

[Winfield Thomas Pickett]

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[??]- RANGE LORE TWO VERSIONS [53?]

[?] Sheldon [?]

[??]

[??] Dist.,. 7

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Winfield Thomas Pickett, 80, living at Congress Ave. (no number) Fort Worth, Texas, was born in [Bienville?] Parish, Louisiana. His father was James Madison Pickett, teaching school was his vocation, also he operated a small salt works which was located at Saline.

The Picket family migrated to Texas, in 1863, bringing with them one slave. They settled in Robinson County, and after one year moved to Falls County, where James Madison Pickett engaged in transporting freight. Later the family moved to Hamilton County and began farming.

At the age of 20, Winfield F. Pickett, secured employment on the John Snow ranch and worked there as a wrangler for a period of two years.

He then secured employment with the Bob Schockly ranch. Winfield discontinued ranch life in 1890, to labor at railroad construction.

He came to Fort Worth, in the early 90's and has since has made the city his home.

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He married Dela Ferrell, in 1888. Eleven children were born to the union, only four of the children are now living.

His life's story follows:

"The first money I received for labor was for working [?] [hoss?] ranch, which is the work I followed during the early part of my life.

"My name id Winfield Thomas Pickett, however, all my acquaintances in Fort Worth, know me by the name of '[Fell?]' Picket. I was born in [Bienville?] Parish, Louisiana, [?] 7th, [1857?]. That puts my age at 81.

"My father was James Madison Pickett, and his vocation was teaching school, also, he conducted a small salt works near the town of Saline.

Father owned three slaves, among whom was one nigger John. I emphasis John, because he was a dependable fellow. He was purchased when four years old. C12 - Texas

Father decided to migrate to Texas, in 1863, and befor [?] sold all his property, except person al things. He 2 sold two of the slaves and was offered \$2000. for John. He left the matter of sale to John for decission, telling him:

"Iam offered \$2000. for you John, now, I am certain that in the course of a year you will be free by law. Shall I sell you?"

"Keep me Marster, please do, Marster, dis culled person wants to stay wid youse always". John replied, with a [quqvering?] voice and tears trickling down his cheeks.

"That settled the matter of John's sale, regardless of the amount offered. In the operation of the salt works, John attended to the work as though he was lookin after his personal property, and father depended on John in all matters.

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“The production of salt those days was a simple matter. Water was obtained from wells, then placed in open kettles and evaporated by heat.

The major part of the salt we produced was sold in the surrounding territory, some was [shipped?] to the State of Kansas.

“My family came to Texas in 1863, and settled in Robinson County. The country was sparily populated at that time. There were no railroads and all commodities transported were hauled by ox and mule teams, using wagons constructed with wooden axels.

“My father engaged in freighting for a livelihood and travled to Millican, Belton, Waco, [Gainsville?] and other towns. After a period of five years, we moved to Falls County and continued/ [??] freighting business, als attempted to develope a a farm. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas

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“Our vehicle of transportation was a four wheel wagon, constructed with wooden axles and pulled by four ox teams. Freighting those days, in that section of the counrty where we operated, presented many problems. The roads over which we traveled were unkepted. Therefore, many mud holes in wet weather, [creeks?] to ford and rough spots of every discription. Driving oxen presented a problem when the weather was warm and watering places far between. The oxen often became exceedingly thirsty. When that condition existed a stampede, with loaded wagons, was sure to take place for water the moment they scented [?].

“We were approaching the Brazos River, one very warm day, and the teams indicated restlessness for a spell then suddeny suddenly the lead team broke into a run for the river. The other five teams followed and it resulted in a scramble.

When the river was reached the first team plunged into the water and the momentum [cattied?] carried the oxen and load into deep water. Then each ox began to fight for it's

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life while the drivers were attempting to release the [yokes?], but before that could be accomplished two of the oxen were [drowned?]. The first wagon blocked the way for the others and that saved a [??] for the balance of the teams.

“The Indian menace was always present while traveling through that country those days and were compelled to be prepared for an Indian attack at all times. When my 15th birthday arrived I weighed 150 and was six feet tall and then father 4 put me to work, in company with six other men guarding the train. We were mounted on good hosses and armed with rifels and pisols. In fact, each dirver was also armed. The the old cap and ball/ were the kind used. The pistols were dangerous to handle.

