

THORNTON, TOM

INTERVIEW.

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Robert H. Boatman  
Investigator  
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Interview with Tom Thornton  
Purcell, Oklahoma

I was born January 8, 1861, in the state of Mississippi, leaving there at the age of five years with my parents; we moved by wagon drawn by oxen. After several days of travel we landed in Texas. It was a very slow way to travel as there were no bridges and all the streams were crossed by fords or by ferry boat.

We remained here until I was fourteen years old when I decided to make my adventure of life in the Territory. I came to the Indian Territory in 1880.

When I first came to the Territory there was nothing here except a few ranchmen, lots of country and many Indians. The first job I secured in the Territory was on Big Bear Creek, some three miles from the Comanche line in the Chickasaw Nation. Here I began work as a cow puncher on the Suggs ranch for Mr. Suggs, who was then the biggest ranchman in the Indian Territory.

-- cowboy's life has never been fully described; the greatest danger comes with a royal stampede.

Many stories have been told concerning the early day Indians of the Territory. I do not believe that there ever was a tribe of Indians which was unfair or dishonest. I have had personal dealings and experiences with the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Kiowa, Arapaho, Comanche and Osage Indians. The Comanches are of all the tribes the bravest; they do not fear anything, even death. Next come the Chickasaws and the most cowardly tribe of Indians I have ever known when put to a real test are the Choctaws.

After some time I removed from the Suggs Ranch and settled near old Whitehead near the Canadian River. Here I became engaged in the stock raising business for myself; this was in 1884. A fellow had to be on the lookout at all times for thieves, and rustlers were very numerous in the '80s. Once two men stole fifty head of horses and of course the theft was laid to a band of Indians.

The Agency was then established at Anadarko and all the Indian police were called out and all the interpreters and a big hunt was on. When they found out the truth it was two white men who had stolen the horses.

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Since 1884 I have been engaged in the business of stock raising and farming and also in buying and selling mules. I have bought and sold more mules than any other man in the state having bought as many as five hundred head of mules in a single week.

I live at my home which has all the modern conveniences that a farm home could have. It is located some seven miles south and east of Durcell.

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