

## [Henry Ridinger]

S241-L1 DUD

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Ruby E. Wilson ADDRESS North Platte

DATE Oct. 5, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

1. Name and address of informant Henry Ridinger E. 16th Street, N. Platt
2. Date and time of interview Oct. 2-5 Sept. 29, 1938 P. M.
3. Place of interview His home under trees in yard
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant
5. Name and address of person, if any accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. A low jumble of shacks— unviting and unkept. Mr. Ridinger lives with a daughter and son-in-law and family. Is not too well cared for but one still feels the hardilyhood [hardihood?] and forcefulness of his character despite his recent illness and [apparant?] feebleness which is a new experience to him as illness was never a part of his life. Mr. Ridinger refused to promise the loan of his wonderful old guns; he is embittered by the loss of his pension.

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Ruby E. Wilson ADDRESS North Platte

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NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Henry Ridinger, North Platte

1. Ancestry
2. Place and date of birth Born 1851, Iowa.
3. Family
4. Place lived in, with dates Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Arizona
5. Education, with dates, quit school at 11
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Cowboy, hunter, hay farmer, rancher, broom maker and salesman, reed overseer, father and old time settler
7. Special skills and interests Marksmanship and old age pension recovery; sometimes goes in for a heavy drink, reputedly.
8. Community and religious activities Inextensive [been] us [use?] of age
9. Description of informant Sharp eyes, wears dilapidated hat in something of the flat plainsman air is quite witty, somewhat conversant of today's affairs, has been of medium height and is now stooped and uses a cane. Is becoming feeble. This man is reputed among the oldtimers as having killed his share of men, Indians, and whites. In three calls I couldn't get anything of it. Has been a settled and respectable business and farmer and stock man. Mr. Ridinger occupies a place in History of Lincoln Co. 2nd volume. He has forgotten much due to illness that tho' he has told others of seems lost to his mind now. Only a short time ago he was a well man without spells of forgetfulness that baffle my efforts now.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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NAME OF WORKER Ruby E. Wilson ADDRESS North Platte

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NAME OF WORKER Henry Ridinger, North Platte

I was born in 1851 Council Bluffs Iowa. I swam the Mo. river when I was a boy when it was half mile wide and I went to Kans. I left home when I was 11 and took care of myself after that. My first wife was part Indian, well educated and one of the best singers I have ever heard. I worked for her father when I was a kid in Iowa and when I went back he sent for me to work. Her name was Canon, her father was a cousin to old Joe Canon, the political man.

I rode the range 10 years, trailed cattle up from Texas and Oklahoma to Abeleen in Kans. I rode 10 years and quit and came here in 1885. I rode here for Plummer Jewett and McCully 4 years for them and then I quit and went into hay business. I shipped thousands and thousands of dollars worth of hay out to Denver and Kansas City and Omaha and other places.

I leased the Bratt place, North.

Then I went into the broom busines 1890, Lived in the sandhills but I worked in the broom corn business, I ran 50 60 hands 2 years. I used to make brooms out [S?]. of N. Platte, N. of Maxwell.

I worked in a distillery at Nebraska City thru the winters when I was about 20 ears old and I learned how to make whiskey.

I got some broom corn out to "Grandpa Bowers" out South of Grinton and I went out to make up brooms. He lived with his son Lon Bowers and I went over there. I moved my broom machines where I got the broom corn. Bowers was out there makin' up whiskey and

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I learnt him so he could make good whiskey. I [brot?] [?] in a gallon and I got \$12.00 for it and they said it was better than any bonded whiskey, that was in prohibition days.

My Uncle was a captain in the Civil War and the old man Tillian? served under my Uncle. I was peddlin' brooms up by Hershey and ran onto Tillians and they made me stay a week with them. Hunter's [Huntin's?] different than what it was when I came here. The 4 years I rode here I killed 600 coyotes and got \$1.00 cash for everyone. I only got \$28.00 a month for 4 years that I rode here but I made \$600 killing the coyotes. I lived out at the head of Pawnee Creek.

