

[Dave Hoffman]

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Beliefs and customs — [???

Folkstuff — Range lore

Gauthier. Sheldon [F.?

Rangelore.

Tarrant co., Dist., #7

[66?]

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Dave Hoffman, 38, living at 3415 Ave., J, Fort Worth, Texas, was born at Avon Mo., July 1, 1900. His Father, Jessie Hoffman, was a breeder and racer of race horses. The Hoffman family moved from Mo., to the Indian Territory (now Okla.) during the year of 1905, and settled in Vinita, Craig co., Jessie Hoffman died during the year 1906. Dave secured employment on the Leeforce Cattle Ranch during the year [1916?], at which place he worked for about one year. He then went to Mo., and secured work on the Rankin Cattle Ranch, he headquarters of which was at Larkio. The ranch was a fenced range enclosing approximately 100,000 acres. Dave continued his employment for the Rankin Ranch over a period of two years. His next engaged in catching wild mustangs which roamed the Black Hills region of S. Dak. These animals were sold for meat food. This work he continued for about [on?] year, after which time he enlisted in the U. S. Army, in which he served during the period of the World War. After the conclusion of the war, he engaged in

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prosecuting in the S. W. States. Later he served on the Police Department in Los Angeles. During the past 10 years he has been a resident of the City of Fort Worth, Texas, and has engaged in the oil land lease brokerage business.

[His?] story of range life follows:

“My birth place was Mo., in the town of Avon, at a race horse breeding and stock farm. The event took place July 1, 1900. My father, whose name was Jessie Hoffman, engaged in breeding and racing horses. He moved his family to Craig co., of the Indian Territory (now Okla.) in 1905. Father died the following year, and his death caused me to seek my own livelihood as soon as I was large enough to work. C12 - [?] - Texas

“I was reared around the stock business and could ride a horse when a young lad. I could ride real well at the age of 10 years, and secured my first regular employment during my 13th year. 2 “Craig co., and the surrounding country, was then a cattle range country. When we moved there, in 1905, it was still more or less an open range country.

“About the only work I knew anything about doing was handling horses, and naturally, I sought sought employment in the business about which I had some knowledge.

The Leeforce ranch was among the larger ranches of the Craig co., sections and I succeeded in securing a regular job with the ranch when I was 13 years old. The ranch headquarters were located near Vintia.

“Damon Turner was the ranche's foreman and from five to ten hands were employed. During the summer season the outfit worked about 10 cowhands and cut the number down to five during the winter season. In addition, during the hay harvest season, the ranch employed about 10 extra hands cutting hay, which was used for feeding during the winter when the grass became scarce.

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“The ranch ranged, on an average, of around 5000 head of cattle. At the time I began working for the outfit, the range was partly fenced and the whole Leeforce range was enclosed completely during the year I begun working there. I do not recall the number of acres constituted the range, but it was near 10,000 acres. About 1000 acres was used for hay production.

“The condition of the range country was different in the early 1900s than during the prior years of the open range. During the early days of ranching in the S. W., a rancher could shift his herd from one section to another as the grazing condition became bad, but when I began my range career, the ranchers were compelled to keep their cattle more or less in one locality. Therefore, provisions for winter feed was necessary in order to keep the herd in good flesh.

“The/ work we were required to do, in attending to the herd, was from fence riding to feeding the stock. Before the fence was [??], a number of riders worked holding the herd within the partly fenced area. The fence enclosed tree sides, so we rode on the N. side, which was still open, holding the herd from drifting out. After the fence was completed, one rider rode the fence line constantly, looking for breaks. The small breaks he would repair and the large breaks were fixed by the repair crew. Other men watched for sick animals and in the winter months, when the grass became scarce, we fed hay. There were hay racks built in numerous places over the range. Hay was hauled and placed in the racks which complemented the grass feed.

