

75th Anniversary

Cimarron Cowboys' Association



By Doyle Wardrop and Kay Decker, Ed.D.

July, 2012

Cover Artwork
“Lucy”
Watercolor

Painting by Burneta Koppitz Venosdel, Cleo Springs, Oklahoma
Copyright 2012

About the artist: Burneta is the daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Burr Koppitz. She is married to Dick Venosdel and they live on a ranch near Cleo Springs where they raise Simmental cattle. Burneta is the niece of W.C. (Bill) Romju, the 1969 Honored Old Cowhand.

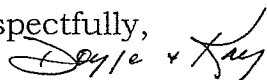
Forward and Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Cimarron Cowboys' Association we would like to thank Wesley Nixon, Nena Wardrop, Sharon Walker, Sandy Wimmer and countless others for their assistance in locating and contributing photographs, stories, and information about the history of the Cimarron Cowboys' Association and the various Honored Old Cowhands. The Cimarron Cowboys' Association did retain records through the years that were extremely helpful in compiling this historical record. Future generations of the area will undoubtedly find the contents of this history as amusing and informative as we have. Local history is always enlightening, and it is important that our region's cultural heritage remain viable for future generations. Cattle ranching and farming on the plains of northwest Oklahoma is a tough business. Although times have changed over the past seventy-five years, working through the heat, cold, wind, snow, and rain (when it comes) remains part of the cattle business. It is not a lifestyle for the weak, but it brings with it plenty of blessings. To those who were born and raised in this region, we know that waking up to a bright spring morning on the Oklahoma prairie, finding a newborn calf, and riding that "once in a lifetime" cow-horse seldom have equals.

The Cimarron Cowboys' Association was formed to combat problems facing the cattle industry and to honor those early-day cattlemen and women of the region. While the problems of the past largely have been solved, today's cattle business confronts contemporary cattlemen and women with a new set of conditions. The price of feed and equipment continue to increase with each passing year, and it is necessary to maintain a good set of animal health and business records in order to remain in business today. In our part of the country a handshake can still "seal a deal between friends and neighbors" and we appreciate the hardships overcome by the women and men who first permanently settled this region.

As we look to the future, the Cimarron Cowboys' Association will endeavor to serve its membership just as it always has, and will continue to honor those each year whose lives have been spent working the farms and ranches of northwest Oklahoma. We hope that you will find this compilation informative, and that it will bring back memories of our collective experiences. For additional copies of the book, please contact Doyle Wardrop of Freedom, Oklahoma.

Respectfully,



Doyle Wardrop and Kay Decker

Chapter I

Introduction and History of the Rodeo and Old Cowhand Association

For centuries northwest Oklahoma served as hunting grounds and homelands to nomadic American Indian Tribes. These various tribes followed the massive herds of buffalo as they grazed on the vast "sea of grass", otherwise known as the Great Plains of the United States. Northwest Oklahoma and south-central Kansas is a region of mixed prairie grasses. The four "horsemen" of the plains, Switch-grass, Little Bluestem, Big Bluestem, and Indian-grass, along with the shorter, but hardy Buffalo grass of the region, served the nomadic buffalo well until White settlement began encroaching upon their range. By the 1870s, the buffalo herds had seriously diminished in size and range ability. During the latter 1800s, after the close of the American Civil War, cattlemen from Texas and surrounding states found northwest Oklahoma an excellent location for cattle grazing. The railroads had, by the 1880s, built track west to Dodge City, which then supported cattle drives up the Great Western Trail and the Dodge City and Red Fork Branch of the Chisholm Trail. The Chisholm Trail virtually crisscrossed Oklahoma following what is today, Highway 81, from the Red River to the Kansas line. These cattlemen saw benefit in the waving prairie grasses and knew that this was prime cattle country (Zwink and Reichenberger, 1986; Dale and Aldrich, 1972).

By the late 1870s, a number of cattle companies had located operations in northwest Oklahoma and employed countless numbers of cowboys to ride fences and herd the cattle. Among these included the Quinlan Brothers Ranch, the Gregory and Eldred Ranch, the Comanche Pool, the Eagle Chief Pool and the "U" Ranch of Major Drumm as well as many others. These companies, along with other cattlemen of the time, eventually formed the Cherokee Strip Livestock Association in 1883 for the purpose of leasing the entire Cherokee Outlet from the Cherokee Tribe headquartered near Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The Cherokee Strip Livestock Association was chartered under the State of Kansas for nearly forty years. The association negotiated a five year lease with the Cherokee Tribe which gave the cattlemen of the area sole rights for grazing (Zwink and Reichenberger, 1986; Dale and Aldrich, 1972).

In 1893, the U.S. government saw fit to open up the region known as "The Cherokee Outlet" for white settlement and forced the cattle companies to cease operations. The Cherokee Outlet Land Run, the largest of its kind historically, was held on September 16, 1893. Thousands came in an effort to "prove up a claim" on a meager 160 acres and start new lives in northwest Oklahoma. The run ended the era of the large cattle companies in northwest Oklahoma, but the "cowman" remains an essential part of the region's economy

and cultural fabric--even today. Beef cattle production is an integral aspect of the economy of northwest Oklahoma (Records, 1995).

After the Cherokee Outlet Run, the Town of Freedom arose from the prairie situated just a few miles north of the Cimarron River in western Woods County. As a result of the Buffalo and Northwestern Railroad running from Waynoka to Buffalo, by 1918-1919 Freedom had moved to its present site to locate near the new railroad. Freedom was incorporated as a Town in 1925 according to the laws of the state of Oklahoma. Freedom's Chamber of Commerce has been active in all aspects of the community virtually since its founding (Cable, no date).

In 1936, a group of area business and cattlemen, led by Brad Shaull, planned a Junior Rodeo for the young men of the area to test their skills at "cowboying". This marked the beginning of the Freedom Rodeo. It was held in "the grassy "river bottom" west of town. From its beginnings, the rodeo has been a community supported event. During the summer of 1939, members of the Freedom Chamber of Commerce agreed to host a reunion of "old timers" and issued 125 invitations to cattlemen from Arkansas City, Kansas, to Fort Supply, Oklahoma, to come to Freedom on September 15, and enjoy a free chuck-wagon feed in honor of the old time cowhands of the region.

On the appointed day, more than 325 individuals arrived to participate in this first ever reunion of "old cowhands". Oklahoma's Governor Leon C. Phillips and many other notables attended. Music was provided by the local "Gyp Hills String Band" composed of Wyman Blevins, Tony Bradt, Lee Trammell, and Jimmy Murrow. At this first gathering of old-time cowhands discussion was held about how to control the screwworm problem which plagued the cattle of the region. In fact, the very first minutes of this organizational meeting were written on the screwworm eradication program forms! The area cattlemen also felt that this was a wonderful time to recognize those men and women, who some sixty years previous, had given of their lives to establish ranches and farming operations in the region. Very few "old-timers" were left to share their stories of adventure and hardship in settling the hills and valleys surrounding Freedom, and the founding members of the Cimarron Cowboys' Association had the foresight to recognize the lost treasure of knowledge and history that was occurring daily.

On a motion made by J.O. Selman of Woodward, an organization was formed and was first known as the "Cimarron Cowpunchers Association". Membership was open to anyone active in the cattle business as a vocation; anyone interested in the promotion of the cattle business; anyone retired from the cattle business; and any descendent of those who first settled the region and who were engaged in the cattle business. It was decided to host an annual meeting each year and a set of officers were to be elected by the membership to hold office for one year. Lifetime dues were established at \$10.00 per person.

The purpose of the association was to promote the annual Freedom Rodeo, honor old "cowhands", and to promote social activities and the general welfare of the ranchers and cattlemen of the Freedom area. The first organizational President was Frank Kamas, Walter Fulton was elected Wagon Boss, Sam Updegraff was elected Secretary-Treasurer, and Tom Dyer was elected historian. Following the business meeting of this first gathering, the old cowhands formed a long section of the big parade to the rodeo grounds where they were guests of the Junior Rodeo management.

The second reunion was set for September 13, 1940. John Hinton, President of the Freedom Chamber of Commerce, served as master of ceremonies for the event in which over 200 old cowhands and their wives attended. The guest speaker for the day was Dr. C.O. Newlin, President of Northwestern College. Frank Kamas, President of the Association, called for an election of officers. Jim Selman of Woodward was the unanimous choice for President, and Simpson Walker, Sr. was elected Secretary. The membership voted to meet the following year for the third reunion on September 14, 1941. In 1941, the Cimarron Cowboys Association also voted to support the organization of an auxiliary and the Cimarron Cowboys Auxiliary was formed.

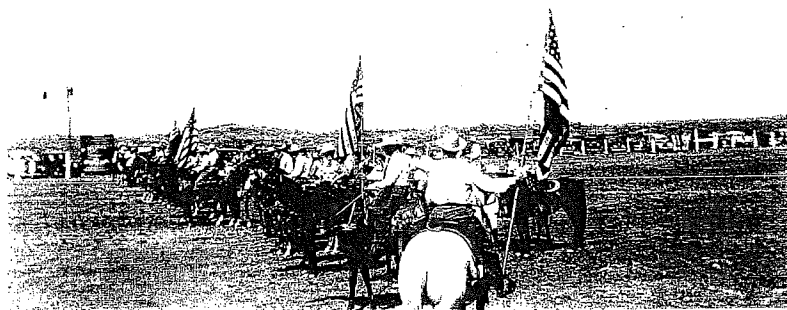
As the years passed, the name of the organization has changed from the "Cimarron Cow Punchers Association" to the "Old Boys Reunion" to the "Cimarron Cowhands", to the current name "Cimarron Cowboys Association". In the early years of the association much discussion centered on cowboys and old-timers telling about their way of life during the late 1800s and early 1900s. In 1943, Fred Hornbeck suggested that Freedom was the proper place for a large stone memorial honoring cowboys. At that year's gathering, Charlie Martin, who was born in 1869, was the oldest cowboy present. For several years afterward, discussion continued on the topic of constructing a large stone memorial to commemorate the early-day pioneer cowhands and cattle companies that first brought cattle to the region. In 1947, Governor Robert S. Kerr attended the meeting of the nearly 400 Old Cowhands and it was at his urging that the group voted to erect a monument.

