INDEX CARDS

Greer County
Squatter Rights
Ranching
Buttermilk Station
Woodcutting

COX, W. H. INTERVIEW. 4288

276

Virgil Coursey
Field Worker
May 31, 1937

Interview with Mr. W. H. Cox.
401 North Lee, Altus, Oklahoma.
Born April 7, 1874. Kentucky.
Father-Wesley Cox
Mother-Lucy Kemper

I was twelve years of age when my father moved from near Fort Worth, Texas, to Oklahoma in 1887. We came to Vernon, Texas, by train and completed the trip in a wagon.

At the time we settled three miles north of Altus this country was mostly prairie covered with mesquite and sage grass. Surveyors had been in here and surveyed the land, placing rocks to indicate sections and half sections. All one had to do was to find the corner of a section of this land, and then plow around a quarter of a section, make what improvements he wanted and commence to cultivate the land. After five years he could furnish proof of having lived on the land for five consecutive years, and acquire possession of a claim which someone wished to relinquish. Many bargains have thus been acquired-property on which quite a bit of improvements had been made.

In the early days I have seen the ground covered for two or three miles with cattle, especially near watering places. I have also seen whole hill sides covered with turkeys. The turkeys lived near creeks. One also saw many prairie chickens, quail, and some deer and antelope. The streams were full of fish. I have often helped seine a stream and catch the net so full that it could scarcely be dragged to the bank.

I well remember the flood at old Frazier in 1891. Old Frazier was often referred to by cowboys as Buttermilk Station. A good-hearted old lady, a Mrs. McClearen, often gave the cowboys buttermilk. Cowboys have the habit of giving a thing a suggestive name. Since Mrs. McClearen's place at old Frazier was a place where they could get buttermilk, the name was Buttermilk Station.

My father and mother had gone to Frazier on the day of the flood after some binder twine and other articles. Along about three o'clock in the

afternoon a cloud hardly larger than one's hand came up. Before long it began to rain and continued until after dark. My father and mother were unable to reach home. Luckily, we had hired a boy to help shock feed, and he was home with me. We decided to make the most of it and go to bed and sleep. During the night I happened to throw my arm over the side of the bed and felt water. We found the water more than a foot deep and decided to get out. I had an uncle living about three quarters of a mile from us, but it was so dark we didn't know how to reach his place. When it lightened we could see fairly well, and would travel as far as we could and wait for another flash. I never saw such a rain. Level ground was six or eight inches deep in water. Finally we reached my uncle's place.

It seemed a miracle that our wheat and other grain were not ruined by this flood. But very little damage was done. We harvested a good crop.

Like practically every one else, we went over in the Indian Territory for wood. It was customary for four, five or six men to go together. This was done for more than one reason. Sometimes it was necessary to double up to cross the river, that is, hitch two or more teams to one wagon, to get across. Then, too, there was the possibilities of being caught by the marshals. The marshals carried those they arrested to Anadarko or some other place further north, to stand trial and pay a fine. When this did occur the men would tie their teams together and turn them loose to go home. When the teams came in home minus their wagons and drivers, the wives knew that the men were arrested and would not be home for some time. This, of course, caused quite a bit of suspense and worry in the homes. The comical feature about these arrests was in making bond. In the event of several arrests, one man would go another's bond and that man in turn would help the one who helped him. As a matter of fact none of the men were worth enough to cover the bond.

In 1900 I married Lillie Catney. At the present time I am engaged in the feed business in Altus.