

INDEX CARDS

Mail routes

Schools--Chickasaw Nation

Hogs--Chickasaw Nation

Guns--Chickasaw Nation

Outlaws--Chickasaw Nation

Thomas, Heck

Spanish Fort

Permits--Chickasaw

Leasing--Chickasaw Nation

Warren D. Morse
Field Worker
May 21, 1937

198

Interview with Mr. Tom Dorsett
Born 1866. Waurika, Oklahoma.
Father-A. W. Dorsett

I came in a covered wagon to Cortney flat in 1876. They had a little post office at this place. Cortney Flats was a flat about two miles wide and eight miles long in the bend of Red River and just above the mouth of Mud Creek.

There was one store and post office here, by J. A. Fowler, who now lives in Oklahoma City. Todd owned and ran the first gin.

We received our mail from Old Spanish Fort on horseback, then went from here to Doak's Store over on Wild Horse Creek.

Our schools were all by subscription. Neighbors built the school houses out of old logs. They were one room with no floors. The chimney was made of mud. For benches they went out and found large logs, split these, then made legs out of smaller limbs and, believe me, these seats got hard before the day was over. They had school about four months during the year.

Some people think the Indians were on the war

path at that time, and very wild. They were not. Most of the Indians were to the west of us. They were the Comanches and Kiowas.

There were no big farms. We didn't need them. Hogs ran everywhere. All we had to do was step out and kill our meat any time we wanted it. Turkeys roosted in trees just like chickens.

There were no roads. You could ride forty miles without crossing a road. I rode from Cortney Flats to Addington one time and didn't cross any roads.

Most of the people around there were or had been into trouble and settled in the Indian Territory to escape the law. They had settled down to make peaceful citizens. They were good hearted, and would do anything in the world for you.

Oh, we had one gang with us. Heck Thomas, a U. S. deputy, was sent in to keep order. That was before Ardmore was there. The Lee boys had killed the Rolf boys, then Heck Thomas killed the Lee boys. Other U. S. marshals were Jesu Juan, Bill Mc Elmore, and McKay.

Al Jennings ran with Heck Thomas. We had picnics

-3-

and Heck came and captured all the whiskey. He would give it to us to drink. We drank but never got drunk.

Heck Thomas killed George Doolin.

There was one gang that no one ever crossed--not even the U. S. marshals. It was the Sam Harrel gang and Stanleys. The rangers had run them out of Texas. There were John, Tom, and Bill Stanley. All of these had made a crop, then went to Old Spanish Fort and mortgaged the whole thing. When time came to gather it they sent word down there to the holders to come and take it over if they felt like it. Well, they didn't come out. They moved back in toward the river and camped at the old rock crossing. There were Gus Stanley, Henslow, and Kenshaw. When they got ready to leave they rounded up a bunch of cattle belonging to men around there.

When they were told they had cattle that didn't belong to them they said, "We know we have but just try and take them." No one tried it either.

They went out to Wyoming and had a falling out among themselves and most of them were killed.

-4-

I heard Sam Harrel say that he and Gus Stanley killed fifty-two Mexicans before breakfast one morning.

When I left Cortney Flats I went to Ryan, from Ryan to Ringling, and from Ringling to Waurika.

The following statement is copy of registration given to Mr. Dorsett's father for grazing:

This is to certify that I have received of A. W. Dorsett 25 cents for registration, he being duly employed by Matilda Criene for the term of twelve months from date. Given under my hand this March 10, A. D. 1876.

G. H. Law & Cleir [?]

T. C. C. N [?]

A. W. Dorsett

Registered

March 10, 1876

You see these leases were given in ten year periods. If every requirement was met, we could release for another period and not have to pay an extra tax on our stock.

When I first knew Suggs he had only about two

hundred head of cattle. He was considered the biggest rancher here then.

Supplementary statement by Warren D. Morse:

In territory days, white people were not allowed to graze cattle on this Indian land. In order to use this grazing land they had to secure a permit. Then a certain portion of this land was under jurisdiction of an Indian. If a white man could get an Indian to claim him he could run cattle here. When this happened the Indian would issue a certificate of registration showing that the white man had paid for his permit. The white man could look to the Indian for protection. In other words it was something like adoption into the tribe. If they had no registration receipt, the militia could and would run them out.

In this case Mr. Dorsett's land was held by an Indian lady.