After much research and planning, in 1949 the monument was completed. The finished product is the work of R.C. VanNostrand of Woodward, along with Thad Leachman and Mr. Endersby, who were both artists in the region. The monument was delivered to its present location on December 20, 1949. On April 14, 1950, the Cimarron Cowboys Monument was dedicated and 2,500 members of the public and numerous dignitaries attended the dedication ceremonies. State Attorney General Mac Q. Williamson gave the dedication address. The Cimarron Cowboys Monument is carved from red Oklahoma granite and is situated in the American Legion Park just south of the Freedom School. The monument is four feet by ten feet long and nearly 12 inches thick. Regional history, maps and western scenes are carved into the 10,000 pound hardy stone. The monument was financed by individual and

business donations, contributions from the 1946 Junior Rodeo, and by memorial contributions of 25 cents a letter for engraving of names. Nearly 200 names of pioneer individuals were placed on the original monument. Each year additional names have been added, and two more black granite monuments now flank the original red granite stone.

Since its humble beginnings in 1936, the Freedom Rodeo has remained an important facet of the Freedom community. Within a few years of its beginnings, senior rodeo events were added. For several decades, the rodeo functioned as the "Biggest Open Rodeo" in the west. Today, the PRCA sanctioned Rodeo and Old Cowhands' Reunion is held the third week-end of August each summer for three days. On the Saturday of rodeo week-end, the Old Cowhands' Reunion is held. Members of the Cimarron Cowboys Association prepare the meal and feed nearly 1,000 visitors a free chuck-wagon dinner at noon in the American Legion Park. The Freedom Chamber of Commerce membership nominates and votes to recognize an Honored Old Cowhand at the dinner, which is hosted by the Cimarron Cowboys' Auxiliary. The cost of the dinner is donated by area residents and friends of the Rodeo and Old Cowhands' Association. Rodeo fans, Freedom area residents, visitors, and many guests attend the dinner and spend time "catching up" with old friends and neighbors.

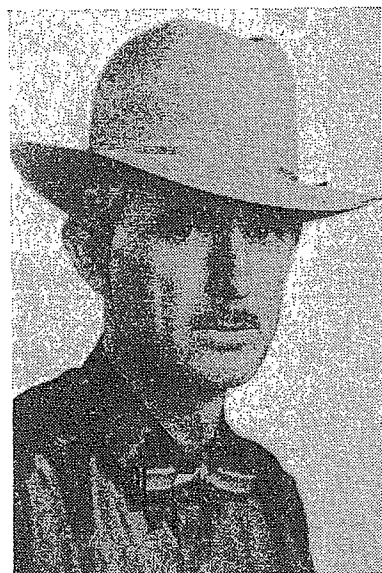
For seventy-five years, members of the Freedom community have ***"put on quite a show"*** and they continue working hard to preserve the rich western heritage of the region. The names and faces of the mixed grass prairie of Western Woods County have changed some over the years, but the life of the cattleman remains a dominant force in this region of the former Cherokee Outlet.



THANKS FOLKS---For your splendid cooperation
and contributions that have made our celebration a
success

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

FREEDOM, OKLAHOMA



Left—Jno. D. Hinton, Pres.
Right—Walter Bishop, Sec.



A. W. McDUFF
LARABEE MILLS
FREEDOM CALL
LEWIS CAFE
FREEDOM THEATRE
B & B BARBER SHOP
McMILLAN DRUG
SOUTH'S ICE AND COLD
STORAGE
REDDING GARAGE

STARR & CABLE
HDWE & SUPPLY
FREEDOM UTILITIES CO.
DR. C. R. YOUNG
FREEDOM STATE BANK
SHADID GROCERY
SERVICE OIL & GAS
FARMER'S CO-OP
H. L. BRENNEN
STOUTS SERVICE STATION

ROBINSON GROCERY
FREEDOM PRODUCE
CIMARRON PRODUCE
B & B RECREATION PARLOR
FRANK TALBOTT
JNO. D. HINTON
ORLY MORELAND
FRANK KAMAS
ALABASTER CAVERNS
FREEDOM SCHOOL FACULTY

THIRD ANNUAL
Old Cowhand Reunion

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

FREEDOM, OKLAHOMA



J. O. (Jim) SELMAN, Pres.



SIMPSON WALKER, Secretary

Program 1941 Old Cowhand Reunion

9:00—Registration starts at the High School Auditorium. Betty Ruth Hinton and Georgia Dotter in charge of registration booth.
Music by the Granite Reformatory Band.

11:00—Reunion called to order by President Jim Selman.
Address of Welcome by John Hinton, President of the Chamber of Commerce
Response by Jim Selman.
Introduction of Congressman Ross Rizley by Jim Powers
Address: Congressman Rizley.
General Business Session.
Election of Officers.

NOON

Chuck Wagon Feed for OLD COWHANDS and Their Wives ONLY.
1:30—Parade Headed by OLD COWHANDS to Rodeo Grounds.
2:00 to 4:30 Junior Rodeo.

December 21, 1948

FOR VALUE RECEIVED, I hereby assign to The Bank of Woodward, Woodward, Oklahoma, the balance due me in connection with the erection of a monument for the Cimarron Cowboy's Association, and instruct the Treasurer of the above association to pay the amount to The Bank of Woodward. This will be your receipt for same.

P. C. San Antonio

Accepted,-

P. P. Ellis
Pres. Cimarron Cowboy's Assn.

John D. Hunter
Sec. Cimarron Cowboy's Assn.

THE CIMARRON COWBOY'S ASSOCIATION
FREEDOM, OKLA.

Aug. 1, 1947

TO ALL COWHANDS: GREETINGS.

A huge granite stone blasted right out of the hills of Oklahoma is being polished up at Woodward before being brought to Freedom where it will be erected to stand for all the time to come as a monument honoring the early day cowboys.

This beautiful stone will be engraved with historical events which actually happened right here in the long ago; The stone measures 10 ft. long by 4 ft. high and will have space for 200 names.

These names are wanted NOW and to avoid error please send your name exactly as you want it to appear on the stone. Cost of cutting the name in the stone is 25 cents per each letter in the name.

You perhaps know that the money necessary to pay for the memorial is being contributed by various persons interested in honoring the Old Time Cowhands; Should anyone else desire to make a contribution he may do so by sending a check made payable to the Cimarron Cowboy's Association.

If you are one of the early day cowhands then we know that you will want your name on the stone, so don't delay sending us your name along with a brief sketch stating the brands you worked for.

Typewrite your name and mail it to us so that a good job may be completed by reunion time.

