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Interview with J. O. Mawlow
308 North 8th Street
Muskogee April 12, 1937 Oklahoma
By
H. L. Ramage, Field Worker

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Mr. Mawlow was born four miles north of McKinney, Texas, March 26, 1860.

Father was born at Hemstead, Arkansas, (don't remember date), died at McKinney, Texas in 1867.

Mother was born somewhere in Arkansas, (don't remember date), died at Caddo, Choctaw Nation in 1892.

NG

I was living at McKinney, Texas and was six years old when I first attended school. It was at the close of the Civil War and there were no school buildings. The school I attended was held in the home of Mrs. Allen, who was also our teacher. I went to this school one term which lasted four or five months. This school was about one mile from my home. The next school I attended was about three miles from my home. I went to this school about two terms. That was the extent of my schooling, except two or three weeks at a time at various places.

I do not know much about ferries. Have crossed the ferry located on Red River, just north of Denison, Texas a number of times. This ferry was operated by Mr. Colbert, a Choctaw Indian. When just a boy I used to cross the Red River on a ferry located about twelve miles up the river from the Colbert Ferry and about even with where Pottsville, Texas is now located; although there was no town at that time.

In 1887 I crossed the Nevins Ferry with a company of men with seven wagon-loads of grading equipment; on this trip we left Cherokee and Broad

driving straight to the Nevins Ferry, going by Bacone College and on ~~t236~~ ferry. There were no fences in those days.

All creeks and rivers of any size had toll bridges in those days, I returned to Texas one time with my sister and her two small children, it was in the summertime and they sunburned and tanned so much that I passed them as Indians, getting free passage over most toll bridges. Indians did not have to pay toll.

There was a toll bridge built by Mull and another man (don't remember his name) across the east fork of the Trinity River. Mr. Mull operated this bridge. I remember one time a fellow on horse-back crossed this toll bridge. After he got about three or four hundred feet across the bridge, he looked back and saw the bridge fall in. It was never rebuilt. In later years the county built a steel bridge a short distance from where the old toll bridge stood.

In 1894 I made a trip to Texas driving a team and wagon. The water was awfully high and most streams was out of their banks and bridges were washed out. On this trip I went around by Lehigh, having to cross the Big Boggy Creek, when I arrived at the toll bridge, it was leaning away to one side and looked mighty shaky. I got out of the wagon and walked out on the bridge. I didn't think ^{it} ~~I~~ would stand my weight the way it was shaking. About that time a fellow showed up at the other end of the bridge and asked if I wanted to get across. I told him that if he wanted to drive the team across I would pay him the toll fee, but if I had to drive them across that I would pay him nothing. He drove the team and wagon across but I was expecting with each step the team made for the bridge to collapse. However, the crossing was made all right

I became a cowboy when I was about fourteen years old, That was in 1874.

My first job was to help Abe Burch drive twelve head of mules and four head of horses from McKinney to the Louisiana line. Cattle were cheap at that time and Mr. Burch traded the fourteen mules and four horses for 150 head of cattle. We drove the cattle back to about sixteen miles west of Gainesville, Texas, which later became the Frying Pan Ranch, (don't remember what the brand was). I worked at the Frying Pan Ranch about two years.

In 1880 I went to work for the LXW Ranch. This ranch was owned by Mr. Harrison who also owned and operated a Mercantile store at McKinney, Texas. We drove about six hundred head of cattle to a pasture on the line between Denton and McKinney and shipped about two hundred head to St. Louis, Missouri.

In 1881 Mr. Patten, Mr. Critts and myself bought a livery stable at McKinney, Texas. We ran the stable for five or six months and went broke. We then went back to "punching" cattle. We punched cattle until late in 1882. Then, Mr. Patten and I started buying cattle and driving them to the market at Dallas. The next spring we bought an interest in a meat market with Mr. Simpson at McKinney, Texas. Simpson did the banking business. We had a mighty good business and thought we were doing mighty well. However, it was not long until Simpson started drinking and gambling. The first thing we knew we were broke. Simpson took the money to the bank each morning but instead of putting it in the bank he would drink and gamble it away. Well, we were broke again. In 1883 we went back to punching cattle. We did this for just a short time. Then we bought cattle and drove them to different market points.

