

INDEX CARDS

Cattle--trail driving
Ranching--Chickasaw Nation
Openings--Pottawatomie
Openings--Cherokee Strip
Openings--Repeaters
Openings--Cheyenne and Arapaho

Thad Smith Jr.
Field Worker
May, 11, 1937.

25

Interview with Bill Thomas
1528 Idaho Avenue, Chickasha.
Born March 5, 1868. Tennessee
Father-Wm. Thomas
Mother-Katharine Ross.

I made my first trip into Oklahoma in the year 1888. I hired out in Texas, to a big cattleman, named Ike Prickett. I helped drive a herd of three thousand two hundred head of cattle from Texas to a pasture near Rush Springs. Mr. Prickett had all of the land leased from Rush Spring west to Ft. Sill.

My main job was of course, to help drive the cattle, but I broke horses on the side. I was given forty dollars a month for regular work, and three dollars for each bronc that I broke.

Each of the Cowboys were given six horses to ride. As soon as I had ^a horse gentle enough to be called broke, I'd turn him over to some of the boys and get another bronc to ride in my string.

We forded Red River with our herd of cattle at the lower Gainesville Crossing, I happened to be riding a young horse that hadn't been ridden but a few times, and when we hit swimming water he refused to swim, and would go to the bottom and come up and lunge and go down again. It looked as if he might drown so when he came up the second time, I quit him and grabbed hold of a steer's tail that was near me, and the steer pulled me on across the river.

The horse finally made it back to the side of the river that we started from and I went back on a good swimming horse and got him.

I went back to Texas that fall and came back in the summer of 1889 and hired out to Ed Johnson in the Chickasaw Nation, as a cowboy and horse breaker.

When the Pottawatomie country was opened I made the run and got a claim, I stayed on it a couple or three days, got hungry and got up and left it.

When the Cherokee strip opened two other boys and I left Johnson's ranch riding his horses, branded diamond link.

(Made like this ). These horses were extra good. Mr. Johnson had started with good mares, and had bought a redbuck stallion, that had been a race horse in the east, but was broken down in the limbs, this cross produced some of the best horses ever known in the country. A good many of them were sold to polo horse buyers, and some of the best ones were shipped and sold in England for as much as two thousand dollars.

But to get back to my story of the Cherokee strip opening. My two pals and I made the run and got claims four miles from the lines, but being young and not knowing what we wanted, we left those claims to others.

I made the Cheyenne-Arapaho opening, riding a diamond link redbuck horse of Mr. Johnson's. I bet another man that I would stake the second claim from the line, I knew my horse was the fastest there, I staked the claim and collected the bet which was twenty dollars. Some of the men who made the run horseback rode skeleton saddles, just a girt and stirrups.

My father had a claim near Noble. He farmed cotton and corn and made extra good crops. He ginned his cotton at Noble and sold it for around six cents per pound.

Nearly all of the cowboys in the early days wore California pants, and flannel shirts the year around. California pants were all wool, thirty two ounce pants.

Mr. Thomas' father, Wm. Thomas, was born in Tennessee and was buried in Oklahoma. His mother, Katherine Ross Thomas, was born in Tennessee and was buried in Oklahoma.