“The Leeforce outfit participated in just one general roundup after I started to work there. This was the fall roundup of 1913. The fence was completed shortly after the roundup and removed the necessity of taking part in a general roundup. We had our ranch roundup in the Spring and Fall. During our roundup we used the chuck wagon and lived with it. We did our sleeping on the ground rolled up in a blanket lying on the ground. This sort of life may seem hard to a person who has not experienced such living, but it was not considered such by the old rawhides. In fact, to one used to living this sort of an outdoor

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life, it was not hard, but 4 on the contrary, it was preferred by them to living in doors. At the headquarters we had a comfortable bunk house and beds. However, several of the old timers would sleep out doors rolled in their blankets and lying on the ground in preference to using the bed. The out door life was conducive to vigorous appetite and health. I often recall two old rawhides who worked on the Leeforce ranch when I were employed there. These two fellows were not a day under 60 years of age and had engaged range work all of their active life. They were tough as steel and spry as most men at the age of 45 or 50 years. They did their turn in the saddle each day and could do as much work as any us other hands. They never slept in their beds, except when the weather was inclement, but used the ground to sleep on. Another thing they did, which impressed me, was the way they could eat. Among the victuals fed us hands were eggs. These were brought from town by the supply wagon and always served for breakfast. Well, these two old men for their breakfast, would eat three or four fried eggs, a piece of beef steak about six inches square, and the usual amount of gravy, syrup bread and coffee. The rest of us were no far behind [?] two lads, if any, but we were young and still growing. One would awake in the morning ready to enjoy breakfast and did not need any appetizer to start off with.

“We were fed plenty of good wholesome food. A variety of canned vegetables was served and some kind of dessert with each meal. There was always a dish of some kind of dried fruit [one?] the table. 5 “The cattle raised on the Leeforce ranch was a mixed breed of the Texas Longhorn and Herford. Leeforce used the Herford breed of bulls and the Longhorn cows to produce his stock. These cattle were fairly tame and handled rather easily. We did not have much trouble with stampedes. Of course, after the fence was completed, stampedes did not worry us much. During a storm, riders were used to watch the fence and ride the line on the lee side of the storm. If the herd started to drift ahead of or during a storm, there was danger of crowding into the fence so hard that it would break, and in such extent there would result a scattered herd. Therefore, we riders would ride the fence line holding the cattle back.

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“Our roundup was the hardest of all work we had to do, but the most interesting, at least it was to most of us, because we then had roping and bul-dogging to do.

“Leeforce had a large corral, which enclosed about [?] acres, into this pen we drove the cattle. The corral save us from doing riding to hold the gathered cattle while the herd was being worked. We would gather about 300 or 400 hundred head at a time and drive the animals into the pen. After these were cut out, branded and counted, the animals were driven out and held separate from the rest of the herd until the entire herd [?] was gone over.

“All Spring calves were branded in Spring roundup. In the Fall all later born calves were branded and such as may have been missed during the previous roundup. 6 “I Worked for the Leeforce ranch about 13 months and then went to Mo., where I secured work on the Rankin Cattle Ranch. It was located in Atkinson co., near Larkin. The ranch was divided into 12 units, each consisted of from 5000 to 10,000 acres. The entire tract was fenced and the unites were enclosed by separate fences. Each unit ranged from 3000 to 5000 head of cattle, and on each was planted and raised, on an average, of 2,000 acers of corn. There was a crew of about six cowhands working on each section, [?] the workers who looked after the corn crop. The average production of corn per acre was about 75 bushels, thus, one/ may calculate the amount of corn raised and fed on the Rankin Ranch.

“The ranch had their own breed of cattle which was the White Face Herfords, but Rankin bought a great number of cattle from W. Texas. The cattle came in from Texas by the train load. These cattle were fattened on corn and then sent to market. All the cattle which came in from Texas, were steers of the two/ year old class. These were fattened and sold when three. The market where Rankin sold his stock was St. Joseph and Omaha.

“The Texas cattle were a mixed breed, but no Longhorn. Rankin had on experience with a train load of Longhorns steers, which were twos. This bunch caused Rankin to refuse to buy any more of such cattle. These cattle were unloaded on the range and within an hour

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the Longhorns went on a stampede. They didn't like the country, I guess. The animals ran in to the fence and went through it as if the wires were so much thread. So far as Rankin's knowledge about these Longhorns [?] location, they are still running yet. Of course, the hands were not expecting the stampede, and if they were, there was not enough riders to hold the Longhorns.

