

[J. W. Hagerty]

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[H?] Tales - Life history [?]

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Rangelore.

Tarrant co., Dist., #7 [13?] Interview

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J.W. Hagerty, 60, living at 500 Wilkinson St. Fort Worth, Texas, was born June 10, 1878, in Dallas co., Texas, on a farm located at the tract of land now known ad Cedar Springs district of Dallas, Texas. The street now named Cedar Springs Rd. has its route pass the former home of Hagerty, and was a trail when he lived at the place. Many herds of cattle were driven over the trail during the days of Hagerty's youth. Those days, the territory around Dallas was an open range with a few farms which were scattered and fenced against cattle. Hagerty's father, with his family, moved to [Ranes?] co., Texas, in [1886?]. Ranes co., was then an open range with many ranches. The first wire fence was built enclosing the Harpole ranch, about the year 1887. The fence was out and destroyed twice, before the builder was successful in his venture. The hagerty family moved to Fort Worth, Texas, about the later part of 1887. J.W. Hagerty recalls some of the early scenes of Fort Worth.

His story of early days follows:

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"My place of birth was in Dallas co., on a farm and the event took place June 10, 1878. My father cultivated a small tract of land located where Cedar Springs is in the present city of Dallas. The street called Cedar Springs Rd., was a trail running pass our home. My grandfather, E. Roark, [lived?] near us on a tract of land called the Cole Place. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas

"There were a [few?] cultivated fields in the vicinity, but cattle ranches occupied a vast majority of the territory.

"Almost each day one or more herd of cattle was driven pass our home on the trail.' Frequently, a flock of sheep would be seen passing by. These herds of cattle numbered from a few 2 hundred to several thousand.

Cattle buyers traveled through the country buying cattle, in the range country E. of Dallas. After they had bargained for the number desired, the buyers would gather the cattle as they traveled back through the territory. Each day, as they traveled and gathered, the herd would increase in numbers, until some of the herds were [exceedingly?] [large?], by the time the cattle were being driven pass our place.

"I can remember one herd which started to pass our home [one?] morning while our family was eating breakfast, and cattle continued to travel pass the entire day. The scene is still vivid in my mind. I can see the cowboys with their ten-gallon hat, chaps, high-heel boots, spurs and bandana around their necks, riding at the side of the herd keeping the cattle pointed in the proper direction. There was a [cross?] trail a short distance W. of our home, and two cowboys were stationed there all day to prevent any or the cattle from trailing off over the cross trail.

"At the time, I was able to ride a horse. The day the large herd drifted through, I made some money. I mounted my pony and carried drinking water to the cowboys who were [gaurding?] [?] cross trail. My mother suggested that the boys might be thirsty and that

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I should carry some water to them. I did so, and each gave me a coin on my first trip. This act of the boys gave me [intrest?] in my work and I assure you they never run short of drinking water. 3 “I do not know the distination of these herds, but I do recall hearing conversations relating to where some of the cattle were being driven to

“During the period or the early '80s there was a general movement of cattle ranches to W. Texas.

“After the railroads built into E. Texas, the land was gradually settled by people who began to farm the land. The open range disappeared simultaneously, with development of the farms. Therefore, cattlemen moved their ranches to the W. where the open range still existed. However, some of the cattle were being driven to the Northern ranges for fattening and sale in the Northern markets.

“I do not know the extent sheep ranching existed in E. Texas those days, but judging from the frequency flocks of sheep was driven pass our home, there must have been a great amount of sheep raised in the [terriotry?] E. of Dallas.

“My father moved to [Rains?] co., Texas, about 1886. [?] located on the edge of a prairie near the Sabine River. Those days [Rains?] co., was an open and free range territory. There were a few farms which were located along the timber land which was located adjacent to the river..

“The M.K. and T. railroad ran near to our home, and we could see a train approaching for a distance of several miles away. I was about 10 years old at the [thime?] we lived there, and we children would watch the trains running across the prairie. The trains were compelled to stop frequently, while the crew 4 chased cattle off of the track. Once in a while the trains would hit an animal. When the train hit an animal and had to stop, we children would mount our horses and ride to where the train was stopped. The engine was always an object of interest to us.

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“While we were watching the train coming across the prairie, one day, it hit a steer and the engine jumped the track and turned over. The moment we saw what had happened, we mounted our horses and started for the scene of the wreck, riding at a fast speed to see what had happened. We anticipated a thrill at [?] of an engine laying on its side and a couple smashed wooden coaches. But, we were disappointed.