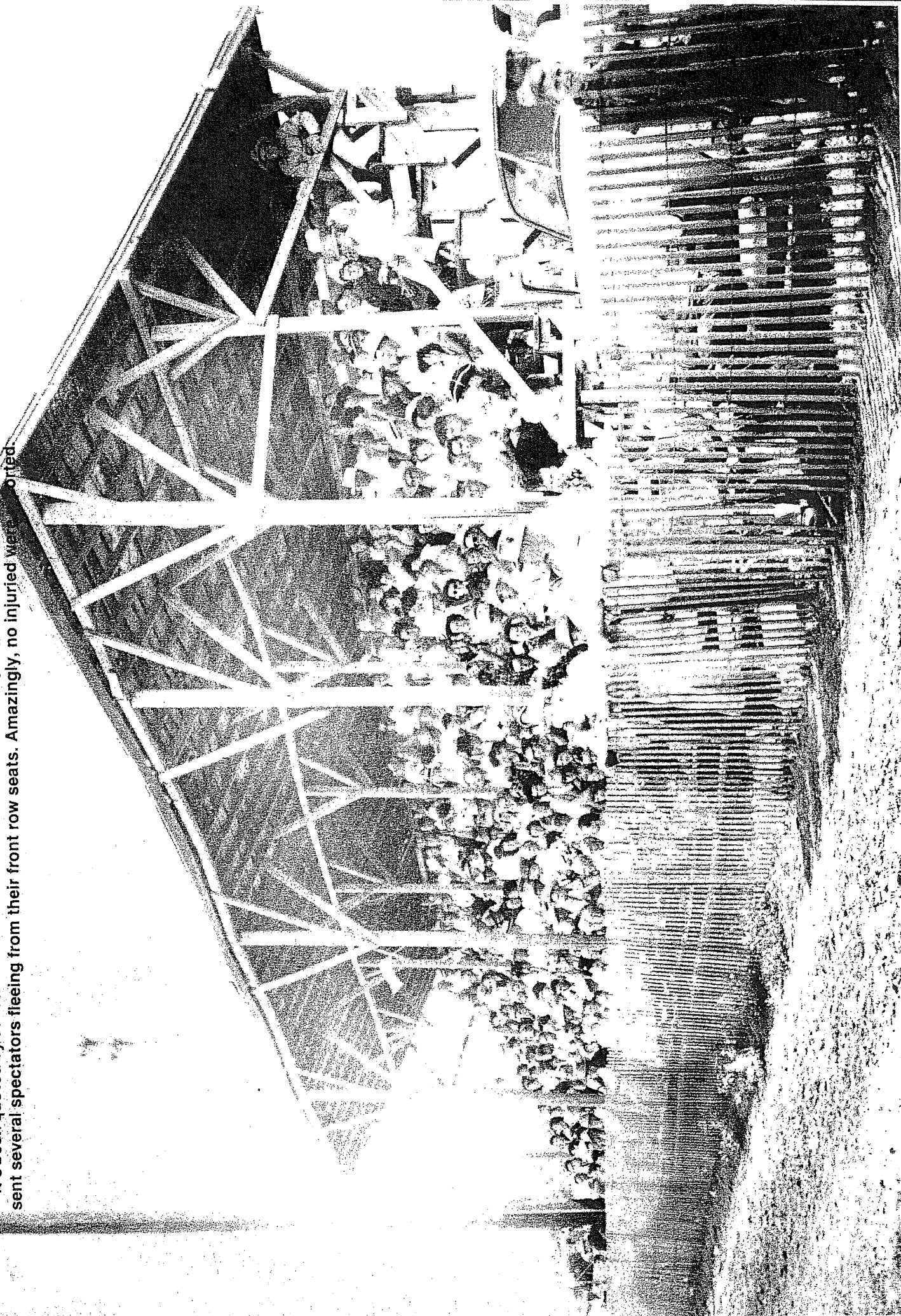
Yours Truly,

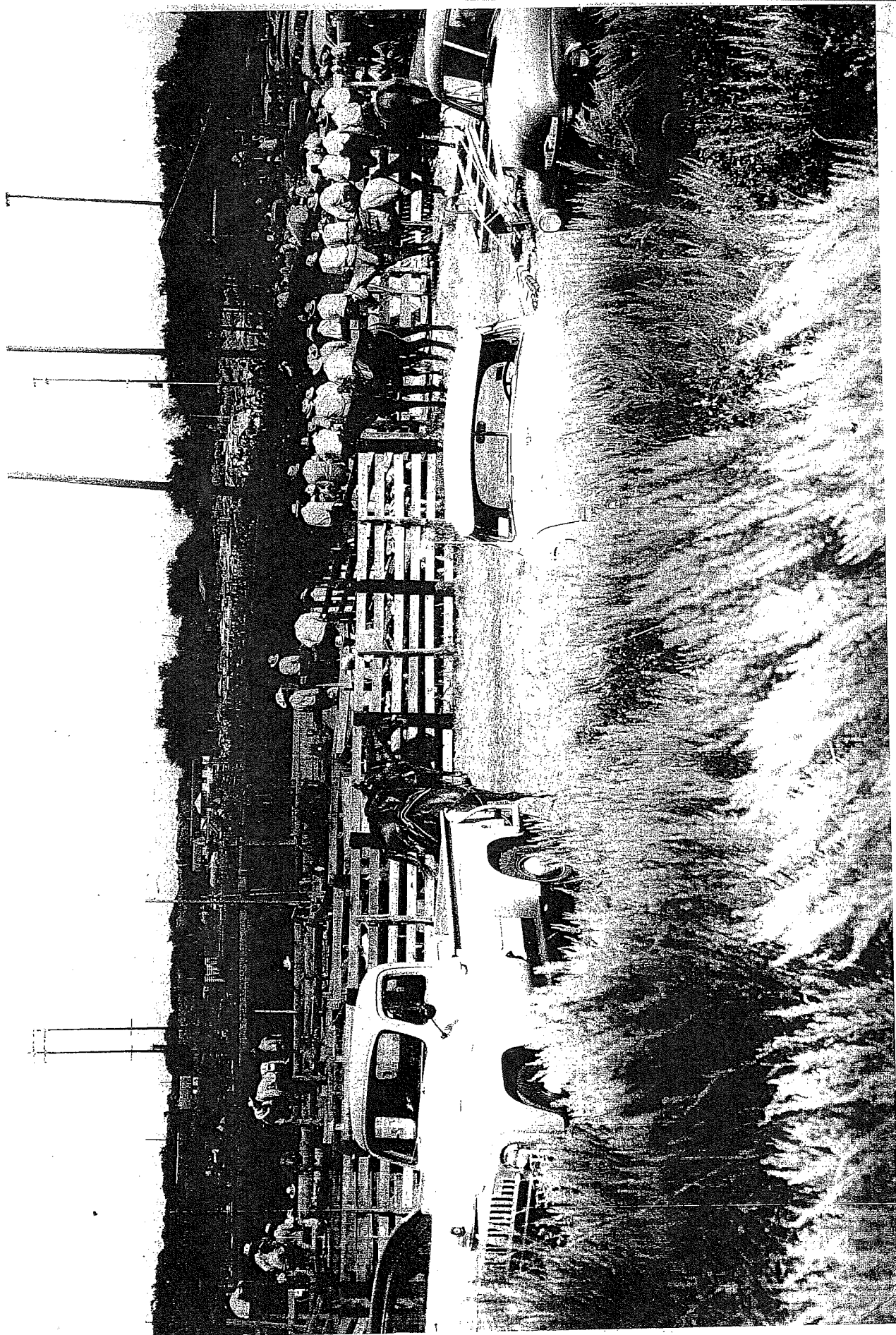
John D. Hinton, Secretary

FRED URBAN

I have owned and operated the
UF (UF Bar Ranch) for 42 years
Came to Okla in 1893

This photo was taken during a packed house at one of the early performances of the Freedom Rodeo. This was the first grandstand to be erected at the Rodeo grounds. It was located on the south side of the arena towards the west end. It's been quoted by several "Old Timers" that a bronc horse once jumped the fence directly in front of the grandstand and sent several spectators fleeing from their front row seats. Amazingly, no injured were reported.

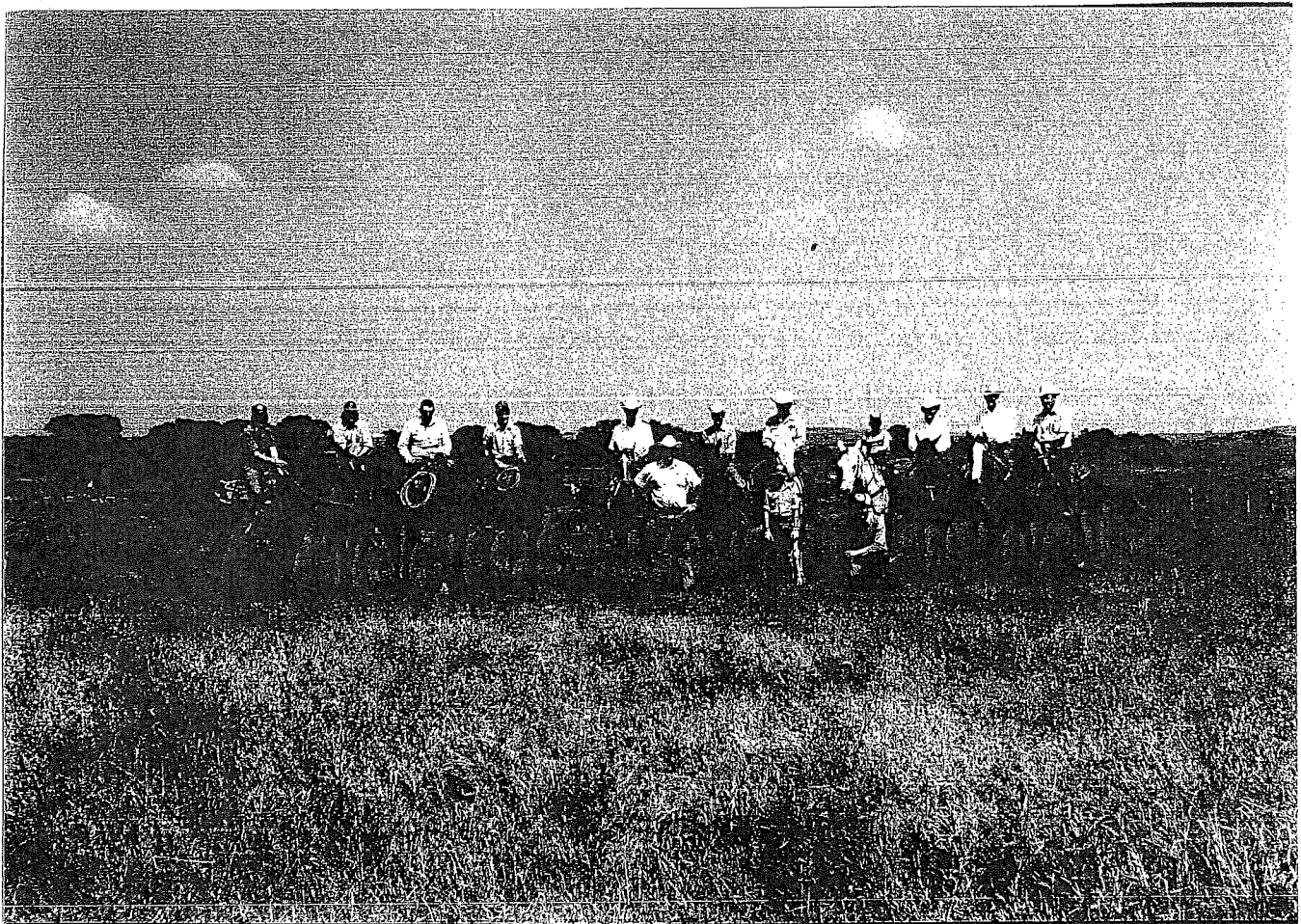




Chapter II

Honored Old Cowhands

In 1955, the Cimarron Cowboys' Association decided that it would be a wonderful addition to the annual reunion and meeting to formally recognize the contributions of an area cattleman or woman by honoring that individual as the "Honored Old Cowhand" at the annual chuck-wagon feed. The following pages of this history will share the stories, photographs, and backgrounds of each of the recognized "Old Cowhands" starting with the very first in 1956.



1956—Lucy Welty Snapp

Just east of Freedom, between the Cimarron River and Red Horse Creek about four miles, is a solid brick home which was the homestead of Lucy Welty Snapp and her husband, Bunk Snapp. Lucy was born in McGrundy County, Missouri, in 1877 to Mr. and Mrs. George Welty. Lucy's folks came to Oklahoma in the late 1800s and settled west of Freedom and south across the Cimarron River. Lucy decided to teach school after her family became settled. At age 27, Lucy met Bunk Snapp and they were soon married. Lucy and Bunk had three children, Frank, Jim, and Helen. Lucy worked alongside Bunk taking care of the cattle and the homestead. When Lucy was interviewed after being named the first honored "Old Cowhand", she was asked what were the toughest years in the ranching business? Lucy replied "that in 1932 the banks locked their doors. She said that Bunk only had \$10.00 in his pocket and that they lost the rest of their money. She went on to say that Bunk died the following year". She knew that droughts and bad times come and they go, but she believed in the values of perseverance and determination. Lucy lived by the ethic of hard work, fairness, generosity and smart decision-making. She lost her two sons and her husband at a fairly young age, but kept on working the ranch with her daughter Helen. Lucy was most proud of her daughter, Helen London—who was named a Freedom Rodeo Queen in 1940 and an honored "Old Cowhand" in 2004 as well, and her grandchildren, Vilene and Jim London.



1957—Ed Mahoney

Ed Mahoney was born in Lynn County, Kansas, in 1877. His father, William Mahoney, moved the family to Kiowa, Kansas in 1886. At the young age of 13, Ed began wrangling horses for Major Drumm of the Drumm Ranch located near the Driftwood, Oklahoma community. The Drumm Ranch had a large remuda of 80 plus horses, which meant that young Ed had a full-time job caring for that many head. A few years later, Ed's folks decided to make the Cherokee Outlet Run in 1893. Ed and his father made the run and settled near Burlington, Oklahoma, where they engaged in wheat farming and ranching. Shortly thereafter, Ed filed on a claim near his folks and began his life's work of building his ranch up to 800 acres. Ed met his wife, Nellie at a square dance and they married in 1903. Together he and his wife reared four children on Keno Creek. Ed's formula for success in ranching was "hard work, along with lots of bacon, beans, and beefsteak!"

