

[Charles W. Holden]

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Gauthier, Sheldon F.

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. 7

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Charles W. Holden, 72 living at 404 W. Florence St., Fort Worth, Tex., was born on his father's farm in Murray co., Tenn., April 3, 1865. His father, James K. Holden, with his family, migrated to Texas with an emigrant train of 20 covered wagons in 1869, settling in Lamar co. Four years later, 1873, the Holden family moved to [Brown?] co. and there established a farm. Charles Holden secured work on the Coogin's cattle ranch when he was 11 years old. He later worked on the Scoggins, Connell, and other ranches. He terminated his range career to engage in farming, which he followed for a living thereafter. His story of range life follows:

“The place of my birth is Murray co., Tenn. near Nashville. The event took place April 3, 1865, on a farm which my father owned and operated.

“When I was four years old, which was in 1873, my father moved with his family from Tennessee to Texas. He located in [Lamar?] county, near to town of Paris. A number of folks in and around Murray county, Tenn., organized an emigrant train and drove through to Texas together. There were 20 covered wagons, pulled by hoss and mule teams, and

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around 100 people in the party that came through on that trip, and all settled in [Lamar?] county. The heads of the families all took up land and started farming. [????]

“I don't recall details of the trip coming to Texas, but have a general recollection of some high spots of it. Roads were nothing more than trails, with plenty of bog holes. There were very few bridges crossing streams of water, so we forded 2 most of the creeks and rivers; or had a ferry, which operated in a few spots, haul the outfit across.

“At one time the train was in the lowland of a river bottom, just following a wet spell. The land was black gumbo and it balled up on the wagon wheels, the critters' feet; also, on the feet of the folks, with every step taken. That day, the men worked all day making five miles. Two and three teams were necessary to pull the wagons through the mud; so part of the train was pulled through, while the rest waited for the teamsters to double back after the wagons. One spot in that bottom was so boggy that men were compelled to walk on each side of the wagon, using poles for a brace, keeping the wagons from tipping over.

“At another time the train came to a river, that had to be forded, at a time of high water which would hold up travel for a week or ten days, if we waited for the water to go down. In order to get across the river, the men out logs and made rafts which were leashed to the wagons and by that means the rigs were floated across. Three rafts were used, floating three wagons at a time to the opposite bank. After making the landing, the rafts were floated back after three more wagons, and so / on, until the whole train was put across. Of course there were plenty of men to do the work, but it was a right pert job.

“After the train left Tennessee, the crowd started to keep their eyes peeled for Indians. At all times, there were two men at a distance of two miles in the lead and at the rear, watching for raiders.. 3 “At night the wagons were placed end to end in a circle. The folks cooked and slept inside of the circle, and at all times the people had their guns at their side; also, two men kept riding on the outside of the circle, all night, ready to give an alarm if any raiders appeared.

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“The train came through without any trouble from raiders. We saw Indians many times, but were never molested until we were about at the end of our trip. A party of Indians came up to the train while it was starting to ford the Red River. They begged for a hoss, some food and ammunition, in fact anything they could get.

“After a stay of four years in [Lamar?] county, my folks again joined a train party of 14 families which drove through to Brown county. I was eight years old at that time and able to remember details.

“Among the families that made that trip were those of my father's three brothers and his father, John Cooper, Jim Cooper, Jack Rochell, Tom Brown, all of whom were in the party that came from Tennessee to Texas. The other five families' names have slipped my mind, except some of their last names. There were the Jackson, Thomas and Peters crowd.

“Our worst stream crossing was the Trinity River, which we forded at Dallas. Coming out of the river, we had a steep bank to pull. There was a spell of rain the day before we made that ford, so, besides the incline, there was plenty of mud. The men were compelled to hitch two and three teams to one wagon in making that grade. The grade became so badly cut [adn?] 4 rutted when the last wagon was being hauled through, it bogged so bad that the tongue of the wagon was pulled out of it's hitch by the strain placed on it. On the trail were the usual bog holes, which at times caused the men folks to get their praying and cussing mixed; but we lit in Brown county, all together.

