

GAULT, JOHN.

INTERVIEW

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

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Field Worker's name Ruth Kerbo.

This report made on (date) June 1, 1937. 1937

1. Name Mr. John Gault.

2. Post Office Address Mangum, Oklahoma

3. Residence address (or location) 601 North Georgia, Avenue.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 27 Year 1860.

5. Place of birth Sherman, Texas.

6. Name of Father Theodore Gault. Place of birth Kentucky.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Elizabeth Wimberly. Place of birth Kentucky.

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 11.

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Math Kerbo,
Field worker.
June 1, 1937.

An Interview with John Gault,
Mangum, Oklahoma.

I was living in Grayson County, Texas, when the Kimberland Cattle Company hired me to help drive a hunch of cattle to Greer County, Texas. It was in June 1882. We started with 2,000 head and were going to drive them across the Chickasaw Nation. Shortly after we got over the line we discovered about 500 Chickasaw and Comanche Indians camped over in the timber near the Arbuckle Mountains. They stopped us and were not going to let us go across the country. They tried to make us go back the way we had come, but we had come over an awfully dry country and we insisted that they let us go back south and cross the Red River and follow the river to Doan's Crossing. We had to camp near them that night. We gave them a beef and made friends with them all right. They consented to let us go by the route we chose, but that night they stole two of our best saddle horses. We did not get angry with them for stealing the horses but offered a \$10.00 reward for their return. We had not gotten very far from their camp until they rode up with our horses. We crossed

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at Doan's Crossing and came by the present site of Altus and through Mangum townsite. There was no Mangum then. We went on to headquarters which was located on Elm River, fifteen miles northwest of Mangum, near the present site of Reed.

When we reached the ranch some of the boys asked me how I liked the ranch. I told them I would not have the whole thing if they would give it to me.

The ranch house was a hole dug out of a red clay bank, covered with cottonwood poles placed close together with willow brush on the poles and dirt thrown on top for the roof. The front of the dugout faced the east, was walled up with cottonwood logs and had a door but no windows. There was a rock fireplace in one corner by the door where we used to cook our meals.

We had skillets and lids and large iron pots to cook our food in. We had no regular cook at headquarters, but we had one when we were out with the wagon. The corral was on the northside of the dugout and the spring of water was on the south side.

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S. H. Tittle, George Briggs and Frank Simpson were the only settlers in the country when I came here. They were cattlemen. They came in 1881. There was the Kelsey Ranch over near Hollis and Dick Moore was there too. There were no towns anywhere, this being just an open range grass country with the grass waist high in places. All the hills and hollows looked alike and a man could ride right up on a settlement before he knew there was one near. All of the houses in the settlements were dugouts.

We always herded the cattle in the summer, camping along as the cattle drifted. We made a camp about every four miles and two men would ride together and meet two men. Our line extended south to Red River, west to Hollis and north of Jester.

We had plenty of beef to eat and bread and syrup and beans. We would roll up in our blankets at night and sleep out on the ground anywhere we were when night came.

One of our men by the name of Hughes was camped over on Turkey Creek near Luke while our camp was on farther west. One day we rode by Hughes' camp and found out he was gone. It was near noon and my buddy and I were going to cook some of Hughes' chuck, but before we could get our meal started

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we looked out and about 500 Comanche and Kiowa Indians were making camp. Their tepees were everywhere. They wanted us to fix them something to eat, but we informed them that this was not our camp and we did not know if this man had anything to eat. Before we hardly knew what was taking place the old squaws had some big pots on boiling with dried meat in them. When the meat was ready to eat they asked us to eat with them. The Indians sat on the ground in a circle around the pot of meat. The squaws pitched a piece of rawhide in front of each one on the grass. These pieces of rawhide were to be used as plates. They took long handled forks and lifted the meat out. It was not salted and there was nothing else to eat with it.

These Indians always begged us for coffee, sugar and tobacco. They also liked whiskey, but the squaws did not like for the bucks to drink, but when a buck got drunk the squaws would throw him down and tie him up good with rawhide and let him lie there until he got sober. We would divide our coffee, sugar and tobacco with these Indians and tell them that was all and the older Indians would not bother us anymore, but the children would hang around.

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We had a jug of syrup at the camp and one of the boys asked where it was. We searched in the tent and could not find it, until finally, one of the boys saw it sitting out under a tree with grass straw sticking out of it. These little Indian children had gotten it and that was their way of getting the syrup out. Some of the old Indians would come and look down into that jug.

I worked for this Kimberland Cattle Company as boss in the absence of our regular boss and rode the range too for several years. Then the T-Cross outfit took it over.

I knew all the crossings on the streams here but do not remember whether they were named or not, except the crossing on Elm near our headquarters which was called the T-Crossing.