I was on the "Dismal" (river) 2 or 3 times every year. Used to be a gang of thieves, Doc Middleton and his bunch, was up in [there?], they finally got cleaned out but I was up there once with a fellow by name of Harris and I found some fellows campin' up in there and I went back to our camp and told Harris there was some of the Middleton gang campin' near. He got all the guns on he could carry and "cum" along. We slipped up near and I told him I'd talk and I went up and said "You ain't any of Doc Middletons bunch are you" and all the time Harris was scared to death and never knowed any better.

They said while I was in the hospital last fall I talked about old Zeb Parker. Almost 60 years age he was supposed to have buried that in Trade-rat gulch. It was gold, he claimed he buried it. I wouldn't swear as he was ——.

A fellow shot at me down in Arizona. I had long hair black and curly. Billy the kid was just about 1 1/2 inches taller than me and [they?] said I looked like him. When that happened I got my hair cut and left that country.

I had a picture of me and my wife and she had her hair in 2 braids that just hung down over her shoulders, straight and that was when my hair was long. I was raised by a family name of Cully at Council Bluffs after my mother and father split up. I took my own name after that too.

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I was at a place about 12 miles from Hamburg North along the foot hills in the valley near Abileene or Salina and I talked to the James boys, they stopped to water at a place where I was. They was 2 bunches, Frank James with a bunch of men and Jessie James came with another bunch and they wanted to water their horses. Doc Wheeler had shot about half of them, killed [Glen?] Miller and Caldwell, wanted Bob Younger but Cole Younger his brother wouldn't let them them . Jessie and Frank both got away. Bob Ford shot Jessie, he was a Sunday school teacher, a cousin and Jessie had gone by the name of Howard. It happened in a house on a hill and Bob Ford came out West and got shot. That was about '76. If I remember I was about 23. The [James?] boys when they started were young. Bill Onanter or [Quantrell?] led that bunch. They came into Lawrence Kansas just at [daylight?] and said the Indians was comin'. They'd started a prairie fire and run ahead of it. Everybody got excited and they plundered the town and burnt it down, 18 or 19 of them and there was a regiment of soldiers camped 1 mile away.

They'd raid over into Kans. and there was a man by name of Jamison called a bushwacker and he run them back into Mo. and kill somebody or have a hangin' and get run back into Kans. by the James boys. We lived about 2 counties from the state line. The Jameson gang got broke up after the war but the James boys kept right on [robbin'?] and stealin' and raisin' hell. I was 10 years old then.

My brother-in-law died at my house at Broadwater and he used to work for old Bill Cody, Buffalo Bill they called him. His boy has a buffalo coat that he gave him. They started callin' him "Buffalo" because one time when he was contracted to furnish the construction camp with meat he saw the buffalo comin' in a big herd and got up in a big cotton wood tree and shot 'em. There is the dark and the yellow, the bison and buffalo. The Plains bison was larger and yellow. [???

A cousin and Uncle of Ira Fisher was out with me and some other fellows, we was trappin on the "Prairie Dog" in Kans. in '71, a bunch of Indians made a dust a long ways off. We knowed there was more of 'em than the 7 of us and we talked it over what we would do.

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There wasn't anything we could do but [run?] for it and when we seen we couldn't make it I said " shuks?] [shucks?] , I can take care of 25 of 'em if you fellows get your'n". When they seen we was goin' go fight they'd stay out as far as they thot we could shoot and they'd mill around us you'd think there wasn't an Indian on them horses they'd hang on the other side but we'd cripple their horses [or?] kill em out from under the devils and we made it so hot for 'em they'd run [till?] they got their crippled ones on horses and they'd get out of there.

We crippled and killed so many of 'em and so many horses we finally got away from them and they run us till we got into a bunch of friendly Indians, Omahas and /# Ottoes and Pawnees that was huntin' and they fought the Sioux off. I got shot twice in the [f?] , o once in the knee and once in the skin.

The shot in my skin was with a bullet but the one in my knee was with an arrow. Some of the Indians had guns but they never could use them as good as they could their bows and arrows. Another fellow was shot, Tom Kipper, and he was in bad shape, was shot in the thigh.

