted of a ravine thirty feet deep from which issued a stream of crystal clear water.

The story was told that a stray cow bearing the mysterious brand "D.O.Z." was found in the spring one day, and the cattlemen of the area called the place by that name from then on.

After remaining on his claim three years, Mr. Armstrong came to Greer county and filed on a tract south of Salton, and later to Mangum in 1903. At that time the town consisted of a dozen shacks on the present south side of the square.

The Crouch Hotel was its chief architectural pride. An old water well located in front of the hotel

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is still visible as a depression in the pavement on East Lincoln Street, today.

Throughout his early days in this section, Mr. Armstrong worked as a cowpuncher for a large band of cattle outfits. He spent twelve months with the James brothers, and worked three years for the Rocking Chair Company.

Officials of the Rocking Chair Company, who controlled most of the cattle lands in west Texas, looked down on Greer County cattlemen as nesters or "Woolies." However, Greer County was then the seat of a thriving cattle industry. George W. Boyd and Frank Simpson were then living in the area, which had already gained fame from its T-Cross and H. Bar Y ranches.

Considerable rivalry between cow outfits of the two areas sprang up.

However, the syndicate had the advantage in extent of their operations. Other large ranches in the area were the Rose, near Clarendon; Shoe Nails, J. A. Goodnight's; and Cody.

The cowboy in the early days had to know how to take care of himself and his. For his labor, he was

paid from \$40 to \$80 monthly. If the sum was small, there was little to spend it on. Of course, the larger salary was paid only to boss hands who had executive duties in addition to their responsibility as ranch bosses.

Although professional cowmen, who spent the day in the saddle, and sometimes the night, were little inclined to amuse themselves with horseback riding in idle hours, bronc riding on a small scale was sometimes practiced by the ranch hands.

Of all the old time bronc riders, the most fearless and successful was John Yarber, who is still living at Wellington, Texas. He was the pride of the Rocking Chair outfit and his fearlessness is still discussed when old time cowmen hold a reunion.

Mr. Armstrong, who worked as a youthful cowpuncher in this section 45 years ago, declares the life of a early cowhand was far from being a continuous round of toil, for months at a time, especially in winter, the average cowman had little to do except feed his pony. Of course, hands, who were assigned range riding, had their duties the year round.