

JONES, EADSLEY D.

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Effie S. Jackson
Journalist
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A Memorable Christmas on the Chisholm Trail.
(BY Dan W. Jones- Dover, December 24, 1899)

(From memoirs of Dan W. Jones- as given by his son Eadsley D. Jones, 2240 E. 10th - Tulsa, Oklahoma. This is the personal account written by Dan W. Jones, December 24th, 1899, and never published but once and that was in the Monitor Press, Wellington, Kansas, January 30th, 1901.)

Coming to me where I sit this Christmas Eve is the sound of music from a brass band. It comes from the new M. E. Church house which stands just where my old Red Fork Ranch stood in 1875. A Christmas festival is in progress; the church is filled to overflowing. My oldest boy, E. D., is playing the tuba horn, my youngest boy, Bennie, the anare drum. In listening to the music and merry-making there comes to me the memory of a Christmas present I had come to me twenty-two years ago.

Banker Haworth and Col. Matlock of Arkansas City, Kansas, stopped at my ranch on the 20th day of December, 1877, on their way home from Indian agencies below. They arranged to stay with me for a few days and hunt, desiring to secure a few wild turkeys and deer if possible, to carry with them to Arkansas City for Christmas. The weather was stormy and cold. On the 22nd they had a few turkeys but no deer. On the 23rd, at their request, I got my gun and went after a deer. It was a terrible day with

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a driving snow, and it was growing colder every hour. I rode east into the timber. I succeeded in getting a shot, killing a doe and severely wounding another one, after which I took a chase but failed to get it; Haworth and Matlock started early on the morning of the 24th for Arkansas City with the deer, facing a terribly cold wind. Soon after they left the ranch I saddled my horse- mean devil- and rode out to look after my cattle that were drifting from the storm down the river. I rode east into the timber, then south by the Pecan Springs. (Those springs are now owned and occupied by the old Government scout, O. C. Wells, brother-in-law to the late J. M. Thomas, of Caldwell) thence on southwest to the Cimarron River. There in the sand hills I found a bunch of my cattle and started back driving them toward the springs. Oh! but it was different as I turned facing the terrible wind. I had succeeded in getting the cattle out of the hills, then started them across the bottom. I was well wrapped but I thought my face would freeze. A calf was giving me trouble in trying to run back. I spurred the horse up, heading it. It turned in behind the horse. I checked the horse, and in trying to obey the bit in a sudden rein I gave him to the left, his feet

being on ice, went into the air, and the horse lit almost on my back. I struck the frozen ground full length and the wild devil sprang to his feet and went galloping down the river. I lay dazed for a short time and as I began to pull myself together, I sat up and found the left side of my face was bruised, my left shoulder and arm hurt, my left leg broken smack off, just above the ankle, and the bones in my foot broken. It was 9 o'clock the day before Christmas. I was a little over three miles from the ranch, hardly a show for help, and oh! I was so cold. Thermometer, 8 below zero.

I thought, "Johnny, this is a little the worst wreck you have struck!" What was I to do? Besides the suffering from my bruises and broken limb, I was very cold. I concluded to crawl to the old Chisholm Trail, which was some three hundred yards south. When I got there I crawled in behind some wild pampas grass that grew tall beside the trail and there I lay for a short time, thinking. The only hope I had of someone coming along would be 'Ras Wilson, of Salina, Kansas, who was wintering 1,000 beeves on Campbell Creek- named after Short-horn Campbell of Kiowa, Kansas, south of the Cimarron, who was to come up and take dinner with us Christmas. The old-timers will remember Mr.

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and Mrs. George Haines, of Caldwell. They were running the mess house for us at the ranch and Mrs. Haines had promised us a feast for dinner. I must be in on that dinner, so on all fours I started up the trail, through the snow, over the ice and rough ground. Soon I was tired, but on I went. At times I would grow faint, then I would stop behind some tall grass and rest, then up and on. So it went till near night. My knees had grown sore and my arms ached. The wind had ceased to blow so cold, but away in the northeast there hung a heavy dark cloud. I lay behind a tall bunch of grass, my broken leg paining me so badly it seemed I could not go another rod. Would it storm again that night? I had only made a mile, would I perish?

Had I not been one of those good young men I suppose I should have given up, but the thought of the laugh my enemies would have on me spurred me on, so again I started. Presently darkness came on; soon my bare knees were on the ground, but on I crawled dragging my broken leg as carefully as possible, flowing blood along the trail from my leg. The coyotes commenced howling; a bunch of my cattle came drifting by and lowing and I called to them. I tore

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out the sleeves of a cavalry coat I had on and pulled them over my shoes, tore up the cape and tied pads on my knees with buckskin strings I had in my pocket, took a long woolen scarf I had around my neck and wound it around my broken leg. It was a scarf given me by my aged mother in Indiana and was sent to me a few days before for a Christmas present. God bless mother! Then I crawled all night and as the sun came up bright and warm Christmas morning, I was about half way to the ranch. I crawled up on a sand hill, in the sun to warm and rest. Then for the first time I grew hungry. Won't help ever come! There was the rattle of the Caldwell and Fort Sill stage! Sitting upon my knees and looking across the bottom, there about half a mile away I saw the stage in full view. I waved my hat and halloed, but could not attract their attention. (My old friend, Mike Meagher, Wichita's marshal in the early days, was a passenger. He later came back with the doctor from the Cheyenne agency and assisted in setting my leg.) In starting from there, as it was growing warmer, I dropped my slicker and overshoes and crawled on, sometimes a rod, sometimes but a few feet.

Hungry and sore, weak and sick, I came out of the sand hills in sight of the old ranch a mile away. I had stopped under three trees

that stood in the trail. After taking a long look at the ranch, I lay down to rest, then noticing one of the trees was hackberry and that the icy snow was covered with the berries, I spent quite a while gathering these berries and sucking them, and never did anything taste so good. There again was the rattle of wagons, and looking across to the wagon road not a quarter of a mile away I saw two freight wagons. Again I got upon my knees, swinging my hat and shouting; again I failed and they passed on into the hills. Soon I started for the ranch; now came the worst. My arm was so strained and when I got upon my knees it seemed almost impossible to bear it. I had a severe pain and cramping across my chest. As both bones of the leg were broken off, as I would drag it after me over the frozen and rough ground often the bones would grate together in such a way as to sicken me. At 3 o'clock P. M. I had succeeded in getting within hailing distance of the ranch, a quarter of a mile, and finally attracted Mr. Haines. They came to me, then obtained a wagon and hauled me to the ranch. I had crawled three and a quarter miles in a little over thirty hours. Mrs. Haines' son, Anderson, who now owns a fine cattle ranch on the Canadian near Canadian City, rode to the C. & A. agency, thirty miles away, for a physician, who

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did not get to the ranch to set my leg until 12 o'clock the night of the 26th, sixty-three hours after it was broken. That was my Christmas gift for 1878! I was a little late to Mrs. Haines' Christmas dinner, but all the ranch boys claimed I did full justice to all Mrs. Haines brought to the bed for me. I lay eight weeks upon my back, but am still here and able to send cordial greetings for the New Year.

(Signed)

Dan Jones.