“Can you see that scar on my right hand? Well, that is the result of my postil discharging while I was loading it. My pistol was a [Colts?], and considered the tops of guns those days, but the best of six-shooters whoud would, at times, discharge two or three loads when a shot was fired and were treacherous while being loaded.

“The [guards?] duties were to ride at the head of the train and watch for any sinister looking party, sepecially Indians, because it was not uncomon for a train of commodities to be plundered and the Indians were the worse menace those days.

“I road many days on the trail, and trails are what they were, watching for an attack, but was disappointed because we never were bothered.

We often seen Indians and had them call at night when we were camped. The Indians would mooch us for tobacco and rations and then go on their way. I guess perhaps we were lucky, or it maybe because we were such a tough looking bunch of buckaroos it put fear into them and for that reason our train was given the wide-open space. It was true, [twenty?] men in the outfit was over six feet tall, all bone and 5 [senew?] and ready to give battle. In fact, I was at the age that a battle would have been enjoyed and I wished for one.

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“The only trouble we experienced was the lose of [oxen?] at night an two occasions and that was not Indians work. A good ox team was worth money and the best of oxen were used in transportation work. Therefore, white men were the thieves, because they desired good oxen for work purpose. After the second rustling of our oxen, which took place at night while staked out, we maintained a watch in the form of a good dog.

There was a third attempt, but the thieves were fooled and after a running exchange of shots in the dark they escaped.

“Father moved to Falls County, Texas, in 1868 and continued his freighting business, but was intending to establish a farm. We were located a a place called, in those days, Dog-Town.

“We did not succeed in establishing a farm at Dogtown, due objections on the part of cattlemen. We were no more than settled and began to clear land when were informed, by the cattlemen, that farming was not a healthy business in that section. Father could not see the matter in the same light as the cattlemen did, so he continued to carry out his development. He received purchasing offers seve al several times, but he did not desire to sell, in fact he was stubborn about his right to farm there. The controversy, mild in form, continued for four years, then one day he was informed, by a person he did not know, that he had better sell at a resonable price, “or els 6 he would find him self without a home'. It was a kind and friendly hint. He thought the proposition over and decided that perhaps the section was not a good place to farm. So father sold his land and moved to Hamilton County, in 1873. He quiet the freighting business then and devoted his time to farming.

“I went to work on a hoss ranch, after the family moved to Hamilton County. I had rode hosses since I had been 13 years old and had learned what I could do on a hoss. I went to work for John Snow and worked for him two seasons, after that I worked for Bob [Schockly?]. His [hrand?] brand was 'O-3' on the right shoulder, then later he changed it to '[A?]' [?] ther right shoulder.

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“In those days \$25. per month was considered top wages and that was my pay. My work was busting hosses, some people call it wragling.

Schockly had 800 head of hosses and my time was entirely devoted to busting those which was were for sale.

“I shall explain the process of busting a hoss. The first step, of course, is to rope it and then break to stand tied. The [proper?] way to accomplish that is tie it to a log. one that is not so heavy, [?] it can't be moved, but one that can be moved by the hoss with effort.

In that way the hoss will not injure it's neck when it rears back, because the log will give. The next step is to blindfold it and put the saddle on, then take off the blind and let him it pitch until it decides that the saddle can't be thrown, then he it is ready 7 to be mounted.

“When the wrangler hits the [?], if the critter is a fighter and most all [?] animals are, it at once starts to elevate and the enjoyment is on. It is not the ascending, or the descending that gives trouble, but it is the sudden stop when the critter hits the ground. That sudden stop will sure bust ones gizzard unless the buster has timed the movements properly. It is necessary to ease oneself into the leather by tention of your legs, but be sure that you are on the leather when the critter starts the next elevation. If there is any daylight between you and the leather, that is you have not rereturned, and you meet the hoss going up as you are coming down your gizzard is surely going to pop.

“There is three main styles of bucking, or pitching as it is [monstly?] called. I shall explain each.

“The ordinary pitcher is the critter that elevates and leaps forward at each elevation. That animal is easy to ride, because the rider knows just what is going to happen and can get sit for the move.

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“Then there is the '[finrower?]' he has more of a high-faluton style. For instance, the finrower jumps sideways with each elevation; first to one side then the other. Again, all the [buster?] has to do is to keep sit for the next move and if you understand your business you will know the next move.

