

MANGERS, WILLIAM HENRY. SECOND INTERVIEW W.

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Ethel B. Tackitt
Investigator
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Interview with W. H. Mangers,
Hobart, Oklahoma.

Wild horses were numerous in all parts of the Indian Territory from the time first known by my people, which was before the Civil War. But I shall only tell you what I have seen and know to be true. I was born in the Chickasaw Nation, in what is now Marshall County, January 12, 1868. My earliest memories have to do with the great herds of wild horses that roamed the country at will.

There were but few white people in that part of the country and all the farming was done in patches along the creeks and valleys. For that reason this region was a haven for the wild horses. The reeds and grass grew in the valleys of the Washita and Blue Rivers and Wild Horse, Rush, Clear and Muddy Boggy Creeks and hundreds of smaller creeks such as Willow and Glasses, to the height of a man's head sitting on horseback. These places made a perfect winter protection for these wild horses, while the uplands furnished the short grass which horses like so well.

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Nothing disturbed them in those early days as the Chickasaw Indians did not chase them like the Comanche and Cheyenne Indians on the Western Plains, therefore, they multiplied rapidly. The white people did not bother them for they worked oxen, usually, and had their tame saddle ponies.

In the Fall of the year these wild horses came in to the region, which I have just located, in great numbers, drifting in, as the winter came on, from the western sections. The next Spring they would come out on the prairies in bunches and I trust you will know that I am not exaggerating when I tell you that I have seen as many as a thousand wild horses at one time on the prairies of this region. They ran in bands, each one with a leader herding his band where he wished them to graze and driving other bands away. They were of the wiry Mustang type, of all colors and as wild as the deer and antelope which usually were to be found near them. The numbers of them cannot be overdrawn for I tell you they were to be seen with ease in bunches of from fifty to a hundred odd, all over the prairies.

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When settlers began to come into the country and clear larger tracts of land, these wild horses became a nuisance. They would entice the horses of the settlers to run away with them and if a horse was found by them on the prairie unhobbled, (all settlers hobbled their horses to graze) they would drive the work horse into their band and it was a long chase if it was ever caught again. In this way, there were always some good horses among them and a few fine bred horses had run away with them, giving rise to the stories of fine wild horses, but mostly they were Mustang.

We had a team of horses to get loose and run away with the wild bunch and as was the custom we notified all our neighbors for miles around. Everybody was on the lookout for work horses among them and at last we received word that our horses had been seen with a certain band of horses and our neighbors came on horseback to help us try to catch them. The band was chased continuously by parties of men taking turns at keeping them on the run. The work horses would become tired and stop sometimes and in this way we were able to capture the mare of our team but the horse was never caught and at last we gave up and quit the chase.

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Then as years went by people began to catch the wild horses and break them to ride and work and this became an occupation of many young fellows who built traps at watering places and caught many horses. The settlers also shot those that annoyed them and by all these destructive forces, the wild horses disappeared from this section. Some made their way to the Kiamachi Mountain region where they were able to evade destruction for a number of years and were the last band of wild horses which I knew to exist in the Indian Territory.