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LA FORCE, CLAUDE.

INTERVIEW.

4590.

Thad Smith, Jr.
Interviewer
June 25, 1937.

Interview with Claude La Force.
418 South 7th Street, Chickasha.
June 15, 1878, Texas.
Father-Howard La Force
Mother-Ida Doss

I, with my father and several cowboys, drove five thousand head of cattle from Texas to the Indian Territory, near where Lone Wolf is now, in the year of 1890.

We forded Red River north of Quanah, Texas, without any mishaps.

We got the most of our drinking water out of creeks. We got our stock water out of creeks, too. The water contained a great deal of gypsum, and it made all of us sick. It made our horses sick, too.

We settled in the Kiowa and Comanche Country and there were a few Indians of these tribes who lived near where we held our cattle, but the most of these Indians lived near Fort Sill and Anadarko.

We never had any trouble with the Indians at all; occasionally we would give them a beef steer.

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The buffalo, which had not been killed, had drifted further West but there were still lots of prairie chicken, quail, wild turkey, a few deer, and all of the streams were full of fish.

The Indians used to gather frequently at a large cottonwood grove near the river, about ten miles east of Anadarko, and have Indian dances, which would last for days.

I completed my education in Texas in the spring of 1900 and came back to the Indian Territory.

My father then had a big pasture northwest of Chickasha, near the ninety eighth Meridian line.

There were thousands of Texas cattle shipped to Chickasha to be driven from there to a summer pasture nearby.

The Caddo, Kiowa and Comanche country at that time was the best summer country known, and shrewd Texas men took advantage of it, shipping their cattle to grass in

the early spring, summering the cattle there, and then shipping them to eastern markets.

At that time farmers had begun to raise corn, making from fifty to sixty bushels to the acre. Before that time cattle belonging to men who lived in the Territory wintered themselves on grass.

After farmers began raising lots of corn, cattlemen bought it to full feed beef steers, and to winter their range cattle on, as the native grass was being eaten until it was shorter every year.

There were no grain elevators in this country in 1900, and the farmers got from ten to twelve and a half cents a bushel for their corn.

In either 1902 or 1903 smallpox hit Chickasha. Dr. East was the City Health physician.

I owned a drug store at that time, and several men who were broken out with smallpox came into the store after medicine. I would always take these men to the

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pest house on the edge of town to be doctored there. There were a good many deaths, and most of those who died were buried at night as there was less danger of scattering the germs at night.

My partner at that time was Jim Mills; he vaccinated himself for the smallpox and he nearly lost his arm. I refused to be vaccinated but I did spray myself with a solution of formaldehyde or bi-chloride, and got by very nicely.

Dr. Penquite was practicing medicine in Chickasha in 1903. He had the fastest and prettiest team of driving horses in the country.

A fast stepping, high bred team of horses would sell for as much as a thousand dollars.

Chris Madsen was one of the deputy United States Marshals. He caught and killed two whiskey peddlers.