1958—Green Selman

Green was born in 1873 in Jewitt, Texas (Leon County), and he was one of ten children. Green's family ranched and farmed and he began working for the Herring Ranch of Throckmorton County, Texas, at the young age of 12. He then moved onto the L.F.D. Cattle Company located east of Roswell, New Mexico. Green worked for other "outfits" in the New Mexico ranch country moving cattle from New Mexico to Montana for many years. Green had been brought up by strict Baptist parents, so the rough and tough ways of many cowhands did not "sit well" with him. Green remained a bachelor until age 46 at which time he met and married Annie Richburg of Pecos, Texas. Green and Annie moved to the Brook Cistern Ranch in New Mexico where they had three children, Sam, James and Doris Anne. Green and Annie knew that living 75 miles from the nearest school was not a good situation for their children and in 1928, Green's brother Jim Selman convinced them to move north and east to Oklahoma. They settled in the old Ellendale community in Woodward County where they worked hard and took care of their children. Doris Anne was named the 1941 Freedom Rodeo Queen. Green and Annie Selman lived a life guided by the "good book". Green still rode his favorite horse at age 84, and believed that the best life of all was one in the saddle.



Ed Coles—1959

Edgar Coles was born in 1875 in Kentucky. His parents heard the call "of the west" and soon made their way to Kiowa, Kansas in 1887. When the Cherokee Outlet was opened for settlement in 1893, Ed's parents filed on a claim south of Kiowa where he attended school with Bunk Snapp. Ed worked as a "cowboy" for Bunk Snapp and others as a young man. In 1907, he married his wife, Frances, and they made their home two miles south of Look-Out in northwest Woods County. Ed was always ready to help out with cattle work and spent many a day in the saddle helping Bunk Snapp and the other neighbors with round ups and cattle working. Ed and Frances had four girls, Maxine Nixon, Helena Burleson, Betty Whittet and Virginia Renke, and three boys, Lester, Kendall and Jack. Frances passed away in 1949 and Ed spent several years living with his children. He was known as "the great story-teller" by his granddaughter, Sue Nixon Reed.



Lewis "Doc" Omev—1960

Lewis B. "Doc" Omev, named for the doctor who brought him into the world, was born near Lawrence, Kansas, in 1873. His parents relocated to Medicine Lodge, Kansas, where he was brought up working with horses and cattle. Doc made the run of 1893 and homesteaded on a piece of land near Ringwood, Oklahoma, in Major County. After a couple of years, and having come down with a case of the measles, Doc sold out and drove his wagon and stock to a place near Etna, in far northwest Woods County, known as "Poverty Flats". He later settled on a piece of land further south and built a three room frame house. In 1905, Doc married Bertha Sherman, who was a nurse. Bertha sold her place and moved to the ranch north of Freedom with Doc. The Omev's had two daughters, Mrs. J.W. Fry and Margaret and a son, Lewis. Their grandson, Jim Omev and his wife Verina, and family later moved to the home place. Doc had quite a sense of humor and always joked that "no one could find his place unless they were lost"!

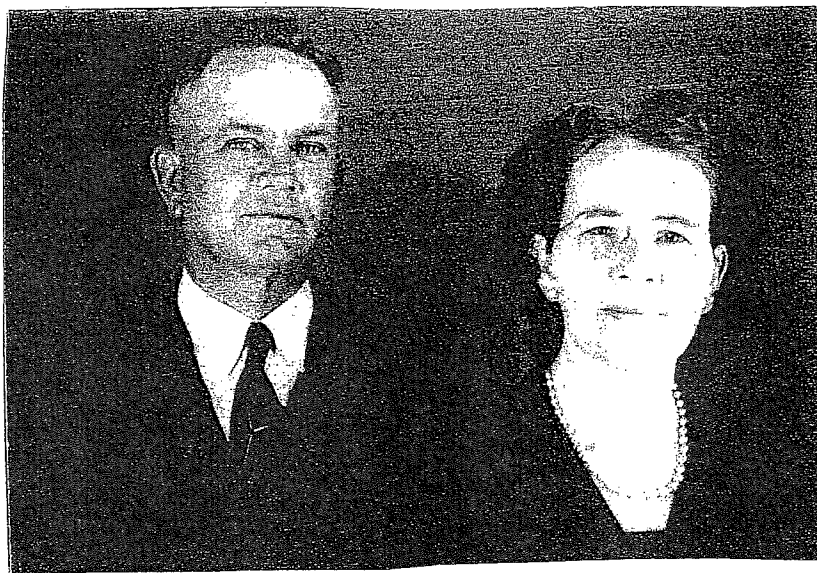
Rudy Eden—1961

R.I. "Rudy" Eden, came to Oklahoma as a small boy with his folks, George R. and Anna Eden. He, like so many others of his generation, had his fair share of tough times living on the prairie of northwest Oklahoma. The Eden family settled in the Fairvalley community, east of Freedom about five miles. As a young man, Rudy drove the supply wagon for Alph Updegraff's General Store, and he worked on the ranch for Lige Gaskill. Rudy gradually acquired a herd of cattle and later on bought land. Rudy also was heavily involved in the cattle hauling and marketing business and could "guess a calf's weight" with nearly unequaled accuracy. Rudy married Alice Kendrick and they had two children, Darrell and Bonnie. Rudy's granddaughter, Lisa Eden was named the 1969 Freedom Rodeo Queen. Rudy's grandson, Arlie Eden and his family, continue to live on the family homestead east of Freedom.



Simpson Walker, Sr.—1962

Simpson Walker, Sr. was born in 1890, near Attica, Kansas. Simpson married Ethel Mae Stout in 1910 and they lived near Yewed, Oklahoma, for a number of years. Simpson and Ethel were encouraged by Simpson's older brother Samuel T. (Kit) Walker to move to northwest Oklahoma just south of the Cimarron River in Woodward County. They came with their oldest son, Leland Walker, to the two room house on Kit's place where they started their ranch. Simpson and Ethel saved their money and worked hard as they grew their family. They soon had a houseful of children, Thelma, Naomi, Gilbert, Simpson Jr., and Wesley. Another son, Douglas, died from dust pneumonia during the "dirty thirties". Simpson Sr. and Ethel continued to add to their ranch as neighbors sold out. They both felt strongly that all of their children would attend college and made sure that each one graduated from Oklahoma A.& M. The Walkers were strong supporters of the Freedom community and knew the values of hard-work and determination. Members of the family still operate the ranch today. The Walker's granddaughters, Sheila Bilyeu, was the 1960 Freedom Rodeo Queen, and Karen Walker, was the Freedom Rodeo Queen in 1963. One great-granddaughter, Kelli Walker, was the 2004 Freedom Rodeo Queen.

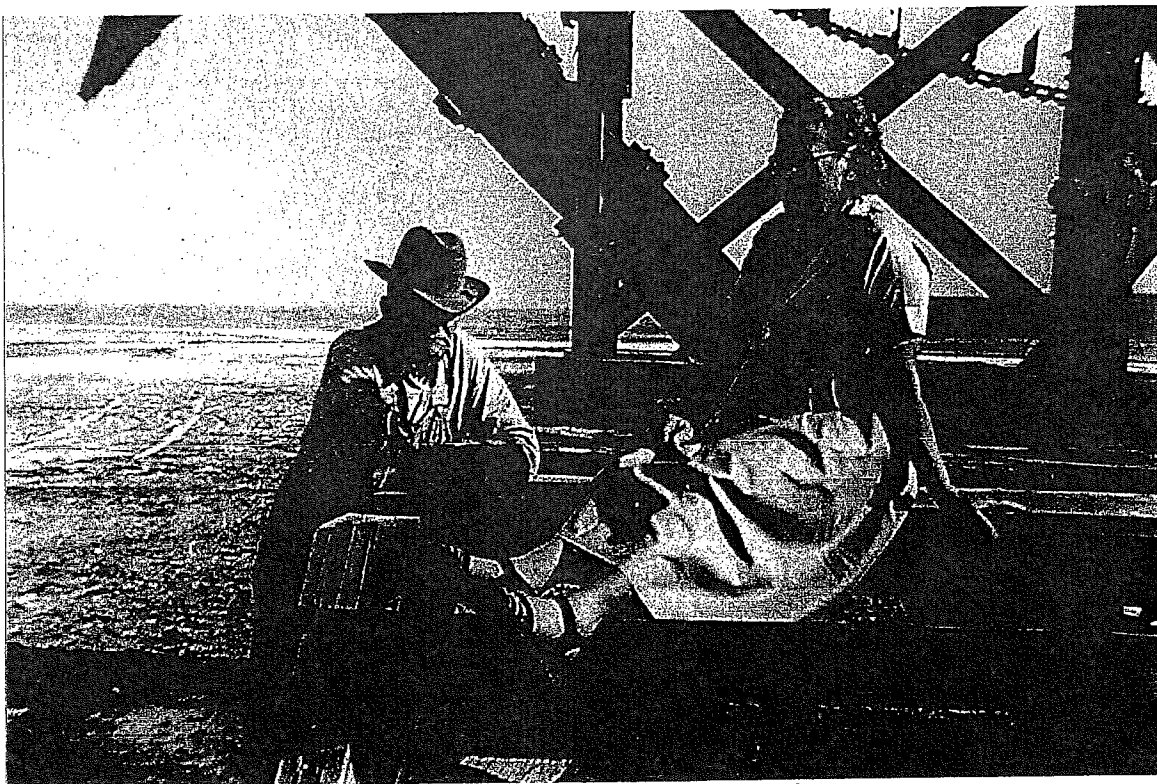


Lena Earnest Selman—1963

Lena E. Earnest, was born to William and Sarah Earnest in Dallas County, Missouri, and moved with her family to northwest Oklahoma at a young age in 1900 where they homesteaded near Fairvalley. Lena received her education at Northwestern Normal School in Alva and earned her teaching certificate. In 1910, she was married to James Oldham "J.O." Selman and they moved to a lonely homestead near present day Selman, Oklahoma. J.O. and Lena moved to Woodward in 1918 so that their two children, Robert "Bob", and Eileen could attend school. Through the years, they continued to build and operate the ranch and Lena and the children returned to the ranch every summer. Lena worked alongside her husband and was a shrewd businesswoman. She held many civic and church leadership positions and served on a variety of statewide and national boards throughout her life. Lena knew the cattle industry as well as any man, and was not afraid of hardship.

Jim Bliss—1964

Jim Bliss was 12 years old when his father "loaded up the wagon" and made the trip to a homestead 9 miles southwest of Alva, Oklahoma. Although Jim was born in a log cabin near Clay Center, Kansas, in 1882, his parents and 11 siblings made the new homestead their home. Jim "drifted" into the Lookout community northwest of Freedom as a young man. He filed on a claim and spent the remainder of this life on the isolated farm. He enjoyed riding the range and was an avid wildlife preservationist. Jim married Opal Bagby, a school teacher, in the Coy district. Jim and Opal were married for sixty plus years. Together they had 2 daughters, Eileen Bliss Darnell and Lois Bliss Layton. Jim's grandsons and their families operate the ranch today.



