

[Mr. Daniel Boone Sinclair]

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Range-lore

Ruby Mosley

San Angelo, Texas.

[Folkstuff - Range - Lore [?]?]

Page one [?]

RANGE-LORE

Mr. Daniel Boone Sinclair and Mrs. Melvina Graham Sinclair, were born in Missouri. They had a family of several children. Daniel Boone Sinclair, Jr., was born in 1863 in Madison County, Missouri, soon after his father was killed, then a little later his mother passed away. At eleven years of age Daniel Boone Sinclair, Jr., came to Texas and made his home with the J. A. Goodnight family for sixteen years, riding the range most of the time. Tears were shed in expressing his gratitude for the goodness of Mrs. Goodnight to the wandering cowboys, she and Mr. Goodnight being the only mother and father he had ever known. He revealed his good training and character, in pictures as well as words, as he showed the picture of each of his children at different times being baptized. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 The old fashion baptizings were held in the river where hundreds of people gathered. Mr. Sinclair was father of two families; his first wife was Mrs. Lella Fields Sinclair, three children were born to them; his second marriage was to Miss Lillie Cain, to which J.A., A. D., and Mrs Lillie Sinclair Mullinax, were born.

"I was just a wandering orphan boy when I went into the Panhandle just north of the Pease River, looking for work, and some place to live," says Mr. Daniel Boon Sinclair, Jr., known

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as "Missouri Kid". "I got a job with the Half Circle Box Ranch near 1331 [Breckenridge?] and my dream had come true, I was a cowboy at last. I was such a kid; but nothing was too hard for me.

"Our ranch business was going as smooth as that kind of work did in those days, when a band of Comanche Indians attacked our place one night and swiped seventy of our horses. We got on our horses and trailed them to six miles north of San Angelo; here's where the skirmish began, we sure had a bloody fight; Ray, Thompson and four of our other boys were killed. The negro soldiers from Fort Concho were called in to help us and sixty of them were killed. The Indians were happy over killing the so-called Buffalo Soldiers, (meaning negro soldiers). Johnson was commander at the fort at this time. We killed a good many Indians; we never knew how many. We rounded our horses and got them ready to return to the ranch when the Indians made another attack and got fifty of our horses. During the skirmish I got shot in the hip with an arrow. I laid in Old Fort Concho twenty-two days before I could ride again. This battle was fought on White Flat.

"During the time we were here J. A. Goodnight had taken over the Half Circle Box Ranch, and me and eleven more of our crew were to take the horses back. Charlie Thompson, Willis Benson, Wild Bill, Arch McDonald (and I don't recollect the other names) made up the bunch. Our food supplies had run out and we didn't have any money after being delayed, so our only resort was meat of any kind that we could get and this was eaten raw for a period of six weeks. An Indian friend of ours warned us that one hundred Indians were on our trail. At this word we set out with a long road ahead of us. We made 247 miles in three days and nights without water or food. Three of the boys' tongues swelled out of their heads before we got water for them. I laid over for about eighteen months on the Old Half Circle Box Ranch, owned by J. A. Goodnight, recuperating from the arrow wound and starvation period which I suffered while going from San Angelo to the Panhandle. Old "Missouri Kid" was afraid he would not ride again.

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“Now it was time for the main round-up and I couldn't miss that, the most interesting event of the year. Jack Smith, Charlie Thompson and me were to take 145 head of horses to the old Goodnight Ranch/ in the Panhandle. On the way when night came we always hobbled our horses so they would range near our camp. Well, me and the two boys were at it when 4 a band of depredating redskins attacked us. Jack and Charlie were killed and they would have gotten me but I mounted my horse and jumped off a bluff in the water. My horse was a good swimmer, so we went on across the Pease River and to the ranch. I got forces from Fort Sill and the ranch then we put up a good fight for six long hours. Some Texas Rangers and six of our boys were killed. We killed many Indians but we never knew the exact number. We took what was left and went on to the round-up, which was a very unhappy occasion after the skirmish with those hostile Indians.

“Just eight days later the Indians made another raid and sneaked our horses. We had about 120 men at the round-up and they all mounted horses except me. There was nothing left so I jumped on a little mule. We circled the ranch, going in every direction to get our horses again. Tom Scott, Billie Smith, and me were cut off from the bunch by sixteen Indians. My, it was cold and these Indians were wild and kept us dodging until late in the evening.

“When the other boys found us I was shot in the shoulder but kept fightin'. A cowboy wouldn't quit. We used all of our ammunition and there was nothing left to fight with except our fists; then we really clashed. The hand to hand flat fight lasted most of the night. I had lost so much blood that I was carried to the ranch. The wagon man served as a surgical physician, 5 as he was used to cutting meat, and he cut the arrow out of my shoulder.

“I was carried to Fort Jacksboro and stayed twenty-one days and was off the range for a year and could not use my arm.

“I had two good cuttin' horses, Nigger and White Man, named for their color. Money couldn't have bought either of them. We rode all night, horses without bridles, as they

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knew more about the trails at night than we did. I rode my night horse twenty-five miles one night during a stampede in a thunderstorm; four of our boys and about twenty head of cattle were killed by lightning.

“One time Mrs. Goodnight went with us on a trip. We got into town late and she couldn't get a bed, as the hotel was full. This made her mad, so she wouldn't eat at the hotel. It was cold and snowing and we made her a bed in the wagon, as comfortable as possible. The next morning we shoveled snow so that she could have breakfast on the ground with us. When we were returning home she got in a hurry and asked to ride my horse on in. She started out and got a few miles ahead when she was stopped by the Indians. They grabbed the cuttin' horse by the reins and was going to capture both horse and woman but he was too quick for them. He fought and pawed the Indians, then cut around as quick as lightning and brought Mrs. Goodnight safely back to the gang. 6 The Indians disappeared for they knew we would be prepared for them.

