

LEGEND & STORY FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma
CRABTREE, HIRAM LEE INTERVIEW.

306

10624.

Bessie L. Thomas.

Field worker's name _____

April 23, 1938.

This report made on (date) _____ 193_____

1. This legend was secured from (name) **Hiram Lee Crabtree.** _____

Address **Cache, Oklahoma.** _____

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe _____

2. Origin and history of legend or story _____

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____

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Bessie L. Thomas,
Investigator,
Apr. 23, 1938.

Interview With Hiram Lee Crabtree,
Cache, Oklahoma.

I was born in Mason County, Texas, in 1886 and lived there with my parents until I was ten. My father and my grandfather ran the H Ranch about fifteen years.

My job was wrangling horses for the cowboys on this ranch. There were about eighteen cowboys. I had to saddle their horses every morning, unsaddle them at night, feed and water them, curry them, turn them out for the night, except in very stormy weather. Sometimes, when the snow was deep, they were kept up in the corral during the night. I made enough money this way to buy all my clothes and school books. The boys would give me nickles, pennies, and dimes for standing on my head and singing, or turning somersaults.

We left Texas in 1896, moving in wagons drawn by mules and horses. We were sixty-five days on this trip, camping out at night, putting wagons in a circle, for protection from possible attacks from the Indians or wild

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animals. Father had been wanting for weeks to come to Oklahoma Territory where there was an abundance of native grass and water for cattle and horses. My father always had a lot of horses, raising most of them himself. He was considered a good stockman. After reaching Oklahoma Territory we camped during the opening where Sentinel is today.

We brought with us, from Texas, two hundred and fifty wild horses. It meant a lot of work and worry bringing them through. One night after we had been on the road for twenty-five days the horses stampeded. One horse in that whole herd was killed by running into a wire fence. We came by way of El Paso, turning east there. The horses crossed the Pease River, swimming part of the distance across. We crossed at Vernon, taking two days to get them across the swinging bridge. The first day we started trying to drive them across and we worked from early morning until dark. We would get a bunch started across and then they would kick, bite, and try to stomp each other, some would be knocked down, others piling on top of them. Some would try to jump over the bridge railing. We reached Sentinel

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October 20, 1896, and in January, 1897, there came an awful snow storm which lasted twenty days; we lost one hundred head during this storm. It snowed and drifted so the first night we just could not find them all the next day, and the one hundred head froze to death.

Father got dissatisfied and we went back to Indian Territory. We came down by where Hobart is today, following the one road which ran close to Quannah Parker's place near the foot of the mountains. We camped one night at Quannah's place. The Indians ran off all our horses during the night, but Father and the helpers got them back the next day. We went from Fort Sill to Marlow and then moved to Bear Creek, where Doyle stands today, and stayed there until 1898. We moved from there to Baily and lived there until 1907. I worked for Cochran and Silverstine, wrangling horses for seven years, then worked on the ranch of Hick Harrison for four years. In 1902 we brought a bunch of about fifteen hundred cattle from the Arbuckle Mountains to the Kiamichi Mountains and shipped them to Kansas City where they were sold for beef. The cattle in those days were always fat.

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In the fall of 1900 Swift and Company bought fifteen hundred head of cattle from Mr. Harrison, which we were to deliver at Kansas City. On this trip there were fourteen cowboys and one chuck wagon. After two days travel we crossed the Washita where Lindsey is located today. Crossing the river we camped in a little valley. Seven of us stood guard all night. A storm came up about two thirty in the morning, from the northwest, and the herd stampeded. One cowboy had to dive in a ditch close up against the bank and the cattle went on over him, he came out unscratched but scared blue. Some of us, while on guard duty, were about five miles from camp. It took two days to round up the cattle. We were on the road fifteen days.

We were camped at Sulphur in the spring of 1901. One morning I went out after the saddle horses and saw three horse thieves running them off. The horses were found near Ada. At the time, Cris Madsen was coming through the country and Mr. Harrison saw him and told him about losing the horses. Nothing was said that night when Mr. Harrison came home but in a few days after that we cowboys who were at

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home at the time "understood" that there had been a "neck tie party". We stayed at Sulphur about twenty days, came back to Marlow about June 21, and shipped cattle on to Kansas City. four of the cowboys going with the cattle car.

Mr. Madsen came to my father's home when we lived in Bailey, in 1901, looking for three horse thieves. He and his deputy, Mr. Mitchell, caught them at Bear Creek. Two of them were put in a two-horse hack, handcuffed together. It was after night and very dark so while the deputy was driving the hack the boys slid out the back end of the hack and ran off across the prairie. The deputy tied the team and took after them. On account of the darkness the deputy fell in a prairie-dog hole and broke his leg. He had to spend the rest of the night there on the plains and suffered untold misery with his broken leg. Mr. Madsen came on to our place and got me to go back and look for his deputy. I could not find him that night, had no idea just where to look. The night was so dark I could not see two feet ahead. I yelled and called until I was hoarse by morning. I

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hunted next morning until about ten o'clock before I found him. Then located him by the report of his pistol which he had fired several times to attract attention. He was down in a little swag, close to a mesquite bush. He had saved one bullet for himself as he had begun to think no one was ever going to find him and said he could not have stood the torture much longer. I rode back home on my horse as fast as I could go, got one of my Mother's featherbeds, put it in a hack and hauled Mr. Metcalf to Marlow to get medical aid.

The two thieves went on and rode a blacksmith, at Pearl on Fish Creek, file off the handcuffs. Chris took the one he had on to Chickasha where he got a term of five years. The other two were never caught again to my knowledge.

We were in the little pasture in 1904. I was working for Ed Thompson and the wade boys; we rounded up and shipped about three thousand head of cattle to the Kansas City market. One morning, we were bringing a bunch of cattle into Marlow, we held them out one and a half miles west, where Klondike was, camped and ate dinner, then that same day we went down to the Lion Saloon. As we rode up we heard two

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shots fired. There were three men killed, two cowboys, Bill Caldwell and Tom Green, and the bartender, Alexander. Their trouble was over a watering site. This happened in July 1903. We took our cattle on to Marlow and shipped to Fort Worth.

In 1907 we moved to Cache where I raised my family, and where I still live. My father died in 1933 and was buried at Shamrock. My mother is still living with a son at Shamrock and is eighty-four years old.