Bob Litton—1965

Bob Litton, his two brothers, Dishman and Tom, Bob Rockhold and Viv Roper left Mercer, Missouri in 1900 to take up claims in northwest Oklahoma. They were met at the community of Curtis, east of present day Mooreland, Oklahoma, by John Mobley who brought them to the Haskew Flats about 10 miles southwest of present day Freedom so they could stake their claims. Bob cut his fence posts about 15 miles west of his claim and hauled them to the homestead. In 1902 he purchased 200 head of cattle, broke about 40 acres of ground and planted Kaffir corn (a common commodity of the day). Bob served as a Woodward County Commissioner for 8 years and served on the Woodward County Conservation Board for over 30 years while working his place. He and his wife, Liczie, were married for over 50 years, but they never had children.

Walter R. "Brad" Shaull—1966

Brad Shaull was born on the Fritzlen Ranch north of Alva in 1898. Brad made many trips from north of Alva to south of Selman herding cattle with his Dad. Brad married Nina Groesbeck, a school teacher at the Greenleaf District, and they later moved to the Syndicate Ranch south of Freedom. Brad and Nina reared three boys, Marvin, Jess, and Buster and three daughters, Mrs. Conn Dobbs, Mrs. Leo Nixon, and Mrs. Tom O'Dell on the ranch. Nellie Shaull O'Dell was the 1954 Freedom Rodeo Queen. Brad is best remembered for starting the Freedom Amateur Jr. Rodeo so that the young men of the area could "practice" their "cowboy" skills. Brad and his wife eventually moved to Spearman, Texas, but Brad always enjoyed the ranch life and visiting with his friends and neighbors in Freedom.



John Hinton—1967

John D. Hinton was born in Whitewright, Texas, in 1896. He moved to Hobart, Oklahoma where he met and married his wife, Ruth Walker. In 1919 they moved to Curtis, Oklahoma, where he started his career as a mail carrier. In 1922, they moved to Freedom where he continued to carry the mail. John was active in many community civic organizations and served as the President of the Freedom Chamber of Commerce. He was one of the first organizers of the Cimarron Cowboys Association and was instrumental in getting the Cimarron Cowboys Monument completed. He and his wife owned and operated the "Freedom Call" for over 43 years before selling the newspaper in 1967. He retired from the rural postal service in 1966 after 46 years of service. He and Ruth had 2 daughters, Betty Ruth Hinton Selman and Barbara Hinton Bealmear.



Walter Blevins—1968

Walter Blevins was a year old when his folks, Simmie and Bill Blevins, left Soquohee, Tennessee, and moved to Ft. Worth, Texas. The family only stayed in Texas a year and then moved onto Garfield County, Oklahoma, where they were met by a cousin, "Big Willie Haskew". The men ventured on out to the Haskew community, south of Freedom, to prepare 160 acre homesteads for their families. In the spring of 1901, the men "collected" their families and moved them to the new town of Haskew on the prairie south of the Cimarron River in Woodward County, Oklahoma. The small community had a mercantile, blacksmith shop, post office and a weekly newspaper could also be found at Haskew. Walt married Edna Gregory, the school teacher at the Freezeout School in 1917. Walter and Edna had three children, Allene Nixon, Meredith and Wyman. Walt and Edna were active in community affairs and farmed and ranched on their homestead throughout their lives. Walt was known as quite a "horse-breaker" and was always glad to help "gentle a horse down" for his friends and neighbors.

W.C. "Bill" Romjue—1969

Bill Romjue was born near Wayne, Nebraska, in 1895. He moved with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Romjue, to the Freedom area in 1902. The Romjue family settled on a claim 8 miles north and 2 miles east of Camp Houston. In 1907, the family relocated to near Avarad, Oklahoma. Bill Romjue grew up on the farm and married Edna Stone in 1920 in Medicine Lodge, Kansas. They had two children, Dorothy Wilson and John Stone. Bill and Edna later relocated to Alva, where he served as County Commissioner of District I for nearly 16 years. Bill was in office when the new Woods County Courthouse was completed and he was instrumental in helping build the long bridge over the Salt Fork River north of Alva. Bill gave unselfishly of his time and resources and was an active civic leader of his community and county.

Ray McMoran—1970

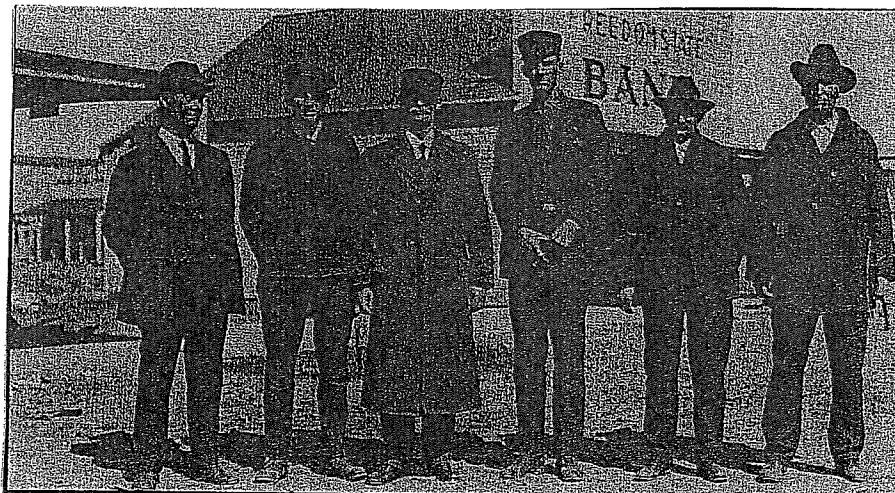
Ray McMoran loved the wide open spaces of northwest Woods County. He was born in Osbourne County, Kansas, in 1895, and moved with this family north of Camp Houston in 1900. Ray married Edna Becker in 1946 and they had 2 children, Ray Jr. and Linda Sue. Mrs. McMoran served as a registered nurse for many years and worked tirelessly with the Blood Banks and youth 4-H groups. Ray loved his horses and raised quarter horses for sale. Ray and Edna were happy living the isolated ranch life and would not have traded it for anything. The McMoran family remains on the homestead Ray and Edna built up through the years.

George Annis—1971

George Annis moved with his family to a dug-out north of Freedom in 1902. His father ran the area grocery store and his mother served as the postmistress for the region. George worked on the ranch and did all of the chores while his Dad ran the rural postal routes. In 1917, George married Ethel Moreland of Alva. They made their home in a two room farm house and started their family. Their children were Jack, Nina Hope, and Max. George and Ethel made sure that their children received a good education. George believed that a man "was never in better company than when he was with his horse".

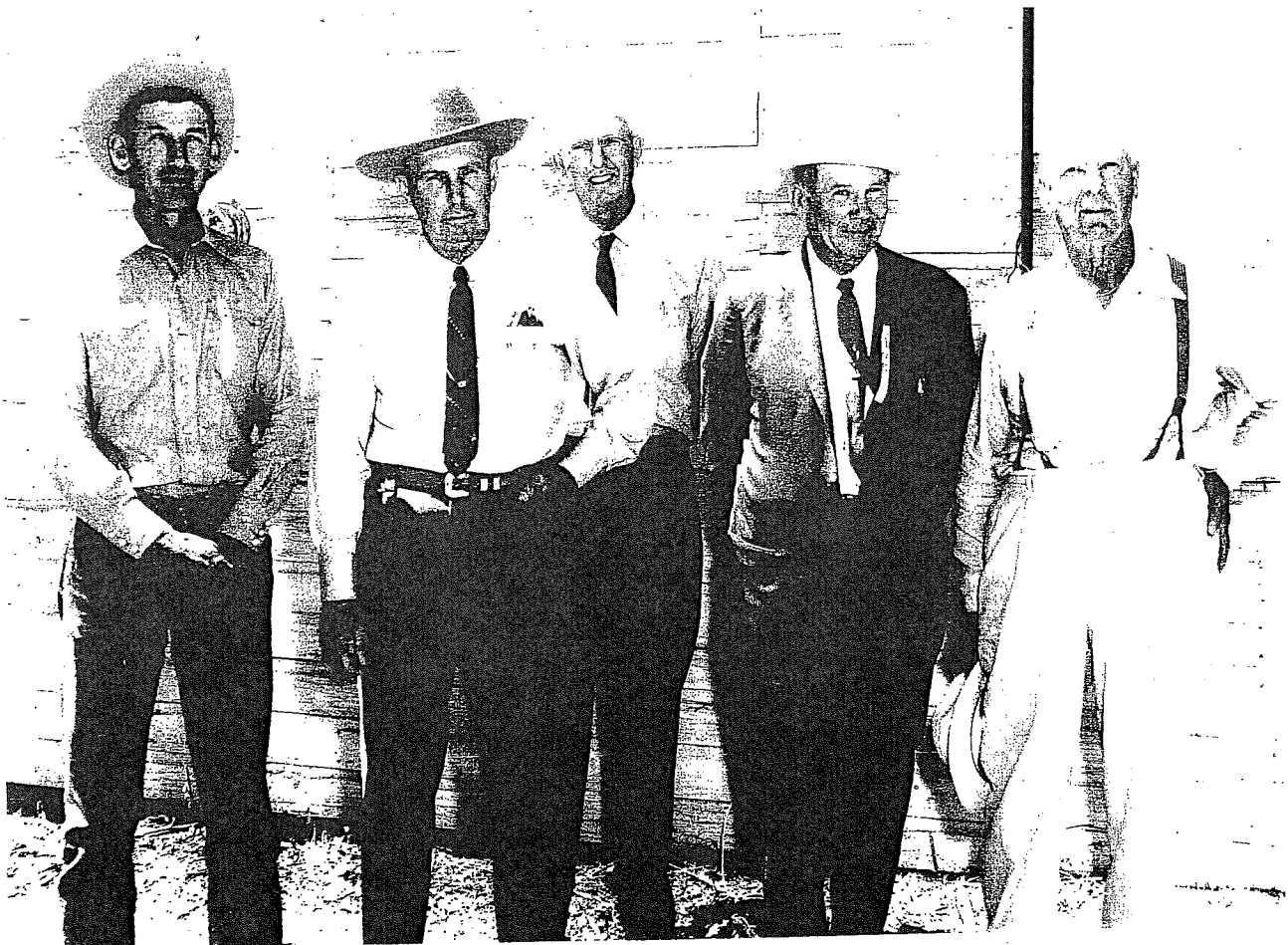
Earl Armantrout—1972

Earl Armantrout moved with his family to a homestead northwest of Freedom in 1903. The family came from Chautaugua County, Kansas, and Earl set about attending school and helping on the farm. As a young man, Earl hauled freight from Alva to the Freedom area, which would take two and three days round trip! Earl married Lucille Wanger in 1923 and they had three daughters, Pat, Opal and Delois and a son, Charlie. Earl loved the ranch life and would not trade a day of it for "town living".