“It only one point did we get a scare; that is, especially the women folks did. We had forded the [Pecan?] Bayou, and on the west bank two of the party's dogs attracted our attention to something that they were gnawing on. upon looking, we saw two dead Indians that someone had made good Indians out of, laying on the ground, and the bodies had not been there long. Well, that created excitement among the men folks and a part scare to the women. We had heard a lot about the Indian raids and depredations, therefore feared that our train would run into a party of raiding Indians. All of the men and a few of

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the women folks got their shooting irons ready for prompt action. My mother fainted from the sight of the dead Indians, and several of the women became hysterical; but we soon got everything straightened out and started on, headed by a bunch of determined, fast and true shooting men.

“When my mother came out of the faint, she insisted on having a piece of artillery. She was provided with a rifle and rode in the rear of the wagon. The determined look on her face and with a rifle placed across her lap will never leave my mind. She sure was set to protect her chicks.

“We had missed the Indians by a few hours, because a 5 company of rangers had jumped them and the two dead Indians failed to make their get-a-way.

“We were just a short distance from our destination, which was the Pecan Bayou Valley., two miles east of Brownwood. We all camped together on a mesquite flat. The wagons were arranged in a circle; and each family had a tent, which was pitched inside of the circle. That was done so that the party would be in a bunch in the event of an Indian attack, which were taking place here and there in that section.

“Each of the families had leased 320 acres of land from Cam and Moody [Coogins?], two brothers who were large cattlemen and controlled thousands of acres in that country. The entire tract of 4,480 acres was fenced with a split rail fence, which was for the purpose of keeping cattle off of the tract. The whole section of the country was an open range and this tract was to be farmed, and was about the first farming venture in that section.

“The first thing the settlers did was to break land for crops. It was the latter part of January when we lit on the land; and by March all of the families had a good piece of land ready for planting.. The major part of the land was planted in corn. The rest was planted in wheat, for flour purposes, and [?] vegetables for family use.

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“The crops were planted and there was an excellent stand of everything. Everybody was feeling in fine spirits about the future. Then, one day, a strong north wind started to blow, and with it came Kansas grasshoppers, not only one million, but a 6 million or more. It was about mid-day when they came in and they blotted out the sun as a dark cloud would. Well sir, those hoppers landed in the fields, and six hours after they started work not a bit of corn was left, or grass; or anything else that was green.

“As you may know, a grasshopper will emit a fluid similar to 'baccy juice in appearance, when they light on you and are disturbed. Several of the folks had not seen the grasshopper before at close quarters. The insect not only covered the vegetation, but were all over humans, and we had to brush them off and wipe away the juice. Tom Brown was brushing off hoppers and juice, and thinking deeply without saying a word, while others were discussing what move to make. Finally, someone asked Brown what he thought of the hopper, and he answered: 'Well, the insect is the most impolite thing that I have ever met up with. They not only eat all of our crops, but then spit 'baccy juice in our faces.'

“That crowd was as happy as oysters out of their shells. On top of the grasshopper show, Jim Cooper and my father got into a regular bearfight because of the insects. Cooper tried a fool trick which could not be no more successful than if he tried to put on his boot wrong end to. He and another man took a 100 foot rope and each holding an end, mounted hosses and started to sweep across Cooper's corn field. Them two fellows were attempting to chase the insects out of the field. As fast as the chased hoppers out, others would hop in. What he did chase out was towards my father's fields. Father commanded 7 Cooper to stop shunting hoppers towards his field, and Cooper refused to cease. That started a fight, pronto. Each of them did a pert job of fighting, which was enjoyed by all, except a few of the women folks. The next day each admitted that they were dam fools and continued to be good friends. The insects left the country soon as they had cleaned up the vegetation, and it was early enough to still plant late corn, which was done, and a fair late crop was raised.

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“None of the families had any milk cows and Sam Coogins told the folks they could pick out any of the fresh cows, which roamed the range by the hundreds, that suited them for milking purposes, and turn the critters back into the herd when they went dry. Father's experience with the range cows was only looking at the critters. Back in Tennessee, all the cows were tame animals. He picked out an old mother cow with a week-old calf as a milker for his family, calculating that the old mossy horn critter would be easier to milk than a young heifer. He and another man drove the calf into a pen, which had been built for the purpose, and of course the cow followed her calf in.

“Father enjoyed drinking milk, but hated to do milking so that was mother's job. The next morning, after the critter was penned, dad went with mother to watch her milk the cow. Mother started to enter the pen and noticed the old cow shaker her head and give her a side glance, which mother took to mean, 'don't come near me'. I don't suppose that critter ever saw a human wearing skirts before. After sizing up the situation, mother said: 8 “Jim, I don't reckon I have any hankering to milk that cow'.