In 1884 Patten, Mr. Burley and myself went to San Pecos, Texas and got a contract to build a fence covering twelve hundred acres. We got 20 cents a panel. Which means that the posts were set eight feet apart. After the fence was finished, a man by the name of Berry and I bought a horse. We went to Brownwood and on to Albany. We found jobs there as herd drivers, driving a herd of three thousand steers to Colorado. The herd was owned by Snider and

Evans. We followed the trail that was known as the Western Trail, going by way of the Wichita Mountains and the North Fork River. The drive started two hundred miles south of San Antonio. We went across the corner of the Comanche Reservation, stopping for dinner while crossing the Reservation. While we were eating dinner, the old Comanche Chief Quannah Parker, and two Bucks came to our camp. We thought they were going to cause us trouble but everything went along fine. When they left our camp, the foreman gave the Chief a fat two year old steer. Chief Parker could speak a little English. His mother was a white woman names Cynthia Ann Parker. Mrs. Parker was stolen by the Tribe when only a child. When she was old enough she married Peta Nocomo, a Comanche Buck. She had three or four children. One being the great Chief Quannah Parker--the one who came to our camp. Cynthia was later forced by the Tribe to go back to her people where she died of grief for her Indian husband and children.

The first town we hit after leaving Texas was Fort Dodge, Kansas. The next town was ^{Ogallala} Oolagah, Nebraska. Our destination was a ranch on Poll Creek, about five miles from where Junction City, Colorado is now located. Although there was no town there at that time. We had several runs but only one amounted to anything. That happened between the Texas line and the Comanche Reservation. It took us four days to gather the cattle and six months to make the drive. After the drive was over, Berry and I sold our horses. We then went to where Junction City is now located and bought a ticket to Austin, Texas.

In 1885-86 I farmed at McKinney, Texas. In 1887 I went to railroading and followed this work for one year. In 1888 I moved to Caddo, Choctaw Nation, taking my mother and two widowed sisters with me. I farmed at Caddo until 1894.

July 3, 1894, I moved to Muskogee and took up the carpenter trade and have been here ever since.

When I arrived at Muskogee, the only church was the Methodist Church

located on Cherokee and Okmulgee streets. It was a sandstone church, if I remember correctly, consisting of one room. There were no other churches here at that time.

AR

I don't remember much about the war. However, along about the latter part, my Uncle by marriage, was killed. He was not considered much in the community and was known as a bushwhacker. He would/ ^{join} neither side during the war. My father was in poor health and in bed most of the time. Dad had some money, which was in gold, and buried some place. This uncle tried several times to borrow it, but Dad always told him that he did not have any money. Bill Brack was my uncle's name. At a later date Bill came to my mother and told her that if Dad did not loan him that money he was going to be sorry. The Quantrell Gorillo men wintered around McKinney each year. One of these men, by name of Vaughn, was living close to our house. One day while he was at our house, mother told him what Bill Brack had said about the money. Just a day or two later we heard some shots up the road. It was not long until four or five of the Quantrell men rode up to our house and called father out, telling him there was a dead man up the road for him and to come and see if he knew who it was. Mother and Dad went to the place where the body lay and recognized it as Bill Brack. No one ever knew who killed him but we were rather sure it was Vaughn.

There was another bushwhacker killed on our farm. We had a well a short distance from the house. This bushwhacker had been arrested at McKinney, (don't remember what the charge was). All prisoners had to be taken before General McClure at Bonham, Texas for trial. It was thirty miles from McKinney to Bonham and as they passed our well with the prisoner he started to run away from them. The guards shot and killed him, leaving him where he had fallen. My brother and two old slave women drove some cattle to the well to water them. When they

got to the well they found the dead man. They all came back to the house and told mother and father about it. Father told my brother to go tell some of the neighbors. When the neighbors arrived we all went back to the well. The cows had eaten all the clothes off the dead man except his underwear. They would have eaten the underwear but the corpse was swollen so much the cows could not get hold of it.