Jim Wardrop—1973

Jim Wardrop, whose ranch was located northwest of Freedom, was born in 1901 near the Hunnewell, Kansas, which was near the state line. He moved with his parents, Thomas and Ella Wardrop, by covered wagon to their homestead seven miles south of Lookout. The early years were spent farming raising livestock and cutting posts. Jim married Marie Olgevie from the Lookout community in 1921 and they spent their entire married life northwest of Freedom. Jim served on the Woods County Election Board for 24 years and was active in the Old Cowhands' Association throughout his adult life. He and Marie had four children, Basil, Foy, Ella, and Bill. They ran Hereford cattle, having purchased their first registered Hereford bull in 1922, and they raised registered hogs. Descendents of the Jim and Marie continue to ranch northwest of Freedom today and son, Foy, was recognized as the 2001 Honored Old Cowhand. When describing the 1973 Honored Old Cowhand, the word "progressive" would come to mind.



Sinah Welty—1974

Sinah Feely Welty was a small girl of 5 years when her folks, James and Jennie Feely of Barton County, Missouri, began moving west in 1897. After stopping for a few years in Kansas City, Mr. Feely bought a team and wagon, loaded his family, and headed toward the Cherokee Outlet. They settled on a claim south of the river near the West Union schoolhouse. Sinah married Nova Welty in 1907 and they resided on Nova's claim which was 3 miles west of Freedom. The Welty's had five boys, Jason, Jack, Pod, Pete, and Nump and 2 girls, Cleo and Ruby. Sinah worked side by side with Nova on the farm until his health began to fail in 1942. They moved to Colorado for a short time, and Nova passed away in 1943. She returned to Freedom in 1954 where she stayed until her death. Sinah was quite a "hand" with the cattle and never backed down from any chore that needed done. Sinah's son, Pod, was named the Honored Old Cowhand in 1994 and her granddaughter, Lanora Bradt, was the 1959 Freedom Rodeo Queen.

L.C. Mulnix—1975

L.C. Mulnix was born on the family homestead, south of Freedom in the Haskew community in 1906. They relocated closer to the West Union community a few years later, and L.C. worked the farm from that point forward. He began riding at age 4 and would rather work cattle than do about anything else. He was active in the Freedom Chamber of Commerce and served on the Rodeo committee for many years. While L.C. never married, he never missed a rodeo dance and considered the rodeo the highlight of his year!

Harley Wares—1976

In 1976 Harley Wares lived just a few miles from where he was born in 1903 to Joseph and Martha Jane Wares. Harley's mother passed away when he was a young boy and he soon had to find his own way in the world by becoming a "jack of all trades". At the young age of 16, he began traveling around and finding work at a number of jobs in Colorado, Kansas, and in eastern Oklahoma. In 1926, Harley married Iona Parker and they made their home near where he was born 11 miles north of Freedom. Harley and Iona had two boys, Dale and Wayne. Wayne and his boys continue to work on the ranch north of Freedom. His son, Wayne, jokingly stated that "he never saw his dad in the daylight until he was 18 years old"! Throughout his life, Harley worked hard and loved his life out on the prairie of Oklahoma.

Ezra Blackman—1977

Ezra Blackman, who was born in 1893, was originally from Sherman, Texas, and came to Freedom in 1910 to visit relatives. He decided to stay and began working as a ranch-hand for area ranchers. He married Alta Swain in 1924, and they made their home west of Freedom along the Cimarron River. Ezra began mining salt from the Salt Flats after experiencing several years of crop failure. He worked the "salt" for over 50 years starting out with 10 horses and mules and of small crew of men who dug the salt with pitchforks and grain scoops. Ezra later sold his salt plant to Cargill and retired when the work became too much for him.

Vernie Burkhart—1978

Vernie Burkhart was born to George and Amie Burkhart in 1906 on the family farm six miles south of Freedom. Three years later, his folks purchased more land 3 miles further south and Vernie grew to adulthood there. He grew up working cattle, helping on the farm, and at age 20 purchased 320 acres of land 13 miles south of Freedom. Vernie married Mae McGee of Mooreland and they became the parents of Dwight, Lavonne, and Merle. Mae was killed in an accident when the children were small, and Vernie soon married Nelda Magee of Carmen. The Burkharths worked side by side and had a son, Alan. Vernie and Nelda raised registered Hereford cattle and purchased additional land increasing the size of their place. Vernie served on the Freedom School Board and was also actively involved in Soil Conservation programs. Nelda and Vernie moved into Freedom in 1961 and their son, Alan and his family, has made the ranch their home since 1973.



Melville (M.A.) Gibson—1979

At age 7, Melville Gibson left Missouri with his family in 1904 headed for the Cherokee Outlet country of northwest Oklahoma. They rode the train to Woodward, Oklahoma, and then continued their journey by wagon and horseback to a 320 acre place north of Ft. Supply. M.A., "Mel", as he was called, was drafted to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces in World War I. He completed his basic training and was headed toward Europe when word came that the war was over. He returned home to assist his ailing father, but was encouraged to go ahead and seek "his way in life". He soon rented his own ground to farm and married Valma Shuyler in 1923. Mr. and Mrs. Gibson had 3 girls, Ethel, Dewey, and Jeanne and 1 son, Dean. The Gibson's purchased land near the J.O. Selman place southwest of Freedom and continued to add to their ranch's acreage as time passed. In the early 1960s, the Gibsons moved to Alva after Mel's health began to fail. M.A.'s granddaughter, Sharon Hepner Harper, earned the title of Freedom Rodeo Queen in 1974. His great-granddaughter, Kristin Harper, was the 2003 Freedom Rodeo Queen and several of his great-grandchildren continue to rodeo in the region.

Ed Gaskill—1980

Ed Gaskill, son of Lige and Mary Gaskill, was born in 1909 in Alva, Oklahoma. He grew up on the family farm near Redhorse Creek and attended Farry school northeast of Freedom. His early years were spent working on the ranch and tending to the cattle. He married Mildred Elder and together they built a sizable ranch of 8,500 acres. The Gaskills were the parents of 7 children, Patricia, Roberta, Robert (Bud), Barbara, Linda, Danny and Mary Jane. Ed never did anything but farm and ranch during this life, which is exactly the way he liked it. He often said that even the hard times on the ranch were happy times compared to anything else! Ed's grand-daughter, Autumn Gaskill, was named the 1997 Freedom Rodeo Queen.

Hugh Robinson, Sr.—1981

Hugh Robinson, Sr. came west with this family, after they "pulled up stakes" near Manchester, Oklahoma in 1919. They settled on his grandfather Lydick's place, 2 miles north of the West Union School. He was born in 1903 and married Nan Stout in 1922. Hugh and Nan purchased their own place in 1931 in the Haskew community where they lived for 45 years. They had 3 children, Hugh Jr., Mary Lou and Robert. Hugh was a quiet, humble, God fearing man, who worked his farm, raising crops and cattle throughout his life. Hugh and Nan loved the farm and could not have imagined their lives as being anything different.

Wilbur Olson—1982

Wilbur Olson was born in 1912 to Louis and Ida May (Prigmore) Olson on the family homestead northwest of Freedom. Wilbur spent his early years working on the family farm and attending school at Centerview. After leaving home, he worked on various ranches in Barber County, Kansas, before going to work with Rudy Eden on the old Dalton Ranch east of Freedom and the old Wyckoff Ranch south of the Cimarron River. Wilbur married Edna Denny in 1939. He liked to say they spent their honeymoon with 500 "bawling calves" for company. Wilbur and Edna had 2 girls, Shirley and Marilyn. In 1944, Wilbur and Edna purchased his folks' place northwest of Freedom and built up their ranch. They lived the remainder of their married life out on their place in the hills northwest of Freedom. The Olson's daughter, Marilyn, was the 1961 Freedom Rodeo Queen. Wilbur and Edna were quite a pair and loved the red hills of home.