In the winter before the round-up, and before we broke up camp, sometimes there would come a big snow and it would be too bad to sleep out on the ground so we would take cottonwood poles and make a little log cabin to cook and sleep in. It would not be very large and we would take rawhide and poles and make our bunks and swin; them up in the cabin and put our corn and eats under them. Corn cost about \$2.50 a bushel.

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Before the country began to settle up there were lots of cottonwood trees on Salt Fork and Elm Rivers and on the creeks. Salt Fork was only about half as wide as it is now. After the settlers began to come in and cut these trees down to make dugouts and corrals, the banks of the rivers began to cave off.

Our cattle would get mixed up with those of the other outfits and it would take days to separate them as each outfit handled from 1500 to 2,000 head of cattle at a time. Sometimes we would get nearly back to headquarters before we would finally get the cattle all separated. Each cow was branded of course, and we knew each fellow's brand. When we finally got these strays cut out of our herd we would drive them back in the direction of their ranch far enough away so they would not come back to our herds and these fellows would come and get them. We got our mail from Doan's Store. Mr. Doan knew all the cattlemen in the country and when any of them were at the store he would send the mail on to the different ranches. Each ranchman would pass the mail on until it finally reached its destination, each letter having on its envelope the brand of the ranch where it was going. It was sixty miles to Doan's

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Store. Our supplies came from Gainesville, Texas, at first. One time our wagon was gone for a month. We had a little flour left, but we were getting uneasy for fear our supply would be exhausted.

There was a spring near headquarters where we got our water, but when we were out in camp we got our water out of lakes.

We would dig a hole three or four feet from the lake and let the water from the lake seep into it. It seemed cooler when we fixed it this way and I think the red water from the ponds was cooler than clear water.

These cattlemen brought their cattle in here for the free grass range and expected to be run out any time, so they did not spend any money for lumber to build houses nor corrals.

Finally, after the country began to settle up and the ranches changed hands, smaller cattlemen came in here with small herds and fenced their ranches off. I helped put the first 40 mile fence on the line from McQueen by Hollis and nearly to the Texas line.

There were large herds of antelope here but we paid no attention to them. Wild turkeys went in droves and could be

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seen from any direction. We hardly ever killed one but would run them down with a horse.

There were no buffalo in the country but buffalo trails were everywhere. They were so narrow that we could not follow them, and the trail by which they crossed the creeks was too narrow for a horse to pass through. One time my horse fell in a buffalo trail on Turkey Creek and I was two hours getting him out.

Hunters had camped about all over the country. They had left the stakes that they had had their tents fastened to and maybe a hide or two which they had stretched up to make pens. There were bones scattered about the camps. These men would find a herd and kill as many cattle as they could, then skin the carcasses and hang the hides out to dry.

When they got a wagon load they would tie a pole down across the skins to hold them down and start out to Wichita Falls, Vernon or some other railroad town to sell them.

Sometimes these men would dry some of this meat. It can be cut into narrow strips and just peeled off the bone like peeling an apple.

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We drove our cattle to Canadian City and Higgins to market.

I worked for the T-Cross Ranch and two other outfits for fifteen years until they went out of business in 1896.

We had no amusements of any kind. Sometimes one of the boys would sit around and play a french harp or we would rope steers or bust a broncho when we had any leisure time.

After the Supreme Court of the United States annexed Greer County to Oklahoma Territory and the Free Homes Bill was passed, I filed on a quarter section of land ten miles west of Mangum near Reed. I hauled the lumber from Quanah, Texas, to build my house. I erected a wind mill and farmed a little. I had accumulated a few head of cattle of my own.

I remember the first toll bridge in the country was at Straw Crossing on Red River. Some men had hauled straw and put it on the quicksand and had made the road higher than the surrounding country and the main channel of the river was not boggy. It cost 25 cents a round trip to cross on this straw bridge.

The first bridge on South Fork River was washed out that first summer.

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I remember several stage stands after the stage route came through from Wichita Falls. One was at Hoans' Crossing. A fellow ran a kind of restaurant. Anyway, he served meals to travelers at the Crossing and I remember his canned corn was a specialty and was served at nearly every meal and the bread was like sour dough.

Then there was a stand on Station Creek, near Jester, called Sand Station.

We burned cottonwood, hackberry and mesquite roots.

There were two men killed over near Wild Cat, across the river from my place. I do not remember the date exactly. One man was named Wheeler and was buried on Salt Fork River. His people lived somewhere in Texas and after they heard of his death they came and moved his body to Texas. I do not know what the other man's name was or where he was buried.

One of our T-Cross ranch men killed an outlaw and buried him down on Turkey Creek near Luke. He put a rock wall around his grave. Guess it is still there. I do not know whether anybody ever knew what this outlaw's name was. I don't think there was any name or date put on the grave.

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There used to be a post office at White Flat over near Reed and I think there was one at Bloomington. I am not sure, and one at Blake and one at Greer. There was a little store over near Gould. These stores and post offices are no longer in existence.