

## [Mrs. C. C. West]

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Range-lore

Elizabeth Doyle

San Angelo, Texas. Interview

Page one Tales - Personal Anecdote

### RANGE-LORE

Mrs. C. C. West came with her husband and small son from Stephens County, Texas, to the Eldorado Country in 1889, before the mad land rushes or even a townsite had been thought of. With the family dog and her babe in her arms she herded sheep by day and listened to the howling of wolves by night, while her husband would be away on business sometimes for weeks at a time. C12 - 2/11/41 - [Texas?] 2 For six months they lived under a large live oak tree with only their bedding, a big skillet and lid, and a few tin dishes for a house keeping outfit.

“When we heard of the wonderful climate and free range of West Texas, we thought surely that must be the place for everyone to go,” pleasantly commented Mrs. C. C. West, gracious little mistress of one of the loveliest homes in Schleicher County.

“Mr. West thought if we could only get here with our sheep and baby boy that we would never want or need for anything else.

“In 1889, equipped with a covered wagon, a few supplies, an ordinary team and a bunch of sheep we started out. Our sheep had no water for 'three days and our own supply was

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running very low when we came upon some water holes where we camped, from one hole to another for several days.

“When we reached Schleicher County, water was still the problem until my husband got help and dug a well. I cooked all around that well for months and the few passers-by never failed to stop.

“We camped under a big live oak tree for six months before we got a tent. The tent looked like a mansion to us and we certainly thought we were getting along then.

“Our sheep were doing well and I have taken the old family dog and my baby and herded them for days, while Mr. West would be away on business. We would 3 sleep in the wagon then and always the wolves seemed to howl more and louder at those times.

“There were a few bad Indians left then, but somehow we managed to escape them. I spent many sleepless nights, however, in horrible fear of them.

“While we were living under the big tree, Easter was approaching and the little boy had been told the story of the rabbit's laying for him, etc., until I thought it would be disastrous for Easter to come on and that child without an easter egg. I had one old dominecker hen and she hadn't laid an egg for weeks but the day before Easter I was prompted to go to her coop and she hadn't failed me. Lying there, all bright and shiny, was a big white egg. It all sounds foolish now, I know, but I was a fond young mother in a strange land and to me that egg was a beautiful sight. Eagerly I snatched it up, ran into the house and began coloring it with my quilt scraps. That was the prettiest easter egg I have ever seen and of course I have seen every kind since then. The rabbit had been under a tub for days so we all had a very joyful Easter, even if we did have only a live oak tree for a home.

“When we sheared the sheep and took the wool into San Angelo I went along and when we reached the big divide and I looked afar over the vast expanse of the 4 western country, I thought that indeed this must be paradise. We had to camp on the way and the

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few who passed, stopped and ate with us. On this trip we got six months' supplies and above all else a cook stove. No kind of stove can ever again look to me like that one did. Later when we had more hands, I have cooked hundreds of biscuits at a meal on that stove.

“When there would be prairie fires, mustang or antelope drives, they would all gather at our place for food and we never disappointed them.

“The nearest I ever came to seeing a gun fight was between my husband and a man who came to our place asking for water for his stock. 'I am very sorry,' said my husband, 'but we have only drinking water here and that was bought and hauled five miles.' 'I must have that, my stock are starving,' said the man and he made for our water barrel while Mr. West made for his gun, with me hanging onto his coat tail. I wasn't much force in size but I hung onto him with all my might until the man saw what he was in for and fled.

“There was plenty of trouble over the water and grass between the sheep and cattle men, and fight after fight ensued but I never knew of any dangerous gun fights that we sometimes hear of. Fist fights were common, such as occurred between—(I'd better not call names though, they are still living), but 5 Mr. Cowman found Mr. Sheepman on his grass. 'Don't you know those d—n things will ruin my grass?' he said. 'Get off, yourself,' answered the sheepman, 'this is as much my land as yours and it will take more then you to put me off.' The fist-a-cuffy was on and the sheepman won, proving further his equal rights to the wide open spaces.

“For sometime the only, post office in the county was a large wooden box nailed on a big live oak tree on the Vermont Ranch. All the mail for every resident of the county was placed in this box by the stage drivers and going to this unique post office amounted to an event with the few settlers.

“Mr. West established the first post office in the first store building in what is now Eldorado. He was also the first justice of the peace after the county was organized and I believe the

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joke still goes around that my two children came in and said, 'Ma are we justices of the peace too, cause pa is?' 'No, children, no,' I replied, 'just me and your pa—me and your pa.'

“Speaking of stage drivers, I have seen them put hot bricks to their feet and veils over their faces and then come in with their faces frozen. I believe it used to get colder here than it does now.

“I was called to sick relatives once and took 6 the earliest stage out. On down the line when the mules seemed about run down, bang, went a revolver right out over their heads. Without thought of announcing his intention he had fired away and the team lurched forward into a new pace. 'Excuse me, madam,' says he, 'I only fire like that to hasten them on a bit.' 'You can't go too fast for me,' I replied, 'I'm answering a sick call and can ride as fast as you can drive.' With that, he used his six-shooter freely the rest of the way and our arrival must have been hastened considerably by this means.

“People comment on my living in such luxury now. I am grateful for every comfort but I know exactly how it all came. I've done most every kind of work known to man or woman. When we were moulding the concrete blocks out there in the back yard for this nine room house, I helped just like a man. I scraped the walls of all nine of these rooms and that big hall by myself before they were [calcimined?]. We have our own light and gas plants and enjoy many comforts from them but I always tell people that with any showing at all a person can have nearly anything they set out for if they work to that [end?] long enough and hard enough. When I was living under a tree, herding sheep with my babe in my arms and using one big skillet for a whole kitchen outfit, I was a long way from the big 7 steam heated home I am enjoying now. Our present basement would have been paradise then.

“My greatest regret is that Mr. West couldn't have lived and enjoyed these comforts with us.” Range-lore

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### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mrs. C. C. West, Eldorado, Texas, interviewed November 15, 1937.