

DEAN, HARVE

INTERVIEW

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Investigator, Ida E. Lankford,
October 18, 1937.

Interview with Harve Dean,
Cordell, Oklahoma

Born July 29, 1864,
Meridian, Texas, Dallas County.

Parents Alvin Dean, Tennessee.
Ruth Rickett, Kentucky.

As I have given one history before this one, this is only a sketch of the Chisholm Trail and Doan's Trail and of the court houses of Washita County.

I, a Washita County homesteader, traveled both the Chisholm Trail and Doan's Trail in an early day because when I was a young boy I ran away from home. I was a cowboy at the age of fifteen.

I made the long journey of six months from San Antonio, Texas, to Dodge City, Kansas, and on into North and South Dakota. We made this trip on the Chisholm Trail in 1879 and five years later I drove a herd of cattle from the Doan's Crossing, located on Red River, near Quanah Texas, to Caldwell, Kansas, on the Doan's Trail. Both the Chisholm Trail and Doan's Trail crossed Fort Supply.

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When I made the first trip in 1879, the Cheyenne^{country} and Arapaho country were both settled only by the Indians.

There has been much disagreement as to the route of the Chisholm Trail but I believe right today I could go over it again as I did in 1879.

We traveled all over the San Antonio and Brownville Country in South Texas. The trail went about twenty miles west of Round Rock to Belton, in Bell County, following the Red River to Meridian, Texas. Then it went between Fort Worth and Weatherford, Texas. It missed Decatur just a few miles and went through Montague, then crossed the Red River and came to Duncan, went from Duncan to Fort Reno to Fort Supply, crossing the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation. From Fort Supply the trail went to Dodge City, Kansas, and into the Dakotas. It took all spring and summer or six months to herd the cattle on the Chisholm Trail in 1879.

There were about three thousand head of cattle driven over the Doan's Trail in 1884 and after the cattle were delivered in Caldwell, Kansas, and sold to the C and A Ranch, they were herded back to the Old Grand in what is now known as Ellis County.

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We left Doan's Crossing in April, 1884, and got into Kansas the last part of June of the same year.

The Doan's Trail left the Doan's Crossing on Red River and came northwest and went on the east side of the Granite Reformatory to Port, Oklahoma, and on to Foss. It left Turkey Creek at Foss and went to the Barnitz Creek in Custer County, then to the Canadian River, followed it for several miles and crossed the river at Black Bull Crossing in Ellis County, then on to Fort Supply. Here we angled east and went to Caldwell, Kansas.

The famous watering place was the Old Soldiers Spring, located about seventeen miles west and a half mile south of the present New Cordell. Here the old Army Trail intersected the Doan's Trail. This is where the spring got its name. The Army Trail was from Fort Supply to Fort Elliot in McBeetie, Texas. I remember just the three trails went through the Cheyenne and Arapaho country.

Before a court house was built and this county started having officers, the offices were placed mostly in the homes until they could get a place for a court house.

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The first building in Cloud Chief was the Iron Hotel which was also used as the court house. Later, a court house was built out of cottonwood sawed at a small sawmill on the Washita River.

When the county seat was moved to Cordell in 1900, the cottonwood court house was moved from Cloud Chief to Cordell, dumped on to the main street and burned and then the people went to work and built a two-story wooden building and this was used from 1902 until 1907, then a mysterious fire burnt it down and the present court house was built in 1910.

The first Washita County Teachers' Institute was held at Cloud Chief in 1898.

I was an official of many years when I witnessed the excitement of the run on April 19, 1892.

In two hours the town of Cordell was full of grocery stores, gambling houses and saloons, all of which were located in tents. Almost all of these stores, gambling houses and saloons stayed in business for only two or three days and then left Cordell.

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After the homesteaders staked their claims they had six months to settle them; so almost all the boomers returned to their former homes, hoping to return to their claims with their families in six months.