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BOATMAN, A. N.

INTERVIEW

#5999

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Jerome M. Emmons,  
Field Worker,  
May 24, 1937.

An Interview with Mr. A.N. Boatman,  
Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

I was raised in the Chickasaw Nation on a ranch. I came to Okmulgee about the time of Statehood.

Ranches

I had my own cowpony when I had to jump to reach the saddlehorn. We would often go over and help the nearby ranchers gather up their cattle and never charge them anything. However, when we were 'out' with anybody we would let them know it by saying we would have to charge them for helping them.

Some of my mother's cattle and horses were stolen once and were discovered at a sale in Texas. The man was arrested who was attempting to sell them. We had to drive down to be there for his trial. I think for that trip we took the buckboard.

When we drove our cattle to market and during the round-ups we had to keep a very close watch on our cattle and our

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saddle horses. This was accomplished by night watches and usually prevented their theft by the Indians and their freedmen. Our chuck wagon was taken out on these trips.

One time when we were returning from a trip I went fishing on a river where we had camped. My horse was grazing on the bank when I heard a noise near him. I dropped my fishing pole and made a dive for my horse. I almost ran over a Seminole Freedman who was trying to steal him. The men I was with never knew of the incident. My explanation was that the hook got straightened out on a log so that I had to quit.

#### Law and Order

Arkansas Law extended into the Territory and many Federal prisoners were taken to Fort Smith, Arkansas, for trial, though some were taken to Vinita; U. S. Marshals were the representatives of law, but rustlers were many times caught by a group of ranchers. Many times they were caught but never brought back.

Gus Bobbitt, a Deputy U. S. Marshal, drew the simity of two men, named West and Allen, who ran the Old Corner Saloon. As liquor was unlawful in the Territory they got as

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close as they could to it and still be in Oklahoma Territory. This was on a raft in the river where the Seminole and Chickasaw Nations met. There was hardly a week that went by but what at least one man was killed there. Many Indians, of course, came there to drink.

West and Allen started wholesale cattle thefts and when the Marshal, Mr. Bobbitt, started out to catch them in it, they sold out and went to West Texas.

The marshal had the feeling that they might try to kill him, so he set aside a thousand dollars in his will to prosecute them. His guess was right, as he was killed by a load of buckshot by someone as he was driving back to his ranch with a wagon full of cottonseed or feed.

Later, a nephew of the professional killer, who was guilty of the crime, told of the arrangements to have the money in a bank for the job. Allen and West, a banker, the killer were all lynched by the citizens. A coroner's jury never found the mob who did the lynching.

The Henry Masoner gang, which operated around Allen and Holdenville stopped at a ranch near Ada and asked for something to eat. While the woman was getting something for

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their meal, they plundered the ranch. Before they left she recognized her husband's spurs on one of the men. Her husband when he learned of it got together a group of ranchers and came after the gang. They stopped at our ranch and wanted a guide to a ranch northwest of what is now Allen. Eli Pickins, whom I stayed with, said that an Indian named Sid Nelson could go with them. I begged to go instead. This was allowed on condition that I return when I got in sight of the ranch.

The marshal and a posse had just passed on when we saw someone passing our ranch. I rode out to meet them. It was part of the gang the marshal was after. One of them had a toe shot off, but when I questioned them they said he had just hurt it on a rock or something. They asked if I had seen the marshal and I said no.

#### Mills

There were a few mills around the country where people could bring grain, etc., to be ground. One of them was Bird's mill on Bird Creek, near what is now Stonewall. It was an overshot mill. The water was narrowed by planks to hit the paddles. It had a lot of power and ran among other things a gin and grist mill.