“Just as we arrived at where the wreck was located, a party of Indians came out of one of the coaches. They were dressed in their Indian costume of the day. On their head were various kinds of head dress, [all?] more or less decorated with feathers, and bright colored shawls dropped over their shoulders. Our parents, from the time we could understand, had warned us about Indians. However, we had never been bothered by Indians, but we were taught to keep out of their way, and to run [for?] a hiding place in the event we saw an Indian approaching. Because of this teaching, when we saw the Indians [alighting?] from the coach, we spurred our horses towards home at the horse's best speed.

“Father did not remain in [Rains?] co., long. Because of our short stay, I do not recall the names of many of the ranches which were located adjacent to our home. I recall just one or two, 5 one especially, the Harpole ranch, because Harpole and considerable trouble.

“The Harpole ranch was the first ranch which attempted to build a fence in Rains co. It was during the later part of [’86?] or the first part of ’87. Mr Harpoles ranch was adjacent to our home and I saw the start of the fence building.

“Mr Harpole had just about completed half of the fencing of his range when the trouble started. The majority of ranchmen were opposed to fencing the range. They argued, that to fence would destroy the cattle business, especially for the small rancher, and then without sufficient funds to buy or lease land and build a fence.

“They were unable to prevent a rancher from fencing his range by going into court, because the law stated clearly, that a property owner had the right to enclose his land

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with a fence. In fact, all cultivated lands were fenced. These cultivated tracts were small and located adjacent to the creeks or river bottoms, and were not interfering with the open range. Being that the opposers could not secure help from the law, they decided to use their own method to protect and maintain a free and open range.

“The men who were opposed to the fence organized a crew of fence [cutters?], and went to work. These men cut each wire' twice between each post, and cut each post about half way of its length out of the ground.

“Several [miles?] of fence was destroyed when morning arrived. 6 The post and wire were rendered useless for further use.

“Harpole reported the act to the sheriff was unable to apprehend the culprits, but the rumor was that if the men were caught it would mean a penitentiary sentence from them.

“Harpole rebuilt the fence and fence was guarded for about two weeks. During this time there was no attempt made to destroy the fence. Therefore, Harpole let up on his vigilance, thinking that the fence cutters had become fearful of the consequences, of such acts of destroying property.

“It was only a few days after Harpole had ceased to guard his fence till it was again destroyed.

“Following the second cutting incident, the sheriff succeeded in securing the names of almost every person connected with the citizens who took part in the depredation.

“The charges against the fence cutters came on for trial, and many conviction resulted from the trials. The convicted men appealed their cases to a higher court. The cases were fought in the courts for a long period of time, but finally several men were compelled to serve time in the [penitentiary?].

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“After the court trials and convictions, fence cutting ceased. Then followed more fencing of land, and it was not long until the open range disappeared. The cattle industry of E. 7 Texas was transferred to other range country, principally to W. Texas.

“My father moved to Fort Worth, during the later part of 1887. At this time Fort Worth was not a city, but instead, it was a large village. The principal business streets were [?], Rusk (new Commerce) and Houston. The major number of business places were on Main. The business started at Weatherford and extended S. to Fifth street on the extreme Southern locations of business houses. However, almost all of the business houses were located N. of Third Street.

“At Fifth and Main Streets was located what we called the 'fackers block'. It was a vacant tract or land where the 'high [ditch?]' business, a business which flourished those days, was operated by men who made their living by faking the public. Almost every day one or more of these itinerant merchants would be at the 'facker block' selling his [warse?] to the gullible folks. There were sold everything one could imagine and a lot of stuff one would not think was the [market?]. Medicine that would cure any disease, remedies to grow hair on a slick head. Also, if one had straight hair, he could buy a concoction make it kinky or if one had kinky hair, concoction could be bought to make the hair straight.

“A great amount of jewelery was sold on the 'fakers bolck', [including?] diamonds of several carat weight for just a few dollars.

“There was no restrictions to the methods used by these 8 itinerant merchants. The rule was that if any was gullible enough to expect a bargain from those men, he should be made to pay for his experience. In other words the rule was [as?] I head a lawyer once explain, 'the buyer beware.'