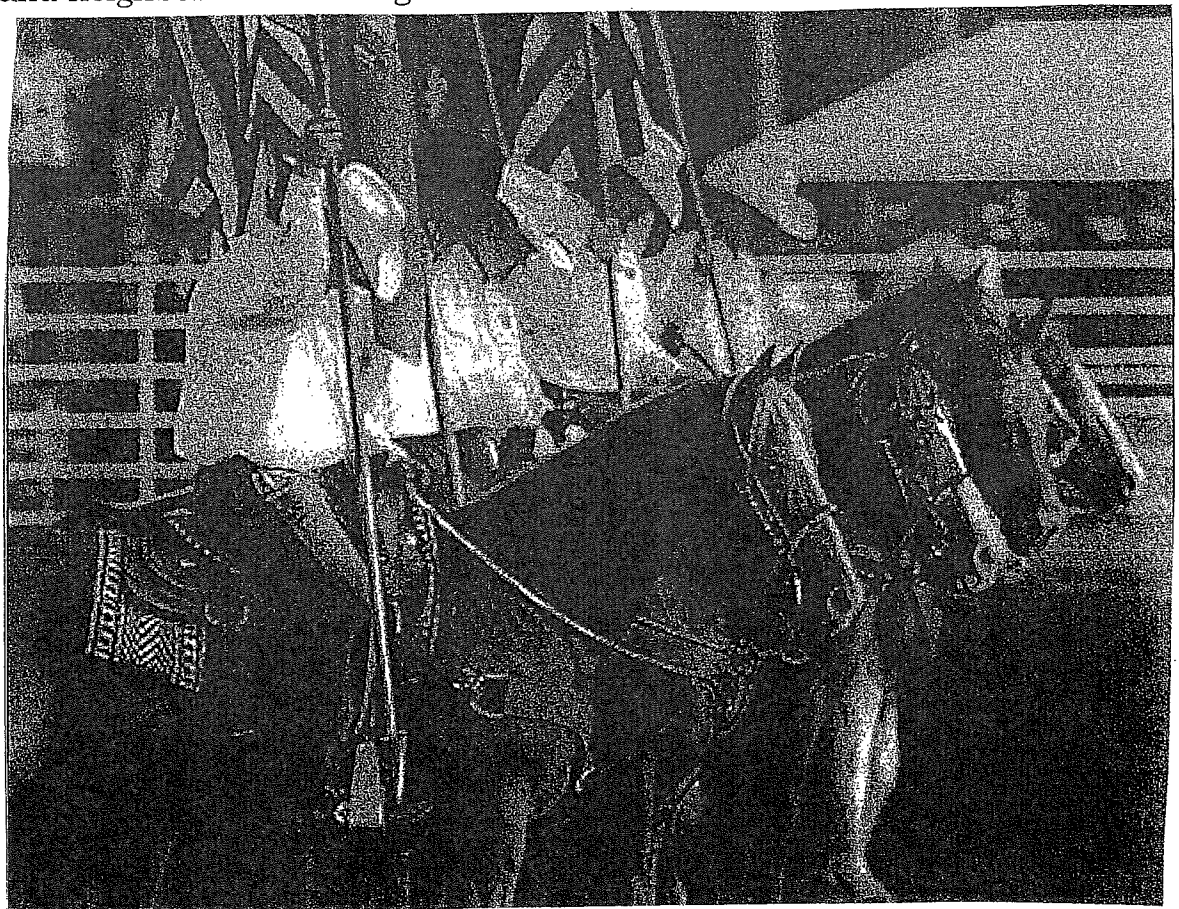


Otis Bickford—1983

Otis Bickford was born and reared on the banks of Red Horse Creek just a few miles east of Freedom in 1902. His folks had filed on 160 acres there and it was here that he spent his early years. At an early age he began working for Alf Updegraff and then spent time working for Bunk Snapp, Lige Gaskill, and Rudy Eden. Otis graduated from Freedom High School in 1925 and went to work for the Farmers Co-op, Freedom State Bank and other local firms. Most of his life was spent on the prairies of northwest Oklahoma. He married Elsie Chase and she passed away in 1967. He later married Helen Litton and they lived on a farm 10 miles southwest of Freedom. Otis was well known for his dry-wit and his writing, having penned many a letter and poem in his lifetime.

Walter Bishop—1984

Walt, as he was known to all, spent his early years in Greencastle, Missouri. He traveled to Oklahoma at the young age of 20 and found himself in Alva, the county seat of Woods County. He first set foot in Freedom on December 22, 1928, and found himself a job at the Kamas Cash Store. In 1929, Walt married a local young lady, Ruby Reily, and together they began a life. Walt and Ruby owned several businesses in Freedom including the hardware store, a service station, a recreation parlor, café, and locker plant. Walt and Ruby had three children, Walter Jr., Don, and Nita. The Bishops were avid supporters of the Freedom Chamber of Commerce, the school, and the churches in the community. While he was not a "cowhand", Walt served his friends and neighbors well throughout his life in business and in friendship.



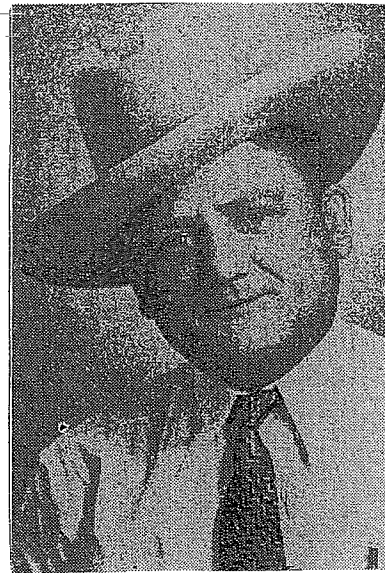
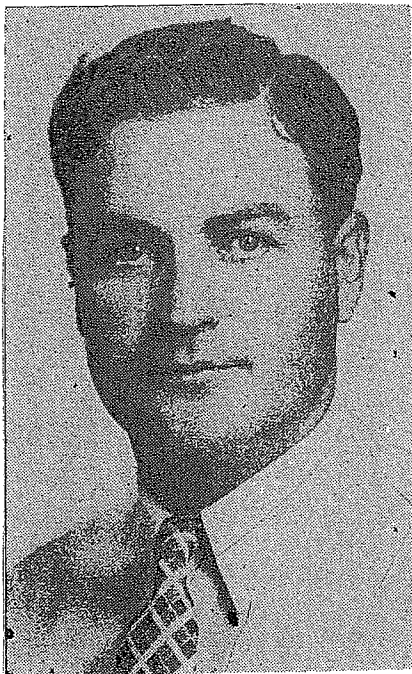
Paul Hepner—1985

Paul Hepner was born in 1908 to Lottie and Grant Hepner 4.5 miles south of Freedom on the family homestead. He spent his entire life farming and ranching in the Freedom area and graduated from Freedom High School in 1928. Paul married Reta Pancoast, a local young lady in 1929, and together they continued working on their farm to build up their holdings. In 1942 Paul and Reta purchased the land where they spent the remainder of their lives south of Freedom. Paul served on many boards during his life and helped start the Woodward County Rural Water District #1 that serves the community of Freedom, and the Northwest Electric Cooperative Board of Directors for 36 years. He also served on the Woodward County Fair Board for over 46 years. The Hepners were active in the Freedom area and had three sons, Harold Dean, Davey, and Nelson. Harold Dean was recognized as the 2011 Honored Old Cowhand. Sharon Hepner Harper, a granddaughter, was the 1974 Freedom Rodeo Queen and a great-granddaughter, Kristin Harper was the 2003 Freedom Rodeo Queen.



Jim Powers—1986

Jim Powers was born and reared in the Freedom community and spent many years as a young man working for different ranchers in the area. Jim joined the Freedom State Bank in 1930, the bank his father, David Powers, started in 1919. After his father passed away, Jim took over the management of the bank and continued that association for many years. During his adult life, Jim purchased land east of Freedom and ran cattle, and became an avid public servant for the region. From 1938 to 1942 he served in the state legislature and later went to Washington, D.C. to work for Congressman Rizley. In 1954, Jim was appointed the State Director of the Farmers Home Administration. He helped to start the Woodward Rotary Club and served on numerous boards and in civic organizations. Jim married Joanna Nixon Powers and they had three daughters, Deanna, Donna and Jamie. Joanna passed away in 1976 and Jim married Vernice Porter in 1981. Jim and Vernice spent the remainder of their lives in Woodward, but Jim always considered Freedom his hometown.



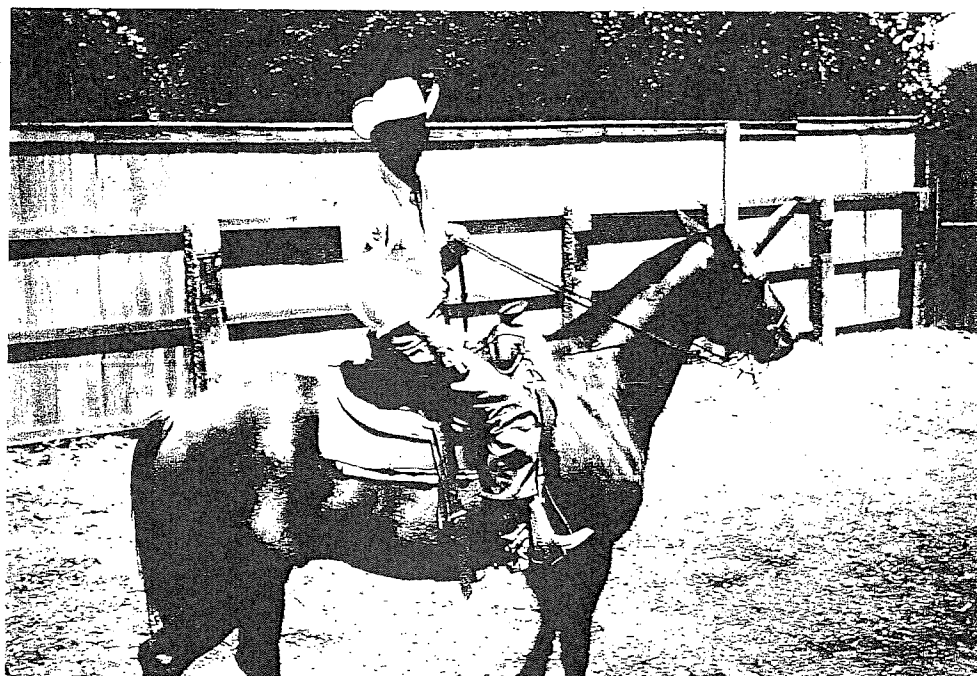
Gene Earnest—1987

Gene Earnest would definitely “fit the ideal” of what a cowboy is all about. Born in 1913 on the family homestead east of Freedom, to Elbert and Arda Earnest, he spent his childhood working cattle and farming. Gene married Myrtle Lockhart Ausley in 1943 and they lived on the family homestead for many years. Their children were Patricia and Gary. In 1970, Gene and Myrtle moved to Alva, but Gene continued to come to the farm nearly every-day and loved to work with the horses and cattle. Gene was involved with the Freedom Rodeo and various community organizations throughout his life. He served on the Woods County Conservation Board from its inception in 1946 until his retirement and also served on the State Soil Conservation Commission. In 1970, he was appointed to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and in 1977 he was appointed State Director of the Farmers Home Administration. Gene and Myrtle were active in their church and loved to spend time with their family and friends. Despite living in Stillwater and Alva for a period of time, they always considered the farm 8 miles east of Freedom “home”. Gene’s daughter, Pat Turner, was the 1950 Freedom Rodeo Queen and his great-granddaughter, Taylor Turner Skouby, was crowned the 2005 Freedom Rodeo Queen.



Mart Fulton—1988

Mart Fulton was the son of an early day cowboy to the region, Walt Fulton and from him, Mart learned how to live the "cowboy way". Born in 1915 7 miles east of Freedom, Mart was taught from an early age how to work cattle and ride a horse. In fact, he worked for a time for Rudy Eden and Clarence Annis on their ranches. After the death of his mother, Rose, Mart and his Dad lived the bachelor's life for many years. In 1935, Mart married Leota Morland and she became his "right hand man" throughout their years together. Mart and Leota lived on the farm east of Freedom for most of their life together. They had one daughter, Marietta Jean, who was crowned the 1952 Freedom Rodeo Queen. Mart loved his rodeos and competed in roping events for many years, but always knew that his home was in Fairvalley overlooking the Cimarron River.