““Why, you scare cat, that's an old critter', said father, 'I picked her because of the age so you would not have to break her to milking. Go in and milk her,' father urged.

“But mother could not be urged, and told father that she wanted a demonstration of how the cow would milk before she tried it. They argued their difference of opinion for a spell, then father said: 'Oh heck! give me that pail'; and he went into the pen. The cow made for him and father hit for the fence, but she got to him before he could top the rails. It was a frosty morning and he had on an overcoat, and that critter hooked one of her mossy horns under the belt of the coat. Father came out of the coat pronto, leaving the coat hanging on the critter's horns. Mother didn't help father's feelings any by saying, 'Jim, it may be hard on your coat, but it's great fun for the cow. Go in and get your coat; show me how gentle and kind that milk cow is'.

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"To hell with the coat and milk, too. Open that gate and chase that beast out', father ordered.

"Open it yourself and do your own chasing. I don't want it said that I chase your milk cow off', mother answered.

"By that time, several of the tent dwellers had come up to see the show, and one of them opened the gate. They first ordered everyone into the wagons, because that old critter had gone, maybe, 10 years without being milked and was on her highhoss about folks wanting her to change her ways of living. She was busy tossing and rearing, trying to get loose 9 from the coat, which she finally accomplished. Then she looked around, snorting an blowing, then made for the gate.

"Father was told to pick a critter with it's first calf, which he did, and in a week's time had it broke to milking.

"Among the troubles that the settlers had to contend with was the Indian hoss thieves. About two weeks after we arrived, some Indians sneaked up and stole two of John Cooper's hosses.. Then they tethered all the hosses with a rope, near the camp, but one night the Indians again sneaked in, cut the ropes and stole two hosses from Brown. Then the men bought chains and padlocked a loop around the animal's neck and the other end around a tree, which stopped the hoss stealing.

"The settlement was never raided and the only one that had any trouble with Indians, while living at the settlement, was my father. He had made a trip to Round Mountain after a critter for beef. Three Indians took after him and run him to within 200 yards of the camp. It happened at the time he was riding a fast hoss, instead of a mule, and that saved his scalp from dangling at an Indian's belt.

"The Indians got Tom Brown's family, but not at the settlement. He moved to some school land which he took up, five miles west of Brownwood. All the settlers advised him not to

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make the move and live off there alone, but he did. He had two children around five and six years old and an infant about three months old, at the time.

“Brown went to Brownwood one day and when he returned home he found his wife, dead and scalped, in the cowpen. The 10 milk pail was on the ground, which indicated that she had gone there to milk. The infant was found dead in it's cradle. The child had been scalded with hot water from a kettle which was on the stove heating. Brown told how his wife always heated a kettle of water before starting to do the milking, which she used to scald the milk pail. The kettle was found setting on the floor; and the cradle clothes, also the child's, was soaking wet. The two older children were gone and were never heard from afterwards, so far as I have ever learned.

“There was a hunting party, made up of cowhands from the various ranges, but the boys had to give up the hunt when they completely lost the trail after two days of trailing.

“In face of the Indian, grasshopper and other troubles, we fared well. So far as chuck was concerned, we couldn't be starved. Beef, of course, was plentiful. We could pick up strays anytime we wanted a yearling. Besides beef, we had all the wild game we hankered for. There were thousands of wild turkeys, antelope, deer, and some buffalo, in that section.

“In the month of February, the folks would go buffalo hunting; and the meat was cut into chunks and hung up to dry. There was no salt, or anything else, used to cure the meat; but it cured and stayed in excellent condition. The meat would form a crust around the outside and when we were ready to cook it we would cut the crust away. Under that crust was the most tasty and tender meat I have ever lined my flue with.

“Wild honey was had for the gathering. So, with raising some corn, wheat and vegetables, all that the folks had to buy 11 was some knick-knacks.

“When we lit in Brownwood, there were only tow places of business there: a general store, run by McMen, and a saloon run by Tom Ackers. Each of the business houses were busy

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places, and the only kind of folks one could see was cowhands. There were several big cow outfits, in that section, and a lot of small grease pots. The Coogins, the Scoggins and the Connell outfits were among the largest ranges. W.E. Connell was in later years connected with the banking business in Fort Worth.

