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BOYD, WILLIAM.

INTERVIEW

9580

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

BOYD, WILLIAM.

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Field Worker's name Linnaeus B. Ranck.

This report made on (date) December 24, 1937 193

1. Name William Boyd.

2. Post Office Address Shattuck, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) _____

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month March Day _____ Year 1854.

5. Place of birth Iowa.

6. Name of Father _____ Place of birth _____

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother _____ Place of birth _____

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 _____.

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Linnaeus B. Ranck,
Investigator,
Dec. 24, 1937.

An Interview With William Boyd,
Shattuck, Oklahoma.

Mr. Boyd came to Oklahoma first in the early summer of 1880, coming up from south Texas with a herd of eighteen hundred steers belonging to his father. With this trail herd they followed the course of the old Chisholm Trail. There were fifteen men in the crew including two of Mr. Boyd's brothers and his father. They had with them, of course, a chuck wagon, a huge and heavy one drawn by ox teams, ordinarily by three yokes of oxen or by as many more as was necessary, in case traveling became difficult.

The outfit crossed Red River at the mouth of Mad Creek in the old Chickasaw Nation. Mad Creek was very properly named for it was an extremely muddy, boggy stream. It was necessary to keep cattle out of it, if possible, for they would usually bog down so hopelessly in it that many were lost at times. In case of cattle apparently hopelessly sunk in Mad Creek they were shot

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and the herd moved on. In such an event the Indians would occasionally undertake to extricate the animals.

The Chickasaws never gave them trouble, but the trail led through a part of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation and the latter tribes pestered and disturbed the outfit more or less till the herd left their country. The Indians persistently begged for beeves and when refused sought artfully to stampede a herd and make away with a few beeves in that manner. One Sunday while yet in the Cheyenne-Arapaho country the outfit was in camp most of the day. A band of Cheyennes visited them and so persisted in having some steers given them that Mr. Boyd's older brother who was with the herd finally took a bull whip and lashed the Indians out of camp. They departed but appeared very angry. The outfit feared retaliation so posted extra guards over the herd during the night following and drove hard the next day in an effort to reach safer territory. However, the white renegades were a much greater hazard and source of annoyance than the Indians. The white men, though, were more interested in stealing horses than they were in getting away with cattle.

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The outfit was bound for Caldwell, Kansas, where they intended selling the herd. On the 28th day of August they arrived in the vicinity of Caldwell, but did not get the cattle sold until two weeks afterwards. This was Boyd's first and last trip up from Texas with a trail herd.

For a few years to follow Mr. Boyd punched cattle with various outfits in Kansas and the Cherokee Strip. In the course of time he established a ranch of his own in the brakes on the north side of the South Canadian River just north of the present site of Canadian, Texas. He served as sheriff of Hamphill County, Texas, for a number of years holding that office when the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation was opened to white settlement. He and several others from around Canadian, Texas, entered the Cheyenne-Arapaho country from the west with a view to staking either a claim or a lot in Cheyenne which had been platted, surveyed and set apart by the Government for a townsite. The dash for town lots in Cheyenne occurred during the afternoon of the day of the opening. To help a friend who was intent on getting a lot in

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Cheyenne, Boyd let the man hold to the tail of his (Boyd's) saddle horse to aid him in getting into the heart of the townsite ahead of some others. It turned out unfortunate for his friend, however, for in the course of time the man discovered that he had staked a long alley instead of a lot. A saloon proprietor in Canadian, Texas, sent a man with a buckboard, a span of mules and a barrel of whiskey to be on the ground for the opening of the Cheyenne townsite. This improvised saloon set up for business in a nearby dugout.

The country did not appeal favorably to Boyd though, so the man (he) left the locality of the Cheyenne townsite the evening of the opening day and staked a claim north of the townsite embracing the location of the old battlefield site where Custer had attacked the Cheyennes in the winter of 1868. Boyd never returned to his claim though.

The claim Boyd staked was littered with bones, piles of them in some places, and there were skeletons of hundreds of Indian ponies which Custer and his

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troops killed incident to the battle of the Washita. Over the years that followed, settlers from the Cheyenne section hauled tons of those bones to Canadian, Texas, and sold them; occasionally there was observed among them skulls and other portions of human skeletons, presumably of the Cheyenne Indians killed in that famous battle on the Washita. Boyd was still at Canadian, Texas, and was the sheriff of Hemp-hill County when the Strip opened. He and three other men trained horses for the run for a number of weeks prior to the opening by making long and fast rides with them over the rough country adjacent to the Canadian River. In ample time to be on the border ready for the run this party of four men left Canadian in a hack with supplies and their saddle horses they had been training for the run into the Strip. They set out for Caldwell, Kansas, intent on claiming some of the choice lands south of the Kansas border in that section. They drove north by Englewood, Kansas, thence east to Caldwell.

The four men were on the line for the run astride horses that Boyd claimed were some of the best for the

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purpose that made that famous race. They carried with them their guns and emergency supplies. Their driving team and hack they left in Caldwell. They crossed the line when a soldier some two hundred yards to the east of them fired the signal to advance and rode to Pole Cat Creek, a distance of nineteen miles, in an hour and five minutes. Boyd staked a claim along this stream and just three miles east of the town of Medford.

Immediately to the right of the Boyd party and standing abreast with them on the line awaiting the signal to advance was a party of four men in a new-like wagon to which they had hitched a high class team of Missouri mules. They dashed over the line as the signal but did not get over two hundred yards away until one rear wheel of their wagon struck a prairie-dog hole with such apparent force that the axle snapped off inside the wheel's hub. The party was driving in a fast gallop when this accident occurred and consequently all except the driver were thrown to the ground.

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In the very locality where Boyd and his companions staked claims they disturbed a Sooner secluded in the high blue-stem grass in a ravine. He was driving a two-wheeled cart drawn by one horse. As the Boyd party was approaching he darted out and sped away to the south at breakneck speed and raced on out of sight.

Mr. Boyd and his companions encountered difficulties in holding their claims for there were plenty of men ready to bluff them off or dispossess them by means as foul and as forceful as the situation or circumstances seemed to require and he and his companions had to defend their holdings at the point of a gun.

The next day after the opening one of the party rode back to Caldwell for their team, rig and its load of supplies. The other three remained on the claims they had staked to keep off lawless invaders. Five days after the opening they all drove to Knid, the nearest land office, to enter their legal filings. Knid was a sea of tents and the land office was in a rough pine-board make-shift building. The ground about the land office had been trampled to a choking dust and it was

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impossible to get a drink of water unless one bought it and it was not easy to buy. Mr. Boyd and his companions waited in Enid for two days before they could file because there were so many ahead of them.

After filing Boyd returned to Canadian and resumed his official duties as sheriff of Hemphill County. In the course of time he established his wife and children on the homestead in the Strip and he remained in the sheriff's office at Canadian, Texas. He made final proof on his claim and later traded it for forty head of two year old steers.

Boyd declares there was never a cow country to equal the old Cherokee Strip. He has been an enthusiastic hunter all of his life and says he never saw a land so abounding with wild game as the Strip country was during the early days. He came to Gage soon after this country was settled and operated a saloon for several years. Later he located on a small ranch several miles northwest of Shattuck.