

JONES, EADSLEY D.

FIFTH INTERVIEW.

13067.

Effie S. Jackson,
Journalist,
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Interview With Eadsley D. Jones,
2240 East 10th Street,
Tulsa, Oklahoma.

HOW RED FORK RANCH BECAME
DOVER, OKLAHOMA.

My father, Dan Jones, owned the Red Fork Ranch from 1875 to 1883. He sold his interest in Red Fork Ranch, government licensed commissary, to Ralph Collins, in 1883. Collins, a distant relative of Brinton Darlington, for whom the first Indian Agency among the Arapahoes had been named, had been employed at the Darlington Agency. He was quite at home in charge of the commissary. He ran it for one year. My father continued to keep his headquarters there until 1887, though he was in the cattle business, six miles northwest of Preacher Creek.

Collins made some improvements although the ranch was in excellent condition when he took it over. Possibly the greatest improvement was fencing the leased area. Cowboys out of work found cutting posts a good winter's job. The

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Indians assisted and in this way the eighty miles of wire fencing was stretched. The task was hardly completed before the government decided to open the country to settlement. All leases were taken from the cattlemen and they were forced to abandon all improvements. Collins, realizing that there was no future in possessing the lease, turned it over to John Chapin in 1884. The commissary would be used until the opening, at least until 1887, though its day of importance was over.

Now a word about John Chapin or "Old Chape" as he was called. He was a dear friend of my boyhood days and was loved by all. He dropped into the ranch one hot summer day during 1883. A thin, wiry fellow, long black beard and a mustache, old army hat, jeans clothing, cowboys boots, and astride a straggly horse. His bearing on horseback was balanced by a cloth case strapped on his back, which carried a violin while a case in front carried a banjo. He said he was John G. Chapin from Fort Reno, "belonging no place in particular". He could cook, was "handy" around a ranch and could always furnish good music. So "Old Chap" became a fixture. As time went on he was well-known all along the

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trail - the commissary became more popular because of "Old Chape", his biscuits and his cowboy music. When Collins gave up the ranch "Old Chap" took it over. He remained in charge of it until 1886, when the opening spelled its doom. It had began falling into ruins when Old Chapin took it over, no point in trying to keep up something that was to be abandoned. After the opening of 1889 this location was logical for a townsite, and the town of Dover sprang up overnight. The Rock Island had already surveyed through it and was ready to run its line where the old stage line had been. "Old Chap" saw the new town rise on the site of the old ranch and remained a loyal citizen of the new town of Dover. I understand that when he got too old to care for himself, he spent the last years of his life at the Old Soldiers' Home at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

My father felt in 1887 that his old commissary, Red Rock Ranch, would be in line for a future (1889) townsite location. He knew that the valley of the Cimarron near the ranch would make a valuable wheat farm, so he planned to "get" this location for his claim in 1889. As I said before we had been

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living in Caldwell, Kansas, for two years (1887-1889) so had established "out of territory residence". My father decided to make the run from the Arapaho line. The thousands who packed the Kansas line had thought only of making it from the North. So the morning of April 22nd found my father and me (I was nine years old) two miles west from the ranch on the Arapaho line. It was quite legal. No stipulation had been made that the participants line up on the Kansas-Oklahoma boundary line. The restriction was that one must be outside the territory and wait until twelve noon before crossing the line to seek a future home.

There we sat alone, our eye on the sun as our only time guide. Father called "time" when he felt noon had arrived. We kept the spirit of the thing by having the horse dash along the two miles to our proposed stake. The buggy bounced in keeping so that I can truthfully say "we made the run". We staked our coveted land, two miles south of the old ranch. Adjoining land was soon taken up, witnesses and necessary filing completed the ownership, and we were ready to homestead our claim. It was ^awonderful wheat farm.

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We lived there until my mother's death in 1893, then my father sold it.

We lived only two miles from the new town of Dover, our old Red Fork Ranch. When I last saw it in 1893, the old ranch building had all disappeared, even the town pump was gone. The only landmark I found was an old cottonwood tree that had been there when I was a child. It still stood in the intersection near where the old pump had been. The railroad passed where the old stage line had been and flourishing stores arose on every side. Dover was a very prosperous place, the center of a wheat farming area and a shipping point, a converging point for railroad and stage lines. Soon it was the mecca for traveling salesmen representing facilities offered by farm machinery.

My mother became active in the religious and civic affairs of the town. She organized the original Woman's Relief Corps of Oklahoma at Dover and was its first department president. My father was the Chairman of the first central republican committee of Oklahoma and was elected to go to Yukon, to help organize the Territorial Government.

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I played my part in political affairs for I beat the head out of my drum rooting for Harrison and then in childish grief wrote him and asked that he send me a new head for it. What/^{was}my joy to receive a whole new drum from the President of the United States.

The town of Dover has almost as many associations for me as the ghost of the old ranch in its midst. My mother was instrumental in having a plot of land set aside on the old Chisholm Trail, a mile from Dover, for a cemetery. My father, mother and brother are buried there. It is my request to be buried there, too.

As I said, my father sold our farm south of Dover after my mother's death in 1893. He then went into the livery stable business in Dover until 1900, when he sold out to the Allen Brothers. He moved to Muskogee and made his home with me and my brother until his death in 1910. I had received a business college education at Peoria, Illinois, (1900). I began as a clerk with the M. K. & T. in Muskogee and am now traveling freight and passenger agent. I have lived in Tulsa since 1916.

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A word in closing about the old cattle trail log book of my father's which he kept in 1879, while he was in charge of the Red Fork Ranch. This was a log book of all the cattle coming up the trail, complete with the day of the month, the owner of the herd, the brands of the owners and number in each herd. The total number of long-horns tabulated by my father for the year 1879 ran over 2,000,000. I have only a photostat of five of those pages (8½ x 12 ¾) dated from May 6 to September 21, 1879.