RACES

I have ridden/a lot of races, some professional and some were just ordinary matched races. I remember one time while working as a cow puncher, Mr. Berry and I took some steers to the stock yards at Dallas. We sold all the steers except two, which were pretty rough looking but good steers. We were having a hard time getting rid of them. The fellow that bought the other cattle had two ponies, we tried to trade the two steers for the ponies but he would not trade. Later we were passing a saloon, located at the stock yards, and a fellow called us in to have a drink. While we were drinking, Mr. Berry asked him if he had changed his mind about the trade. He answered that he was not going to trade like that as one of his ponies was a race horse. Mr Berry told him that his 16 year old horse could out run his race horse. So they matched a race for fifty yards and bet ten dollars on the race. Mr. Berry's horse won the race. The man than bet Berry ten dollars his horse could out-run Berry's old horse for seventy-five yards. They ran this race and Berry won again. He gave the man twenty dollars and the two steers for the two ponies. The boys sure razzed him about an old worn out cow horse out running his race horse.

POLICE

While living at Caddo I knew an Indian Police by the name of Forbis Manning. One day I had been in town to take care of some business, after finishing with my business I got on my horse and started home. Forbis stopped me and said there were two one-gallon jugs of whiskey at the depot. He told

me to put my horse up and we would go down and break one and take the other one up to a room behind the Masonic Hall where a U. S. Marshal and two carpenters stayed and have some fun. We went to the depot. Forbis went inside and got one jug, brought it out and opened it. He asked me to taste it and verify if it was whiskey, which I did. There was an old Negro standing nearby and he asked Mr. Manning to let him have a drink of the whiskey before the jug was broken. Manning handed him the jug but it took the two of us to take the jug away from the old Negro's mouth. Forbis took the jug out to the rails and broke it and almost cut two fingers off. He went back for the other jug but found that someone had stolen it while he was breaking the other one. An old Indian lawyer by the name of Joe Lawrence was standing close to the depot and I asked him about it. He said he didn't get it and furthermore he never drank the stuff--then he laughed. The joke was on us.

Old Dad Depew, a U. S. Marshal from Muskogee and Atoka, used to come to Caddo. He had a Negro deputy that traveled with him most of the time and the boys at Caddo disliked him for that reason. One night Depew came to Caddo and stayed all night. After he went to bed the boys stretched a wire across the street and fixed a dummy and hung it to the wire with a rope around its neck. It looked just like a man with a six-shooter on and everything. The next morning when the old Marshal got up and started down the street he was almost under the dummy before he saw it. He certainly was mad after he learned the joke was on him. They had placed a sign on the dummy which read, "The last remains of Dad Depew". Dad would not wait there for the train but walked nine miles to Caney and caught the train there. He never did come back to Caddo.

While I was working at the Fryling Pan Ranch I was just camping there until lumber could be hauled to build a house. It was not very far to my home and I was running short on supplies so I hitched up the team and wagon and

started home one evening. I saw five or six horsemen coming to meet me. They did not look just right so I pulled off the main trail. They saw me as they passed and came to where I was. They asked me a lot of questions about different things; asked me who the team belonged to that I was driving and I told them it belonged to me. One of them said, "If its the kid's team, we don't want it", and went on. When I got to town I learned it was the Bass gang and that they had just robbed a train near McKinney. One of the gang named Jim Murphy was later caught. He told the sheriff that if he would turn him loose he would help lay a trap and catch the gang. They let him go and planned a bank robbery in order to catch them. The bank they planned to rob was at Round Rock, Texas. The sheriff and Texas Rangers were notified of the day and hour and the trap was layed. As the outlaws were riding into town, Murphy made an excuse of some kind to get away, saying he would meet the gang in town later. The gang rode into town early, it was about eleven o'clock. When they got into town they went in a store. The sheriff saw them enter the store and followed them in with only one deputy. When he got in the store, he told Bass to give him his gun. Bass answered that if the sheriff got his gun it would be the smoking end of it. At that the shooting started. The sheriff and deputy were both killed. The Rangers were just riding into town and heard the shooting. They raced their horses to where it was. The Bass gang had just reached their horses when the Rangers arrived and surrounded the gang. Barnes was killed instantly, Bass was shot through the stomach and Jackson got on his horse and was getting away. He looked back and saw Bass trying to get on his horse. Jackson wheeled his horse and came back, jumped off his horse and helped Bass into the saddle. He got on behind him and made their get-away. Bass was later found about six miles from town but dead from the gun wound. Jackson was never caught. The Rangers said Jackson had more nerve than any they ever saw. Bass told the Rangers that cared for him until he died,

that he made Jackson leave him and make his get-away and gave him all the money they had. The Rangers said Bass was as nice a talking a man as they had ever talked to.