“The Horse Head Battle on the plains was the most outstanding battle that I was in. There were over two-hundred Indians killed and only four whites. We really had it on them this time. We were hidden in the rocks of the canyon and every time an Indian showed up he was shot by several different men. We sure had a lot of fun there.

“Me and Lieutenant Red Thompson of the Texas Rangers, saved the negroes at Fort Concho. We had been scoutin' around, got hungry and needed some sleep so we tied our horses and went in at the back door to make it for the kitchen. Mrs. Charlie Fields, the cook at the fort, saw who we were and shouted, 'Just in time, Missouri Kid and Red.' We asked for food but she gave us whisky and ammunition. Some of the negro soldiers were called out to Dove Creek to do a little fightin' in what is known today as the Dove Creek Battle, and the Indians came from some other source and tried to take the fort from the remaining soldiers. The Indians began coming through windows and doors but Red and me with the help of Mrs. Fields and the booze she gave us soon cleaned up on the Indians. The unusual thing about this was that we found nine dead Indians in the back

Library of Congress

yard the next morning. I 7 guess there were not enough live ones left to carry their dead this time. We didn't know which of us killed the Indians but I know one thing, I had rather any one would take a shot at me than Mrs. Fields.

"I was then sent to Ranger as a Texas Scout for the rangers, when all of the Tom McDonald family was killed, except the sixteen year old girl. The Tom McDonald family was one of the wealthiest in that section and when they were killed the Indians put Tom's head on a gate post. They carried the girl with them and it was our job to rescue her. Captain of Texas Rangers, Dave McDonald (cousin to the family that was killed), Lieutenant Red Thompson and I, set out with strong determination to rescue the girl, Millie McDonald. We got on the trail and followed as long as we could see. It was raining and cold but we kept on going in and out of the woods. About 10:00 o'clock I saw a fire away in the woods and we rode as near as possible without disturbance and left our horses. We crawled on our bellies until we got as close to the fire as possible without sound. The snow began to fall fast and thick when old Dave whispered, 'If we run off or disturb them they will kill Millie, but if we lay low the Indians will be sound asleep about 4:00 o'clock, then one of us will crawl in, cut the ropes and escape with her.' We agreed and lay under the blanket of snow those long hours; no one knows how we suffered mentally and physically. Sure enough, when the long waited-for time came, old Red crawled through the slush, snow and Indians, to cut the ropes and free 8 Millie. They took every precaution in getting out. I stole an Indian pony and gave Millie my horse and extra gun. We pushed on that night without much speed through rough hills and darkness. We continued our escape with as much speed as possible but that was not enough. The Indians had followed our snow tracks to [???] Fork,, Red Canyon on the [???] Brazos. Here they came double strong, whooping and yelling, angry as could be because we out-smarted them. We began firing but they wouldn't halt, just came right on into the canyon where the fight began. We fought and ran but couldn't go far because they were closing in on us. We tried to get Millie to go on in to the fort which was about twenty miles away. She refused, and used her gun with as much skill as we did and would risk her life for ours, as we did ours for her. About

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9:00 o'clock that night we heard a bugle as were being trapped in the back end of the canyon. We fired our guns again and again until we were located by the soldiers pursuing the stolen girl. We hadn't had food nor water in two days and nights, during this cold and horrid weather. Millie lived to be an old woman and proved to be worthy of our suffering to save her life.

"Two years later the Indians were still seeking revenge; they returned to Ranger and caught twelve men and carried them to Red Canyon as captives. They chose 9 Charlie Smith first and gave him his due course of punishment and in turn gave each what they thought would be his punishment. There was nothing too bad for those heartless creatures to do. Poor Charlie, they hanged him to a tree and skinned him alive, taking finger and toe nails to make the hide complete for display. As they were completing the torture, eleven rangers and I appeared on the scene. We really scattered Indians, and killed several but they carried their dead with them, also Charlie's hide. The Indians thought Charlie was dead and so did we, and went on with the skirmish which lasted 'most all night. The citizens were released and sent back home. Mrs. [Fad?] [Eskew?] had a nightmare that night and tried to get Mr. Eskew to go help Charlie. He only said, 'Go back to sleep, it's too late to help Charlie now, he is dead.' She went to sleep and the dream was repeated. This time she said; 'Fad, go get a bunch of men and help Charlie, if you don't I will.' This time Mr. Eskew rounded up a gang of men, rode out well armed, to do what they could. Charlie was gone but they searched around and found him. He had obtained his own freedom from the tree and was trying to make it to Fort Griffin. They picked him up and rushed him to the fort where he was given treatment. Of course it took many days for him to recover and grow a new skin. Charlie lived eleven years and fourteen days after the disaster. 10 Charlie came in from the northeast. I didn't know any of his people except his brother Jack that was killed. We never knew cowboys' people. Most of them were outlaws who drifted in from the East. Charlie and Jack ran the H. T. Ranch south of Breckenridge on Palo Pinto Creek, at one time.

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“When the Indians were sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Mr. Goodnight made a contract to furnish 4,000 head of beeves for their meat supply each year. I went up there and issued the meat as they needed it. The Indians were held there three years, being trained before they could be placed on reservation. They still had Charlie's hide which was prized among their most cherished possessions. I saw it many times during my three years' stay. Ah, them Indians, how I hate them!”