“My mother was an excellent seamstress and could make men's clothing according to measure as well as any tailor, and she got started in making clothes by allowing W. E. Connell to coax her into making him a suit. Mother was the first person who could do that kind of work there, and after she got started they kept her busy. The suit she made for Connell was a gray jean cloth, and that suit was most always one thing talked about by him and I, in later years, when I visited him at his bank.

“McMen prevailed on mother to make suits, which he sold in his store. With the money she earned making suits, father bought out a school claim from a fellow and moved onto his own land.

“When I was 11 years old, I was given a job by the Coogins cow outfit. The camp was at Brownwood and there is where we bunked and lined our flues, when not behind the chuck wagon working the range, and that we were a great part of the time.

“Walter Faber, Henry [Duke?], [Lonie?] Green and myself were the 12 steady hands at the Brownwood camp. Walter Faber is one of the big cattlemen of that section now. He operates on the old W. E. Connell range.

“In addition to cattle, Coogins run 1,000 head of hosses and around 2,000 head of hogs. The hogs were ranged on the Jim Ned Creek and the critters found their own living on the creek bottoms of that section. The hogs were always rolling fat from feeding on the pecans and acorns that grew in abundance in those bottoms. I have seen pecans so thick on the ground that one could rake the nuts, with a rake, by the bushels. Hogs feeding on pecan nuts made the finest of tasting meat[.?.]

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“The hogs were sold in the Fort Worth market and the first driving of critters that I did was helping to drive 600 hogs from Brownwood to Fort Worth. We went into to bottoms and herded out 650 critters of the proper size and drove the animals to Brownwood. There we stayed two days while 50 of the critters were butchered, which were used by the Coogin's family and the cowcamps. After the butchering was done, we started for Fort Worth.

“Henry Duke, Lonie Green and I were the drivers. At intervals, Coogins would drop in on us to see if we were hogging along alright. Our chuck, bedding and camp supplies were carried on pack hosses. Lonie Green was the cooky; besides, he helped with the driving, which did not call for much work.

“It took us close to 30 days to make the distance of, approximately, 125 miles. We never pushed to animals, but just let the critters take their own time. Two of us walked at 13 the front, on either side of the herd, to keep it pointed in the proper direction, and the other fellow stayed in the rear to poke a hog that became tired and lie down, then we would wait until they had their rest out, before going on. The distance covered in a day was from three to five miles. When we hit a pecan, or acorn grove, we would let the hogs feed their fill.

“Driving hogs is not so hard as some folks reckon. The animals can't be rushed, but will move forward taking their own time. At night, hogs will bed down and give no trouble. If something scares a hog or a number of the animals, just those scared will get excited. but soon will settle down.

“During the night one of us stayed on watch, changing shifts each four hours. we had no trouble, night or day, during the whole trip.

“Coogins made yearly drives of hogs to the Fort Worth market. On the trip I made, we drove back 20 Durham bulls, which he bought and were ready for delivery to him when we arrived with the hogs. Those bulls were the first Durham breeding stock brought into that section and were bred to the longhorn cattle.

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“On the range there was no night riding during my period of nesting there. The critters were allowed to go where they pleased, except during the roundup, then the critters were bunched and held until the branding was done. After the branding, the critters were turned loose to roam. Cattle in that section run the range in bunches and a half dozen or more brands were mixed. At the roundup, all the different outfits would join together, working one section after another, branding calves. The calves were 14 branded with the brand that it's mother had. When a calf was roped, the proper mother would come running to it, when the calf let out it's bawls, therefore, the mother was always easily located.

“At all times, riders were constantly riding the range, keeping watch over the herds, looking after cripples, sick, and bogged critters; also, watching to keep the critters from drifting too far. Occasionally, we would have to drive a bunch back towards the home range grounds.

“When a herd was wanted for the market, riders would ride over the range, picking out the number and kind of critters wanted.

“The cattle rustlers gave us a heap of trouble, and many men were hung up to dry due to this trouble. Frequently, I would meet up with a fellow that was looking up, with a rope tied around his neck, hanging from a limb, and the verdict always was: 'Party came to his death by the hands of a party or parties unknown', and that would end the matter, with all hands satisfied.

“The worst deal with rustlers I ever saw was the Green fight, which took place near Brownwood. There were three brothers of the Green boys, and they were known through the section as top rustlers. They were arrested several times, charged with rustling cattle and hosses, but they were never convicted. It seemed impossible to get evidence against them which they could not meet by producing evidence that the deal was a fair sale or trade.

