

KUHN, MART

INTERVIEW

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Goldie Turner,
Investigator,
Nov. 16, 1937.

An Interview With Mart Kuhn
816 Granite, Pawnee, Oklahoma

I was born in State Center, Iowa, in 1858 and came to Oklahoma in 1876.

I am probably one of the oldest living cowboys who drove cattle through Oklahoma in early days.

I ran away from home when I was seventeen years old and went to Atchison, Kansas. There I signed up with Tom Smith, a cattleman, to go to Texas and help bring back a herd of four thousand cattle. We rode on the train from Atchison to Wichita, then our boss bought up horses for us to ride and with five companions we started over the Chisholm Trail to Texas. The herd of cattle was delivered at a ranch about twenty miles from the Oklahoma line. When we started back there were seventeen of us, including camp cook and all helpers. We left in March. The Red River was up but we had little trouble in getting the herd across. We followed the old Chisholm Trail which went through Hennessey and then north, letting the herd graze slowly along.

One night a bunch of Comanche Indians stole about two hundred head of our cattle and drove them off. I, with seven

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companions, was sent to try to get them back. We trailed them all day and in the evening came to the Comanche Hills which were in reality mountains. In the early evening, we came across the carcass of one of the cows. The Indians had killed it and had cut out the hind quarters, leaving the rest, then they had gone on. Just about dark we saw the Indian's camp fire up a canyon. We waited until dark then rode up the canyon until within about a quarter of a mile of their camp. We then dismounted and leaving one man with the horses, the rest of us cautiously crawled closer. When we came quite close to their camp we divided into two parties one for each side of the camp fire. The Indians evidently did not expect to be pursued for they were not very watchful and had a big camp fire.

We counted seventeen of them and since there were so many more of them than of us we decided to wait until their fire had died down and they were asleep and then take them by surprise. We crawled as close as we could and waited until about midnight and then I opened fire. The Indians were lying all around the camp fire and we were well armed so they were easy targets for us and we made short work of

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them before they were hardly aware of us. We found our cattle on up the canyon and returned them to the main herd the next day.

We got to Dodge City in November. The herd was fat and were shipped out of there in a few days.

I have made the drive over the Chisholm Trail several times and have been in several fights with the Indians. The Indians expected the cattle owners to furnish them with all the fresh meat they wanted while the herd was moving through their territory but some of the cattlemen refused. Refusal to furnish them meat usually resulted in a battle, not always successful for the cattlemen.

In 1880 I began working for the father of the Miller brothers of 101 Ranch. He then had his ranch at Hunnewell, Kansas. In 1882 he bought the land where the 101 Ranch now is located and I helped in moving the cattle and outfit to the new location. I worked there for a year or two.

At the time of the opening of the Cherokee Strip I was working on a ranch in the Osage country. The ranch owner had the land east from Marland for fifteen miles leased. It was along the Arkansas River and was from two to three miles wide, south of the river. He had this land all fenced and

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just before the opening we had to take down and roll up all this wire. At the time of the Opening we had several thousand head of cattle at the southeast corner of Ponca City. There was only a little town there then.

I rode the range in Oklahoma until about ten years ago when I became partially paralyzed and became unable to ride a horse any longer. I worked for five years on the ranch of Tom Gilbert at Watchorn. This is only a little ranch in comparison to the ones of early days.

In the old days I was known either as "The Kid" or as "The Texas Wolf".

All of the old brands were registered in Chicago, Kansas City and St. Louis and when cattle reached the shipping points there was always a man on hand to read all the brands in order to detect any stolen cattle.

I was a United States Marshal for three years soon after the opening of the Strip and helped to get some of the early-day "bad men".