

ROSS, ELIZABETH.

SHOOTING MATCHES.

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Investigator  
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### Shooting Matches.

Shooting matches were frequently held in the Table-  
quah district in Indian Territory times. The marksmen who  
made the best scores were rewarded with portions of beef.

A man who owned a fat steer or cow, or a well-grown  
yearling or two year old, desiring to obtain the worth of  
the animal in money, made announcement that a shooting match  
would be held on a given date. A good-sized crowd of men us-  
ually assembled at the designated place. Each man who de-  
sired to enter the contest paid a specified sum for each shot  
he wished to fire at a mark. When the sum desired by the  
owner of the animal had been subscribed the competitors made  
ready for the match.

Each man furnished his own target, which was usually  
a clapboard made of oak or yellow pine. These boards were  
slightly charred in fire, so as to become uniformly black.  
A cross mark was then made upon a small piece of white paper  
which was placed in the center of the board. The board was  
then attached to the trunk of a tree at whatever distance had  
been agreed upon, and soon the match was under way.

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After each shot the boards were carefully and closely examined by men who acted as judges, and who noted how near the bullet came to the center of the cross-mark. In some matches there were skilled marksmen who sent their bullets exactly to the center, but in other instances the center was not reached. Several hours were usually devoted to firing at the marks, and upon conclusion the judges carefully compared the bullet holes in the various boards and announced the winners.

In some contests one man alone outshot all competitors and won the entire animal. In such instances the winner did not slay the steer or cow but drove it to his home. Such successful marksmen were said to be "driving home the beef". But rather often there were several winners in a shooting match, and after the animal was slain portions were awarded to various persons. One man had won a hindquarter, another a shoulder, yet another a portion of the ribs. Another had not won a choice portion of beef but had succeeded in winning the hide and tallow. Everyone could not expect to win and consequently there were some who received nothing in return for the money expended in buying chances to fire winning bullets.

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A favorite season for holding shooting matches was in the mid-autumn time, when the days were clear, bright and cool. Not only did young men participate in shooting matches, but middle-aged and elderly men entered the contests in some instances.

Turkey shooting matches were also indulged in the favorite season for the event was just before Thanksgiving or Christmas. The procedure was the same as in the shooting matches for animals with the exception that the sum agreed upon for firing bullets was much smaller and the winner received the whole fowl.

Mazzel-loading rifles were the favorite firearms used in the matches of many years ago. The majority of the marksmen declared that the old-style weapons were more accurate than were the more modern rifles which were beginning to be used by some people.