“The third style is a sidewinder, or gizzard popper. The method is a combination of the first two all scrambled together. The critter begins to elevate and will jump to either side, forward or backward and all the rider knows is that the 8 honery cuss is going in some direction. That style, the boys use to say: “Came [outter?] the back door of hell on a hot day and became mad at the atmosphere”.

“The buckaroo that can stand to have his fins jared and stay with a critter is a [faluton?] bust to be sure. There [exists?] few

[high-faluton?] buster among the biys boys of my day and I was one of them. I never failed to ride, or bust a hoss and refused to ride one only once. The hoss I refused to ride had been busted by me six months previous, but had not been ridden after the bust. When a hoss has not been ridden for that long a time after being busted, it has to be busted again, at [lest?] I never [have seen one?] that did not..

I knew that critter, he was a sidewinder and due to the fact that I had my collar bone broken about three months prior I was afraid I would again injure the bone.

“The fracture to my collar bone happened while I was busting a whizbang critter. The accident was caused by a cow getting messed up with us. The hoss had worked itself next to a cow and as he was coming out of the air the cow got under us. We all went into a spill. I grabed leather a-plenty, but could not save my collar bone.

“I requested the boss to take the hoss to some other wrangler and he took it to the neighbor ranch. The wrangler at the neighbor's place grabed leather on the first elevation and went into a spill with the first side [shuffel?]. I finally had to rebust the hoss. It was

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rawboned and when he hit the ground I could feel every fin in my back jar. I grabed leather 9 and pulled leathera-plenty, but I stayed with the critter and busted him the second time. He was harder to ride the second trip, due to studing out [no moves?] after [?] first lesson. I guess that was the cause.

“The ranch contained about 800 head of hosses. Most all the anilals animals were sold there at the ranch, just a few were [draped?] to market. A good saffle saddle hoss those day sold for \$25.

“The life on the range was hard, but a good life. There is something about the hossey-stinck that gets into your blood and when it does it is hard to get out. We lived out in the [??] part of the time, sleeping under blankets with the saddle blanket for a pillow. Our meals were cooked by the cookey out of provisions carried on a pacj pack hoss. The rations consisted of beans, beans, and some more beans, broiled bacon, and beef if we could catch a stray yearling, black coffee, sour-dough biscuits. However, about every third day we would get back to the ranch quarters for a four day spell.

“In the matter of hoss rustling, we on the Schockly ranch did not have much trouble, but had some to content with. The fact are, cattlemen rustled hosses for their saffle saddle stock and the hossmen rustled cattle for their beef. Rusteling trouble was insignificant with us, we did not consider it any problem..

“I have told about the work on a hoss ranch and my story would not be complet without a statement of our fun. Our sprees always took place on pay-days, if the work allowed us to go into town. Our bunch was not overly bad with their 10 sprees. We would go into town get about half and half, act like bunckhof school kids on a lark for a spell and then go home and work until the next pay day. Only once while I [?] in the business did the boys go beyond reasonable fun. This particular time the bartender made a mistake in attempting to quiet the boys. The boys resented the interference and shot up the bar fixtures. The next day they returned and paid for the damage. We all chiped in to make up the pot and

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strange to say, but we felt that we had received got intertainment for the money spent. There was not much amusement those days, so we always were willing the pay a good price for our fun. While at home, around the bunk house, we played cards and shot crap.

"I quit the ranch life in 1886. There was an old saying then that "Texas was tied together with a rawhide string". Well, when they began to use wire in the place of rwa-hide I quit. Hoss ranching continued to some extent untill 1900, but they had began to move out when I quit, and moved [farther?] West.

"I went to Baird Texas, and entered the railroad construction work. I worked on railroad grading going into [Dennison?], Amarillo, and other lesser grades.

"I came to Fort Worth in 1890 and then engaged in the teaming business, which work I followed until I became too old, that is the people employing teamsters thought so.

"I married Dellia Ferrell, in 1888 and we lived together until [her?] death in 1910. We reared three [11?] children, of the number 11 only four arennow living. My two living daughter are married. / and live here in Fort Worth. They are Mrs. Goins, living at [Halton?] city and Mrs Jackson living on Arlington [Ave?]. My tow boys are unmarried and are here [somewhere,?] but I do not know at what place. Their names are Charley and Fred.

I have had a hard life and some tuff times, but am not tired of living and would like to go over the [entite?] route [again?].