“The train load of Longhorns were the only cattle which gave us stampede trouble, and they didn't give any trouble — they just left. All other cattle bought were of the tame breed and a large percentage was the Herfords.

“Within a day or two, after the arrival of a train load of steers, we would brand the animals and within a week the cattle would be contented and eating corn. Almost all the Texas range cattle shyed away from the corn when it was placed before them at first, but by watching to [?] other animals eating the grain, the animals would finally take a chance and get a taste of it. After getting a taste of the grain, they would be gluttons for a while, when the grain was placed in the racks.

“The corn was placed in racks built in Long rows and fed twice a day. I judge that about 200,000 bushels of corn was fed during the period of a year to the stock on each unit of the Rankin ranch. When the cattle were sent to the market from the Rankin ranch, the animals were in prime condition and sold for top price.

“All equipment on the ranch was the latest on that period and the cattle were handled according to the latest approved method, even to our living quarters and foods.

“We waddies were provided with comfortable beds in a well kept bunk house and our victuals consisted of a variety of well balanced and best of food well cooked. 9 “The work was no different than on other ranches, as a whole, which consisted of repairing fences, watching for sick and injured animals, feeding and roundups when gathering a herd a herd for shipment. The shipments amounted to a dozen car loads to a train of fattened stock.

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Cattle moved in and out from the ranch more or less constantly. A least once each month, a train load of cattle would arrive and a like number would move out.

“Leading pens and shutes were located at a spur railway track which run through the ranch. Therefore, the loading and unloading of cattle was did on the ranch and no driving was necessary.

“I worked for the Rankin Ranch for two years and then went to the Black Hills country of S. Dak. At the time there were many wild herds of the mustang horses which ranged in the [?] River brakes, and these animal could be found from S. Dak., back to Idaho and Mont.

“There was a market for those horses at the time. The animals were being used to slaughter for meat food. At this period one could buy horse meat in retail markets and the meat was listed on menus of many restraurants in S. Dak., Neb., Mont., and other places. At Pierie S. Dak., existed one of the horse markets then buying horses for meat produce. These wild horses sold for a price ranging from \$2 to \$5, depending on the size and weight.

“I joined joined a party of waddies and engaged in catching these wild mustangs to sell at the horse market. 10 While I was catching the wild mustang, I learned many things about the nature, characteristics, and shrewdness of the horse. To catch the animals one must out guess the mustang and this is not always done easily. I shall attempt to explain some about the animal and tell about our work catching these critters.

The different herds have more or less a home range where they will stay. Also, the herds number from 300 to 1000, and are separated into bunches of from 15 to 25 mares, the young colts, and one stallion.

“While the herd is grazing, the stallion will always be stationed off a short distance, standing on the highest point and maintaining a watch carefully. It does not take a chance

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on grazing, but his ears moving forward and back and turning his head from one direction to another, watching for any approaching object and ready to give the warning neigher.

“When the real [??] enemy appears, such as a mounted man, the stallion nighers his warning and then his harem starts to make their escape. The bunch is always lead by a mare which is [?] to the stallion [??]. The stallion always takes a position behind the herd, and there, he is ready to fight off the pursuer, if it becomes necessary. The stallion will attempt to [entice?] the pursuer away from the herd by taking an [?] course. If the horseman follows the stallion, the animal will lead the pursuer in a circle till his is traveling in the opposite direction. While so doing, the stallion will just stay far enough in the lead to keep out of danger. After leading the horseman a sufficient distance to 11 follow the harem to make its escape, then the stallion [?] into high speed, and one couldn't catch the animal with an express trail. The animal's speed and stamina are among the reasons why he is at the head of his herd.

“If the horseman does not follow the stallion on his enticing efforts, the animal will remain behind the herd, so as to be in a position to put up a fight, and to his death if necessary, thus holding the pursurer while his mares are escaping. While running behind a herd, the stallion will bite, on their rump, any lagging animal forcing them to increase their speed.

