

HANCOCK, CLEMENT A.

INTERVIEW

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Investigator, Robert W. Small,
October 20, 1937.

Interview with Clement A. Hancock,
Caddo, Oklahoma.
Born October 19, 1857,
Columbus, Texas.

Father J. S. Hancock, Kentucky.
Mother Julia Hancock, Georgia.

Born at Columbus, Texas, October 19, 1857, Clement A. Hancock was the son of J. S. Hancock, a stock-man of Texas in the early days. Clement A. Hancock learned in early youth how to ride a horse and handle cattle.

In 1868 he helped his father and a number of cowboys round up a large herd of cattle which they drove to Abilene, Kansas, following the Chisholm Trail across the Indian Territory.

In March, 1869, Clement A. helped his father and fifteen or twenty cowboys in driving three thousand head of longhorn steers from Columbus, Texas, to Baxter Springs, Kansas. The original plan of the elder Mr. Hancock was to take his cattle to the western part of Kansas as he had done the previous year but before getting his herd to the Indian Territory border the soldiers from Fort Worth advised Mr. Hancock to

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change his plan and cross the Indian Territory farther east. The Comanche and Kiowa Indians were on the war path in the western part of Indian Territory, and would likely cause him much loss of stock if he attempted to follow the Chisholm Trail as he had done the previous year. Mr. Hancock followed the advice of the soldiers and drove his herd farther east through Texas. When near the line of Texas and Indian Territory one night they had camped and all hands had retired when a great rumbling sound was heard in the distance and an occasional yell by the Indians. All hands were instantly summoned to mount their horses and to assist in preventing a stampede of the cattle or their loss by theft. As the Indians drew nearer it was learned that they were driving a herd of horses in a dead run and they soon passed by and the herd of cattle was unmolested. It was reported the Indians had stolen the entire herd of horses somewhere in the east and were hurriedly taking them to their reservation in the Indian Territory.

When they reached Red River at Rock Bluff Crossing with the herd of cattle, the river was up and they drove some of the lead cattle into the water to make them swim across. The leader swam about half way across the river when

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circled and swam back to the Texas side and all the other cattle followed and came back again. The cowboys did not attempt to force the cattle into the water again that day but stayed there for three days until the river had gone down a little and then crossed and proceeded on their way through the Indian Territory. Their route of travel took them near Stonewall and not far from present site of Ada.

They crossed the Arkansas River at Childers Ferry where they again swam the cattle across the river. Mr. Hancock had to pay taxes for driving his herds across the Choctaw Nation and all other tribal lands they passed through which included the Chickasaw, Seminole, Creek, Osage and Quapaw Nations. They would usually pick out a nice fat steer and give it to the Indians for the taxes.

They drove this herd of cattle slowly and were seven months on the road. They left Columbus, Texas, in March, 1869, and arrived at the Quapaw Reservation in Northeastern part of Indian Territory in November of the same year and after arriving in the Quapaw Reservation, they were compelled to hold their cattle there till January 1st before they were permitted to drive them across the line into Kansas.

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They had two chuck wagons that went ahead of the herd each morning and camped at some point which they determined the herd might reach by noon and the cooks would have meals ready for the cowboys and all the helpers as soon as they arrived. The same procedure was followed after the noon meal was eaten, for the camp at night. Mr. Hancock never slept in a house at any time during this seven months' trip and was never sick a day. There were no bridges across any of the creeks or rivers and but few ferry boats and they were not used except for wagons. The cattle and the cowboys had little dread of swimming any stream.

The cattle were all long horned steers from three to ten years old with trim bodies and they were almost as swift on foot as horses.

In 1872 Mr. Hancock came down into the Indian Territory to work. He came to Caddo from Atoka on a construction train and located at Caddo where he has lived almost continuously ever since. At the time he came to Caddo it was the terminus of the railroad, now the M.K.& T. R.R. but the M.K.& T. later built on into Denison, Texas.

Mr. Hancock began buying furs, skins and wild animal

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meat from the Indians soon after he settled in Caddo. He bought such furs as opossum, skunk, coon, fox, beaver, otter, etc., and he also bought wild turkeys and venison hams, paying 25 to 50 cents each for the venison hams.

There were stage lines running from Fort Smith to Fort Gibson, also lines running from Atoka to Caddo and on to Sherman, Texas; also a line from Caddo to Fort Sill and other points in the country, including Pauls Valley, Mill Creek, and Erin Springs.

Mr. Tom Fenlen had a contract to furnish all kinds of supplies to the Government for use at Fort Sill and Mr. Fenlen maintained a store at Caddo and Mr. Hancock quit the fur business and worked for Mr. Fenlen in the store at Caddo. Mr. Hancock also worked for Major Harlan, who built the first mercantile establishment in Caddo in 1873.

Very few white people lived in the country at the time Mr. Hancock went to Caddo and no farming was done except small patches of corn grown by the Indians sometimes. The country was an open range for stock, mostly cattle and horses.

White settlers drifted in from year to year and most of them were farmers who leased or rented lands from the

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natives. This land was usually leased for a term of five or six years for which the lessor received no cash rental but in lieu thereof the lessee would build a house and fence the cultivated land, dig wells and make other necessary improvements on the land and at the termination of his lease contract would leave the place with all improvements thereon to the lessor who thereafter rented the lands for an annual cash or grain rental.

In 1889 Mr. Hancock entered the mercantile business for himself. The town of Caddo had been made the county seat of Blue County about 1882 and had become quite an active trading center for that section of country and Mr. Hancock's business house soon grew to be a very large establishment in which he carried stocks of wagons, buggies, harness, hardware, farming implements, dry goods, clothing, boots, shoes, groceries and, in fact, everything that was used in the country.

In 1903 Mr. Hancock's daily sales ran from \$500.00 to \$1000.00 a day and he bought many articles in car-load lots. Trunks were one item that he has purchased in car-load quantities.

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Mr. Hancock often had as many as nine car loads of merchandise on the railway siding at one time, and he employed a number of clerks and they usually all worked until ten or eleven o'clock at night.

Mr. Hancock also bought and sold horses and cattle. Wagons sold in the early days at from \$75.00 to \$90.00; buggies from \$75.00 to \$150.00; a set of harness from \$18.00 to \$35.00, and a pony would sell from \$10.00 up to \$35.00.

The first telephone line in Caddo was put up in 1892. Colbert's Ferry on Red River, north of Denison, Texas, was there when Mr. Hancock came to this country and the M.K.& T. R.R. bridge was the first bridge built over Red River.

There were no section lines surveyed in the country when Mr. Hancock came to Caddo and the roads ran in any and all directions but ran usually where they might be built and maintained with least amount of cost and labor.

Mr. Hancock is still in the mercantile business in Caddo and although now past eighty years of age he is active and alert.