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“In addition to being rustlers, them fellows were tough. They had notches on their guns and no one dared to go near the boys to settle a cattle deal, unless they were ready to shoot it out. From that prattle about the boys, one may reckon the kind 15 of buckaroos them fellows were.

“I want to relate what them boys did to an old fellow from Arkansas that came dragging into the section with a yoke of fine steers hitched to a covered wagon, in which he and his wife had their personal goods. Those boys held the old couple up, took the yoke of well broke steers and put in their place two unbroken wild steers, then turned the outfit loose. Of course, those wild steers went to running, rearing and bucking across the prairie, until they were tuckered out. Then the old fellow had to unyoke the steers to save what was left of his outfit.

“The Green boys claimed that they made a fair trade and gave the old fellow boot in the trade. There was no chance to convict the boys of wrong doing. That act, played on the old fellow, put a finish on what the folks in the section could stand, and they organized an visiting party that called on the Green boys. The party consisted of six men, who rode up to the Green's home and called for the boys to come out. Instead of coming out, them fellows answered 'to hell with your whole gang - take this as a start, there' - and let loose a hail of lead. To be polite, we visitors did the same thing, wanting to treat them as well, or a little better, than they were treating us.

“We visitors were at a disadvantage, being that the boys were barricaded in the house, but we kept pouring lead into the windows and closed doors, from every angle. We took protection of what cover we could find, but several of us got nicked by bullets, and a fellow named Nickols was killed. Finally, one of 16 our party crawled on his belly up to and under the house and set the house on fire.

“It wasn't long after the fire got to going until the folks appeared coming out of the house. Two of the boys were married, and their mother lived there with them. When the boys

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came out, they were behind the women folks, which they were using for a shield. That complicated matters, because we didn't want to shoot the women, and had to be careful with our fire. We began to move about, cautiously, to get a line shot. this we did in a short spell and got all the boys without hurting the women, except their feelings.

"I didn't attend the inquest held in the case of the Green boys, but I was told the verdict was, 'That they came to their death from gun wounds fired by parties unknown.'

"After the shooting, there were around 50 people who came to the Green place and identified hosses as their property.

"I stayed with the Coogins outfit four years, then went to work for the Scoggins outfit and nested there four years, and then nested with the Connell outfit for a spell.

"The best job of brand burning I ever saw was done on some of the Coogin's critters. Their brand was 'SC' and 'MC', which represented the names of the two brothers. Some critters were discovered with the 'SC' changed to read '80', called the Eight Naught brand.

"A person may wonder if there was anything in our lives but fighting Indians, rustlers, herding cattle and hogs. We didn't have shows and night clubs to go at for amusement. But, as I 17 look back and recall our play times, and watch the folks today, I am certain we folks in those early days got more satisfaction out of our play than the folks do today.

"Occasionally, there would be a dance; and when a 'baile', as they called a dance, was announced, that was a general invitation to all who wished to attend. To ride 50 miles was not considered to far for the boys to go to attend a baile.

"There always was plenty of chuck fixed to feed to yelling worms of them which came. When flue lining was over with, a room would be stripped of all fixings and the hoedown would start.

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“One, and sometimes two fiddlers, would agitate the catgut. The main tunes played were 'Hell among the Yearlings', 'Sallie Gooden', 'Devil's Dream', and 'Diannah had a Wooden Leg'.

“Generally, every one came dressed in their cow outfit, except perhaps to change the bandana to a Jap silk handkerchief, and to leave off their guns. The guns would be hung on the saddle horns. The custom considered it a sign of friendship when a fellow took off his gun before entering a house.

“As a rule, there were far more stags than does. To give all a chance at dancing, some of the stags would take the part of does, which caused a heap of fun. Bailes were the big affairs, and when one was announced it would be the subject of conversation for days, before and after.

“Next to the dances, the cowboys took in the saloon on pay days. They would take on enough pizon to get to feeling real pert, then do the first darn fool thing that came into their mind. Tom Ackers, the saloon keeper, kept an extra supply of 18 glasses and other fixtures, so that there would be no delay in replacing fixtures after it was shot up. Of course, the damage was always settled for after the show was over with.

“After putting in about 11 years on the range, I decided to establish a home for myself and went to farming.