

Handling of grazing lands in the Creek Nation before the allotment.  
BY  
Carl R. Sherwood

Some of the Indians would pool together in fencing as much pasture as they could. In the winter months they cut posts out of the timber on the creeks and rivers. After they had as many as they needed they would take their wagons and teams and haul posts out on the prairie and drop them about 32 feet apart; then they would dig holes and set the posts. After this was done they would go to their merchant in town and make arrangements for as many miles of barbed wire as they needed. The merchant would finance the deal and the Indians would have the merchant to lease the pasture to some Texas Cattle men at 25¢ per acre and collect for same. Some time it took the first years lease or more to pay for the wire used, or would pay so much out of the lease money each year until the fence was paid out. The Texas ranchers would be notified as soon as the grass was high enough to graze. The Texas ranchers would arrive with one or two cars of cow horses, and one car of equipment, such as saddles, beds, chairs, tables, feed, and the cook and horse wrangler with their chuck wagon which they used on roundups when they would be quite a distance from the ranch. If the pastures did not have a house suitable for a ranch house, the rancher soon hauled new lumber from the nearest town and built one. After the pasture fences were inspected and the ranch house was complete, the cow boys would

leave for Texas and soon there would be a train load of cattle<sup>427</sup> night and day unloaded at the nearest stock yards all along the M. K. and T. Railway, which ran north and south through the eastern half of the Indian Territory. After all the cattle arrived and were placed in the different pastures the foremen of the ranches would appoint some of the cowboys to riding the line, which was done each day to see that the fence was in good shape. Those line riders would often find the fence cut by some one that didn't want to ride around to get home, and some would be mad because several miles of their old road would be fenced up., but they would soon have a new road going around the pasture. When the cattle left Texas in the spring they were very poor and some would die in the cars while in transit. Others were unloaded at the stock yards but were too weak to drive to the ranch. The cow boys would have them just out side of the yards where there was green grass they could eat and in a few days they gained enough strength. As soon as they gained strength they were ready to fight any moving object they came in contact with. Some would chase the clerks into the stores, the depot agents into the office, and make the brakeman climb the stock cars on the yards. The cow boys were notified and would take them to the ranch. The Texas ranchers that grazed their cattle in the Indian Territory did not have any personal brand on their cattle. They would buy so many head of cattle of different brands which they kept in their books. Only their cow horses had the ranchers brand on them. If they had a wet season and grass was growing good

they would not start shipping until about the middle of August <sup>428</sup> of the first of September as they wanted to put as much fat on them as they could before shipping them to the market. If the cattle were to be shipped to St. Louis markets they would leave here Saturday evening over the M.K.&T. R.R. and they would arrive at the market about 4 A.M. Monday morning.

Just before the grazing season would end each year in October all ranchers would be notified and would have a general round-up. Cow boys from each ranch would be in the general round-up, which would last 30 or 40 days.

The Texas ranchers would have a few strays in the round-up which they would sell to the cattle men here. Some would sell part or all of their cow horses and others would ship them back to Texas.