I was ridin' trail, bringin' cattle up from the South to Abileene at the time; Joe McCall was the Marshall at Abileen, we lived (me and my first wife) close to the Pony express trail and Bill Hickock used to come to our place and stop and eat and we was friends, Bill Hickock never hurt any [booy?] body unless he had to. I think he had been watchin' the gold shipments along the pony express and just [?] /# [?] from along there sometimes. [But?] Bill Hickock was Mayor at Abileene and Joe McCall was Marshall by about '76 and Bill was quite a ladies man but he never got married but he lived with Calamity Jane s, she was called Calamity because whenever a family had a piece of bad luck or when ever somebody got up against it she helped 'em, big hearted she was and she used to make others pitch in and help out too. Wild Bill was an awful good shot. I was an awful good shot myself but I never saw anybody that could draw or shoot from the hip or any other say like Wild Bill.

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Used to others could shot shoot too, Joe McCall was one of 'em. Him and Wild Bill got into it and said they'd shoot each other on sight but they [both hung?] right around the same country. Neither one of 'em lit out. One day Wild Bill was drinkin' at the bar and he looked up and seen Joe McCall in the lookin' glass where he'd come in behind him with his guns drawn. I don't know how in the world Wild Bill ever got that glass out of his hands and got his guns but he did. The other man had his guns on him all the time but Bill was just that fast that he got his shots over his shoulder and he got McCall before he ever got a shot in.

I used to know old King Fisher, he was a big fellow, (foot-note) he got 4 men that I knew /# of. He was bad if he got pushed. Some of them fellows took out 2 homesteaders and hung 'em and robbed 'em and they had quite a time over it. They didn't have kangaroo courts in Kans., In them days like they have now. I talked to one of [the?] them , Ira, about it he was a pretty nice fellow some of the others was [brse?] horse thieves and everything else.

Buffalo Bill was good lookin' but not as good as he was good lookin'. He was just a common man like any body.

In '81 I was up in the Black Hills with a miner, McNare, we mined a little and gambled a lot and we got acquainted with Deadwood Dick, he was supposed to be a tough character, he was ugly enough to be tough and he never had any expression on his face, win or loose he always looked dead.

I was on the range 10 years in Kans, trailin' herd from Texas and Oklahoma to Abileen I rode 10 years and quit and came here in '87 and rode for Plumer Jewett and McCully and then quit and went into the hay business here, leased the Bratt place then went into the broom business I worked in the broom business, run 60 hands 2 years.

I got married /# again to Lena Walker in 1887 the year I come up here. My first wife only lived 6 or 8 years, we had one child a boy, Fred, he has the picture of her and me.

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I helped to survey the Council Bluffs and St. Joe road in [1889?]. I was the [fla?] flag man, they said I had such good eyes they'd put me ahead. Engineer Whiting was the surveyor. I never got anything for it. They promised me a pass but I never got it.

I had everything burnt out about 15 mi. E. of here. We was movin' in with my mother-in-law in '91 and we had /# most of our things in the barn, a prairie fire stared, we used to have them in the spring when the grass was high, and dry before the green grass got started. It didn't burn the home house but it burnt everything in the barn but I had some things in the house.

I run several thousand head of cattle down by Maxwell.

We got some old guns, a double barrel muzzle-loading shot gun, stock has been repaired with copper on stock, Name of Powell on each side of breach, repair was done by me about 45 years ago! Used to kill lots of prairie chickens with the gun.

Another one is a Springfield 1834 U.S. Cavalry shot gun "musket." It used to be a flint lock I lost the hammer in a parade. It is at least 104 years old. And an old Lewis Troy cap and ball rifle. I've killed lots of game with it. It was probably a hand carved stock.

Old King Fisher had a gun, Tooge (Ira) has it now, I saw old Black Legs when I was about 6 years old in Nemaha Co. Kans. in 1857. Ira wasn't born then yet and his father used to shoot buffalo and deer and everything, with it.

I swam the Mo. River when it was half mile wide when I was 10 years old. [?] I'm East Hinman road overseer now. It don't take much work but they made me overseer. They took my pension away from me.

If you see any of them you tell them I need it and you help me get it back.

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Used to be a fellow, old U.P. Sam they called him, was blind, and he used to travel up and down here on the R.R. They'd let him because everybody liked to hear him sing and play, used to fiddle and make up his own songs. Everybody used to like to hear him. He's dead now.