“It is practically impossible to catch a mustang, unless a number of riders, riding in relays, keep chasing the animal till it is exhausted, unless it is run into a trap.

“I shall explain the system we used to catch those mustangs. Always, when we ran upon a herd, the animals would leave their range. The harder they pursued, the farther they will travel, but even if they herd travels 75 or more miles, the animals will work cautiously, back to their home range. They will return in two to three days providing nothing appears dangerous. During the time the horses were away, we would build a corral from up-right poles. From the corral we would string two strans of wire in V shape, extending out for about a mile. At the outter entrance of the two wires the distance would be about a mile

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wide. On the wire we placed pieces of cloth at intervals of 15 to 20 feet. The mustangs knew nothing about wire. If one built a strong trap fence, of three or more wires [?] strans, the horse would fight the 12 wire and cut themselves till they would be incapaciated. But, one wire with cloth at intervals would keep the animals away from the wires because the cloth was conspicuous and strange to them. Thus, the mustang could be groven into the corral and once started towards it and between the two lines of wire.

“We would have the corral and wire arrangement completed by the time the herd returned back to their home range. After finishing our work, we would ride away so the mustangs would not see us. When we calculated the animals were settled and satisfied no one was around, five or six riders would encircle a harem and herd the herd towards the outer part of our strung wire. From this point we would crowd the animals into the corral. Once the animals [?] were between the wires, the rest of the work was done easily, because they were shy of the cloth and would travel forward in their attempt to evade us. When the animals were inside of the corral, we then did our roping and tying.

Generally we corralled about 25 to 50 at a time. These we roped, placed a hackamore on them and tyed five or six together. Three or four tyed bunches were attached to a broken animal and three or four of these broken horses would lead by one mounted man to the market.

“A part of our crew did the trailing to the market while the rest did the corraling. We corralled until we had all the mustangs of a region and then we would move to another section.

“While working at catching the wild horses we lived in camp style. 13 The trailers packed chuck to us from town and we took turns at cooking.

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"I continued the mustang catching business until the later part of 1913. After the U. S. declared war against Germany, I enlisted in the army and served until the termination of the War. Returning from the Army I then went to [?] in the Southwestern States.

"While traveling from place to another through the Southwest, I met many old rawhides, who had worked on the Texas ranges during the period when the whole State of Texas was about one open range.

"These old timers refused to live where the country was thick-settled and [??] Westward as their former locations became settled. When they became too old to work on the range, they engaged in prospecting, trapping or some kindred occupation.

"They did not need much cash to supply their needs. They lived on nature's produce. The edible game was their main food supply, and this, some of them, supplemented from a small garden. Meal, flour, tea, coffee, spices and a few clothes were all the things they bought. These old fellows were contented, healthy and lived to a very old age.

"I stopped at a cabin to inquire about the way one evening. On the steps an old fellow was sitting, whitening nonchantly. His hair was long and white. His skin was tanned and wrinkled, evidencing it had been subjected to the weather of many summers and winters.

"Friend, can you direct me on the way to [Duro?] Gap?" "I inquired.

"Never heard of her, stranger, but I'll ask pappy. Hey! pappy 14 come heyah. A stranger wants some directions," He called.

"In a few seconds an old rawhide appeared. He seemed hale and spry, but more wrinkled and dried than his son. When informed of my query, he said:

"Don' know as I ever heard tell of the place. I'll ask my pappy."

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"Your pappy!" I exclaimed. Say fellow, don't folks ever die out here?"

"Not exactly, they sort off get inactive and dry up. That's the way my grandpappy did. We have him hanging in the lean-to and we are using him for a razor strap."

"Facts are that the dry atmosphere of the Southwest is conducive to preventing decomposition. I saw evidence of this in Arizona. It was demonstrated during an epidemic of pinkeys affecting the cattle. The cattle would lose their sense of sight and would stop feeding. In this state of condition, it was not long till they died. While prospecting, I saw thousands of carcasses lying along drift fences, but no order was noticeable. The flesh dust dried and sort of osified.

"I spent a couple years prospecting and then went to Los Angeles where I worked on the Police Department for a few years. I left Calif., and came to Texas where I have since remained.