I also knew most of the outlaws around here such as the Christy boys, Cherokee Bill, The Cook Gang, the Dalton boys and others, but I have nothing to tell about them.

DS

In the spring of 1887 I came from Texas over the old Texas Road to work with a grading crew when, what is now known as the MoP R.R., was being built. I don't remember what the railroad was first called but the name was changed to the Iron Mountain. In later years it was changed to the present name of Missouri-Pacific. I first worked between Ft. Gibson and Wagoner just north-east of old Gibson Station. I did not work there long as I could not get along with the boss. He bought a mule from me saying he would pay me whenever I asked for it. One morning I did not go out to work, later in the morning I went to where the crew was working and asked him for the money and told him I had quit. He said he would pay me when he got damn good and ready. I told him that might be pretty quick. I went back to camp and got my six shooter and went back to where he was working. When I arrived he had a shovel in his hand and was getting ready to hit me with it. I pulled my gun on him and about that time his son showed up and started to get into the scrap but I told him that he had better get back where he came from. The boss asked me if I was not trying to buy a team, I told him I was, he told me to find a team I wanted and bring the owner to him and he would arrange for me to get the team, which I did. The boss called the man to one side and talked to him a few minutes, when they returned to where I was the man said, "the team is yours". I left there and went to where they were working on the cut just north of Braggs. I asked the boss for a job as slip holder. He said all right, I told him I would go

to work if he would pay me in cash. He said he would not do it as they ²⁴⁴ payed \$1.50 per day and payed with a time slip. These were not of much value for they could not be spent just any place. The boss was sitting on a stump at the south end of the cut. I went to where they were loading the slips and asked one of the men if he cared if I loaded a few. He said, "all right." They were only loading the slip about half full, I started to filling them and putting them full while the boss watched me. Pretty soon he got up and walked by where we were working and went on to the north end of the cut and sat down on another stump. I loaded a few more slips and quit. When I left I walked by where the boss sat without looking at him. Just after I passed, he called to me and asked me if I would not say anything to the other men if he payed me in cash? I told him it was none of the other men's business, so I went to work. I ^{had} worked for him for forty days when I received a letter from my mother asking me to come home, saying that my father was in very poor health. I started for home as soon as I received her letter.

I worked as a cowboy on the Chisholm Trail about sixteen miles west of Gainesville, Texas. I was payed by the Cattlemen's Association. My job was to see that the big herd drives didn't pick up any stray cattle as they moved through on the trail. I have seen herds pass over the Chisholm Trail so large that it would take from two to four days for them to get by.

I have also traveled over the Texas Trail from Texas to the Nevins Ferry. Don't remember much about the Texas Trail, but if I remember correctly at all, the trail varied a little as years passed.

My brother Tom helped to drive a herd from McKinney, Texas to Ft. Smith, Arkansas over the old Military Road in 1869. I am sure the first herds driven north from Texas were taken over this road.

The Western Trail that I helped to drive the big herd through from San

Antonio, Texas to Poll Creek in Colorado, was routed by the way of San Antonio, Austin, Brownwood, Coleman City, Albany, Seamore. The trail did not hit any towns in what is now Oklahoma. The next town we hit was Fort Dodge, Kansas. Next was Buffalo, Kansas, Ogalallah, Nebraska. We camped at Ogalallah. There was ten herds in sight. Altogether there were thirty thousand head of cattle. Our destination was on Poll Creek in Colorado, about five miles from what is now known as Junction City.

CHILDREN

Our first children were twins, born at Muskogee in 1900. One was a girl the other a boy and named Geneva and Jess. They were educated at Vainwright and Checotah. Geneva married H. F. Chase.

Ewell was the third and last child, born at Okmulgee in 1904.

CHILDREN

Barbara Gene Chase was born at Muskogee, Oklahoma, April 23, 1927.

Madelon Doyle Chase was born at Muskogee, Oklahoma, March 19, 1929.

Harvey Forrest Chase, Jr. was born at Muskogee, Oklahoma, September 27, 1930.

Carolyn Ann Mawlow was born at Muskogee, Oklahoma, March 2, 1928.