“The day a fellow set up his stand at the 'facker block' and offered for sale a concoction that would make curly hair straight. 'Yes, sir, boys,' he said,' when this salve is applied to curly

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hair the kinks leave so if by magic. I shall be here for at least two weeks advertising and appointing agents. In the event anyone is dissatisfied with this wonderful salve, return the box to so you will receive the dollar you have paid and \$1. for [your?] trouble.'

"The colored boys, in large numbers, bought [?] stuff as though they were getting a \$5. gold coin to their \$1., after the wizard had demonstrated his concoction on a negro's head. The faker did a tremendous business for three or four days, and disappeared and could not be found at his usual place of business, but soon, many colored men and women did call to see him. All these colored folks had a complaint and desired a refund of their money and some additional coin.

"There was no complaint about the concoction not taking out the kinks, but it did more than the purchasers expected of it, it not only took out the kinks, but removed the hair from the users head. A bald headed negro is an unusual sight, but Fort Worth had a great number for a time after the salve salesman 9 advertised his concoction. Until their hair grew out, one could tell the [suckers?] as they passed by.

"Everything went those days. It was just a matter of a fellow being able to put his deal through.

"The cattlemen's convention days, the lid was taken completely off, and the term was in fact 'hot'. Of course, there were some citizens who yelled long and loud about the town being turned over to the [Santanic?] Majesty. Those people would call at the District Attorney's office, but it is [?] that this official would become ill each time the convention date arrived. It was necessary for the attorney to take a trip to some health resort, starting a few days before the convention [commenced?].

"Geo Holland's Theater was one of the principal show places, it was located at 12th and Jones streets. The place occupied an entire block and provided entertainment ranging

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from a wild animal zoo, to a girl show, and some of the grils were not any too tame. There were [Vaudeville?] act which sizzled and the [?] drew the crowd.

“Holland's Theater was the center of what we called the 'Hell's Half Acre,' and it was an appropriate name. If there was anything every invented by men to attract the [base?] instinct of the human which was not put on at Holland's, it was an [oversight?] on the part of the management.

“Ranchmen and cowboys visited the town in crowds ever day 10 While sidewalks were [for?] and scattered, but when a crowd of cowboys were approaching one could hear them a block away, because of the jingling spurs. The sound of the spurs could be hear the entire day, especially in the main part of the town. One could always see a number of mounted cowboys riding through the streets.

“The streets those days were no better that a trail through the open country, and I presume rougher, because of the excessive use. Mud holes and ruts were the conspicious part of the streets. I have seen many teams bogged down in the vicinity of Fifth and main streets. Front street at the time was low and when the weather was wet, it was a mess. There was a stairway running from the street up to the high ground where the depot was located. The depot was then [?]. of Main street.

“The leading hotel of those days was the Merchants Hotel. It was operated by Lauerio Gonocio. It was to this hotel that Jim Courtright was lured by a U.S. Marshal, and which started the Courtright episode. The Marshal pretended that he desired to engage Courtright to do some investigating. At the time, Courtright was operating a detective agency.

“The U.S. Marshal was from the Territroy of New Mex., and had a warrant for Courtright's arrest on a murder charge.

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Courtright was held a prisoner at the hotel, and prevented from sending word to his friends about his [plight?]. His predicament was discovered and his friends became busy in his behalf. Word about Courtright was spread and half of the town was at the depot 11 when the officers arrived at the depot with their prisoner to take the T. and P. train [W?]. Judge [Reed?], then District Judge, was at the depot and issued a writ, ordering Courtright be turned over to the Tarrant co., sheriff, until the legal custody of the prisoner could be decided. Courtright was finally turned back to the New Mex., officials and the affair ended by him escaping from the officers, which was made possible by Fort Worth citizens.

“The citizens ganged the officials, and their prisoner, while they were eating a meal at a restaurant, before leaving on the train. By some mysterious [means?], two guns were found by Courtright under the table where he sat. Suddenly, he pulled the guns on the officers and walked out of the restaurant, while men held the arms of the officers.

“Our leading citizens of the town was involved in making the arrangements for Courtright's escape, and the publisher of the Evening Mail newspaper took the lead.

“I often think of Captain B.B. Paddock, who published a [peper?] called the Democrat. He devoted a large part of his time to [bosting?] the town. Paddock predicted a future for Fort Worth with a possible 25,000 population. While thinking of those days, I wonder what Paddock would think while seeing Fort Worth of today.