

WHITE, TOM B.

INTERVIEW

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INTERVIEW WITH TOM B. WHITE
East Main St., Geary, Okla.
Augusta H. Custer, Interviewer
July 21, 1937

My parents died when I was a small child and my uncle, Ben White, my father's brother, took me into his home and reared me as his own son. My uncle, Joe White, came to Oklahoma a year before we came and from the description of the country and conditions my uncle Ben decided to come to Oklahoma in 1881, so on August 1, we left the northwest part of Cedar County, Missouri, driving a team of horses to a covered wagon and it took us just thirteen days to arrive at Marietta. I was then nineteen years of age. On our way from Baxter Springs, Kansas, we came through the towns of Muskogee, Okmulgee, Stonewall, Fishomingo, and to Marietta. These were the only towns on the road at that time.

Old Tom Gilbert of Arnoka had the first cotton gin in this part of the country. I worked for him during the fall season of 1881.

I went to work for Washington and Addington who had one of the largest cattle ranches in this country. They ran the Three I Ranch-their brand was made like this III - like Roman numerals. We left the ranch near

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Ringling and made a trail through to Tulsa. We were driving one thousand head of steers and we fattened them on the way. The grass was from six inches to the height of a horse. Our route was through Purcell, through the Sac and Fox Agency, through Red Fork where there was a cattle pen. There was one store at Tulsa. We were three months on the road. Many things happened in that three months. Some of the boys were sick and were doctored from supplies carried in the saddle bags on the saddles. Jamaica ginger was an herb that most of the boys carried; this was to relieve cramps in the stomach caused from drinking alkali water. Some times a change of cooks at the mess wagon would cause us to have to cut cards or flip a coin to see who would serve as cook until another could be found. There were nights of sleeping under the stars, there were stormy nights where all the men were on hand to prevent a stampede, and our adventures in crossing swollen streams kept the trip from becoming monotonous.

In 1885 I worked on a trail which Washington and Addington were making from Ringling to the 101 Ranch owned by George Miller of Ponca City. They paid us thirty to fifty dollars a month according to our experience, and

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we were given our meals from the chuck wagon. The cattlemen were going broke and they wanted this trail made while their money lasted. Jack Mulhall was foreman at the Miller ranch at that time.

There was a fee of five dollars charged to cattlemen who wanted to go down into the southwest part of the state. Some did not want to pay this money to the Chickasaw Indians.

Dick Mc Lish and Washington formed a partnership and ran the CXO Ranch, after Addington and Washington had broken up. They had a drift fence run from Ringling to Berwin on the Washita, north of Ardmore, at a place called Lone Grove.

The Indians had a Governor and they did not want the cattlemen to run the fences so they appealed to the United States officials and secured help, later.

Washington's wife was an Indian and Washington induced the Chief to go to his house and stay all night.

The Chief and about fifty Indians had come to see if Washington would take his fences down.

Washington's cow hands took all the ponies belonging to this bunch of Indians down to the creek and

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shot all of them. This left the Indians afoot and they walked back to Tishomingo. Washington knew that there was likely to be trouble and sent his wife away, for awhile, and asked me to come and stay at the ranch. He said, "Now here is one thousand rounds of ammunition and plenty of guns, just protect yourself and the ranch". I stayed there for a week and no one came. Mc Lish came back at the end of that time: I told him that things did not look right to me and since the boss was afraid to stay I did not care to stay there alone. He said, "Well, maybe it is not quite safe; you wait till evening and then go to a ranch house and get John Burton to stay with you." I did not wait until evening but went at once and waited until he came in from work. John went with me. We were there another week and one day, John said that he was going to ride over to another ranch. He had not been gone long when I saw him coming back as fast as his horse could gallop, waving his hand frantically. ~~I knew that there was~~ excitement sure enough. Close on his trail was a bunch of Chickasaw Indians and United States soldiers. That meant that we could not resist the Government.

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The cattle men got busy and went ahead of the soldiers and pulled the wire and rolled it in big rolls, to save it from being cut into small pieces.

The Mc Lish and Washington cattle ranch was a big affair; they had one hundred chuck wagons and when they branded, they divided the calves into thirty-three shares.

I was married January 9th, 1889. I got my license in Gainsville, Texas. I farmed in southwest Arkansas, Benton County, for two years; these are the only two years that I have been out of Oklahoma since I first came here.

I farmed in southwest Missouri one summer, then came back to Marietta. The Santa Fe was just going through and I got work as a blacksmith in 1886 and 1887. Then I went

to work on Bill Washington's farm as a blacksmith and machinist and worked there until 1898 when the Dawes Commission allotted the land. I was at Springer and worked as a blacksmith, until I went to Bridgeport in 1901 in Caddo County. Then I came to Geary, in 1916, and have had a blacksmith shop here since that time.

I made three trips over the Salsholm Trail, helping to drive seven thousand head of cattle at different times.

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The trail went from Ringling to Duncan, Marlow and Grove, crossing the river at the mouth of Boggy Creek. Then to Minco crossing the North River at Banner. Then, on down John's Creek and on to Dover.

The roads forked at Kingfisher and one went to Enid by way of Hennessy; the other road went east to Ponca City or the 101 Ranch.