

[Fogg Coffey]

Folk stuff - Rangelore

Range-lore

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RANGE-LORE

Fogg Coffey was born in Parker County, Texas, in 1863. His father, (Uncle) Rich Coffey, spent a few months in Runnels and Coleman counties in 1862, moving with his family to a place near the mouth of Elm Creek and on the Colorado river in Runnels County in 1865. There were five families in the settlement and they called it Picketville. Since that time Mr. Fogg Coffey has made his home on or near the river in Runnels and Coleman Counties.

Mr. Coffey says: "My father moved to Runnels County with his family in 1865. There were five families in the settlement, and they moved in wagons drawn by oxen. They built their houses by putting posts in the ground as close together as possible, then they put a few poles and brush [C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 on top, and stretched buffalo hides over all that. My mother said it made a very comfortable shelter.

"I think we dreaded the Indians in the early days more than anything. We had to be on the watch constantly or they'd take all we had.

"A bunch of Redskins (Comanches, I think they were) visited our settlement on June 1, 1871. We had just got all the cattle and horses rounded up. There were 1,050 head of cattle and 54 saddle horses. The men had left a few boys to guard the herds while they

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went to take another look for stragglers, and some to eat. Nobody suspected an attack for they'd seen no Indians or signs or nothin'.

“Well, before the men could get in their saddles them low down Indians had drove off every cow and all the horses except three or four. Two of our men were killed and my brother John, then just a boy, was wounded.

“The very next Christmas them Indians come back and drove off 350 head of cattle. There weren't more than twenty men in the neighborhood and they were scattered or course, so before they could get together, the Comanches were gone.

“My brother Bill and me had a little run-in with the Indians when I wasn't more'n eight or nine years old. My father had sent us out to look for some horses near our home. We was afoot and saw the Indians after the horses before they saw us. We managed to catch two of the horses and beat 'em 3 back to the house. They took after us, and all the time they was shooting at us with old flint rock guns. These guns had a little pan like thing full of powder and a place on one side of it for the flint rock. The trigger would hit the flint and fire it and catch the powder and explode it. We was some scared boys, but nobody took a little thing like that too serious them days.

“When I was just a small shaver I was sent with my brother John to look for some stock one day. We had gotten hold of a small cap and bell pistol. Brother John rode off one way and me another. He let me keep the gun, but told me to be sure and not fire it unless I saw Indians. A gun shot was a signal for help. I didn't go far before I ran onto a polecat and then I let loose shooting. It wasn't any time at all before my brother and everybody in hearing distance was there on the spot. They thought, of course, we had spotted some Indians. My father sure gave me a trimin' down. It was worth it though, just to get to shoot that gun.

“I remember another incident that happened when I was a boy that sure did tickle me. Old Dad Guest had a hog ranch at Fort Chadbourne along in the early seventies. He came by

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our house one day on his way to Fort Chadbourne, and I teased my father and my mother to let me go with him. They consented and I [rigged?] me up an old shot gun muzzler and started off feeling proud as a young cock.

“When we were in a few miles of the fort we looked around 4 and saw a band of Indians coming not more'n a half mile away. They chased us to the fort, shooting and yellin' for all they was worth. When we got there some of the folks asked dad if they'd shot at him. He said, 'Yes, we heard the bullets twice, once when they passed us, and again when we passed them.' If they had attacked us a little further back, before we got so near the fort, they'd a scalped us sure.

“My father never went to the Civil War. He joined, but they kept him here on the frontier to help guard the settlers and fight the Indians.

“I never did any long trail driving; I worked on the range always. I guess I was a pretty fair bronc rider, but everybody was them days. We had to be good riders. It was useless to try to live if you couldn't ride and shoot. I rode, or broke, lots of wild horses when I was a young fellow.

“I remember some Rangers came to our house from Coleman as late as 1875 or '76. They had camped the night before in “Curely Ratchet Bend” about one-half mile from our house. The Indians had stolen their horses and left 'em afoot. My father thought that was a good joke on the Rangers.

“The biggest round-up I ever helped with was along about 1887. We rounded up 50,000 head of cattle and brought 'em together over on Fuzzy Creek. The cattle had drifted into Concho, Coleman and other counties. Jim Johnson was big boss of the round-up. Other bosses were: Irie Fitzgerald, Bill 5 [Mcnailey?] and John Davison. It took several days to gather them. They was worked in three bunches. After we'd worked (cut and branded) them they was turned loose again.

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“There was a man by the name of McMahon killed in that outfit. He was shot and killed by a boy who worked for him, whom he had whipped. The boy drew his gun and told him to apologize to him, and pay him. But McMahon laughed instead and the boy killed him on the spot.

“My father built a two-story rock building on the line of Concho and Runnels counties and near the Colorado river in 1881. The house is still standing. Practically all my life, with the exception of a few years, has been spent in that part of the country.

“I live at [LeDay?] now. I have been in the sheep business for many years. I was the first man in West Texas to run sheep on open range.

“The sheep and cowmen didn't mix in the early days. Cattlemen thought the sheep business undignified. There were many differences among men on that account and many were divided and became enemies who were once friends. But it all worked out for the best and now we have communities and towns of which we can justly be proud.”

REFERENCE: Fogg Coffey. Leday, Texas. Interviewed June 8, 1938.