Cecil Nixon—1989

South of Freedom, in the Ellendale and West Union communities, is where Cecil Nixon was born in 1913 to Arthur and Lula Mae Plumlee Nixon. Cecil graduated from Freedom High School with the class of 1932, and married Allene Blevins in 1941. Cecil and Allene purchased the Hugh Litton place in 1942 and made it their home throughout their married lives. Cecil was always working with cattle and raising quarter-horses. The family built a riding stable and café near the entrance to Alabaster Caverns State Park, and Allene ran the café in the summers and took care of the children during the school year. The Nixons had three daughters, Carol, Billie, Mae Beth and one son, Marvin and helped raise three other girls, Lola, Ada, and Leona. Cecil never missed a

Freedom Rodeo and one daughter, Mae Beth, was named the 1962 Freedom Rodeo Queen. Cecil served on the Freedom Farmers Co-op Board for many years, as well as the Cimarron Cowboys Association. Cecil and Allene were active members of the Freedom Methodist Church throughout their life, and loved to spend time with their extended family.

Bill Daughhetee—1990

Bill would not consider himself a “cowboy” at all, but his friends and family certainly understood why he was named an Honored Old Cowhand in 1990. Bill was born in Capron, Oklahoma, in 1916 where he attended school. The Daughhetee family then moved to Freedom to be near Bill’s grandfather, George. Bill helped his father at the B&B café and later on the Ft. Supply dam building project. In 1941 Bill married Eunice Koch of Rosston, Oklahoma. Eunice’s children, Ronnie and Jody soon became Bill’s kids too! Within a few years, another son, Roger, was born. Bill was drafted and served in World War II in a tank battalion. After the war, Bill came home to Freedom and opened a café and then later worked for various businesses in the community including the Freedom State Bank for 18 years. Bill was actively involved in the Chamber of Commerce and the annual Rodeo events every year. Additionally, he worked tirelessly for the American Legion and was known by all as “quite a character”!

Tom Schroeder—1991

Tom Schroeder had a love of farming, ranching, and country music—just ask anyone who knew him! He was born on the farm in 1918 11 miles northwest of Freedom which remained his home his entire life. Tom’s parents were John and Christina Schroeder although he lost his mother when he was only 6 months old. He attended school at Centerview and in Alva where he graduated high school. After receiving his education, he worked hauling sand to the new Cimarron River Bridge being built west of his home. In 1938, Tom married Mabelle Strong in Cherokee, Oklahoma. Tom and Mabelle had seven children, although only five lived to reach adulthood. They are Stanley, Dennis, Carlene, Betty, and Evelyn. Evelyn is now deceased. Cattle and farming were the life for the Schroeder family for well over fifty years. Tom served on the Freedom Farmers Co-op Board and the ASCD board and was lifelong supporter of the Freedom Rodeo. His daughter, Carlene, was the 1957 Freedom Rodeo Queen.

Lloyd Rockhold—1992

Lloyd was known as quite a “good hand” with cattle, and area ranchers would call upon him regularly to help out with cattle working every year. He was born in 1916 on a farm that his father had filed upon in 1900 south of Freedom. Lloyd’s parents were Robert and Millie Rockhold. In 1932, Lloyd’s

mother passed and his father moved the family to Mooreland, but Lloyd decided he wanted to stay out on the farm so moved back! He worked for a number of ranchers in the area during his younger days, but after marrying Lena Eden in 1938, he moved to the Fairvalley community east of Freedom. There they lived for the next 22 years raising cattle. He participated regularly in area rodeos in the calf roping and wild cow milking contests. He left the ranching life in 1960 and moved into Alva. He later relocated to Colorado before coming back "home". His later years were spent visiting friends and relatives in the Freedom community.

Oscar Hughes—1993

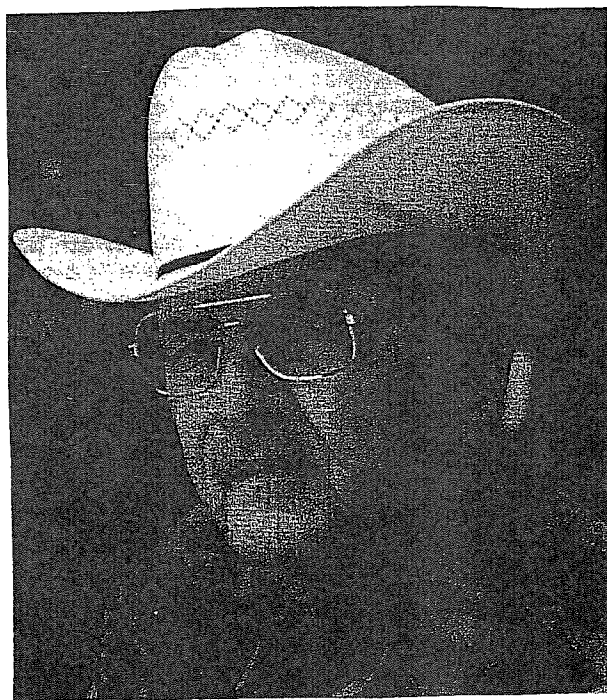
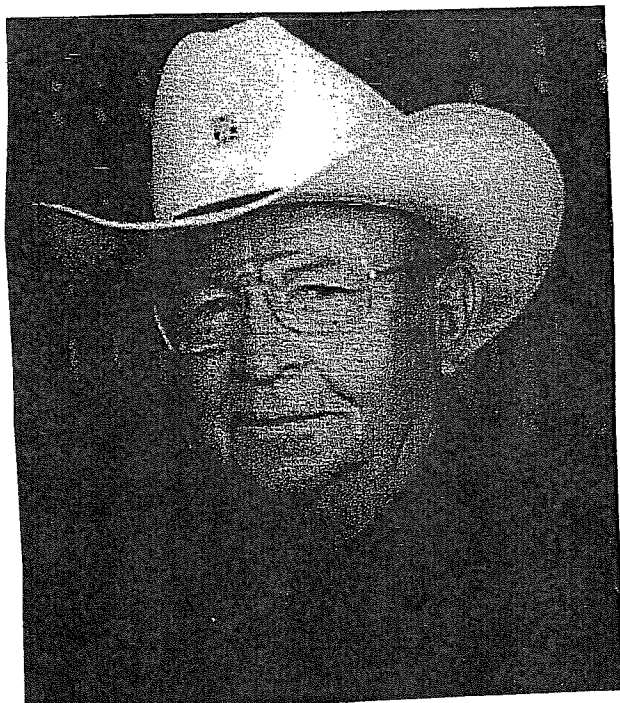
Oscar was born in 1913 to Evart and Nola Walker-Hughes near Yewed, Oklahoma. In 1918, his folks moved the family to a farm southwest of Freedom 7 miles. He married Velma Holloway in 1937 and they soon purchased the home place from his folks. Oscar and Velma had 2 children, Rowena and Boyd. The Hughes purchased a farm in South Dakota and operated it for over 11 years, but never moved from Freedom. Farming and ranching were Oscar's life and he loved to be with his family. Oscar is well known for his efforts at bringing good water to the community and served on the steering committee formed for that purpose—this eventually became the Woodward County Rural Water District #1. He also served for a good many years on the ASCS board and the Woodward Production Credit board. Oscar was an avid supporter of the Freedom FFA and could naturally be counted on to help the "kids" out with their projects. Those who knew him would say that Oscar was a good neighbor to all and a great friend of Freedom.

Thomas (Pod) Welty—1994

Thomas (Pod) Welty as he was known by all was born to Sinah and Nova Welty in 1920 on the home place in Woodward county—just west of Freedom and across the river. He attended school in Freedom and graduated with the class of 1939. Pod helped on the family farm growing up, just as many of his generation did. Pod also helped on the Eden ranch before World War II called him to duty working in the defense plants in Colorado. When he and Ruby returned to Freedom in 1943, he decided to hang up his "rodeo spurs" and put on his "pole climbing spurs"! He went to work for the Alfalfa Electric Cooperative which brought electricity to the rural area around Freedom. Ruby worked right along by his side "manning" the dispatch radio for Alfalfa Electric. Pod and Ruby's home was open to all and many a Freedom youngster would find their way there for fun and fellowship. Pod and Ruby had two children, Lanora Bradt and Eddie Burks. Lanora was the 1959 Freedom Rodeo Queen.

Simpson Walker, Jr.—1995

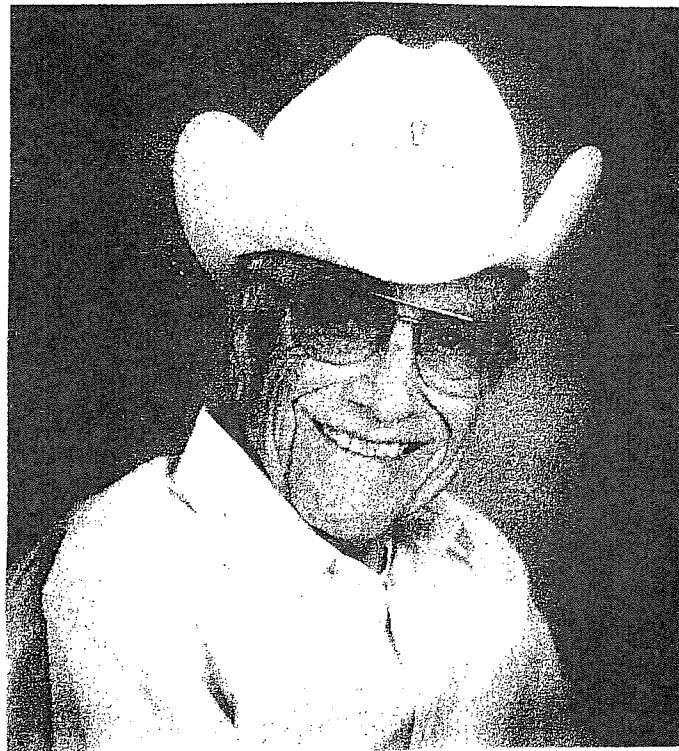
Simpson Walker earned the right to the title “Old Cowhand” by spending his entire life working with the land, cattle, and farming. Simpson was born and grew up 5 miles south of Freedom to Simpson Sr. and Ethel Walker. He attended school in Freedom graduating in 1939. He then went on to Oklahoma A. & M. at Stillwater where he majored in Animal Husbandry. He taught school at Waynoka before being drafted into the army. He married Rosalie Hutchison from Waynoka in 1947 and continued to be involved in farming and ranching near the Belva community. Simpson and Rosalie had four children, Steve, Karen, Tracy and Carol. Carol died in infancy. In 1952, Simpson purchased a grain elevator in Freedom and became involved in the grain, fertilizer, and livestock equipment business. In 1987 he was named the State President of the Oklahoma Grain and Feed Dealers. Simpson sold his elevator business in 1991 and he focused his energies on ranching at that time. Simpson was always a strong supporter of the Freedom community, school and Chamber of Commerce. The annual rodeo was of lifelong import to him. His daughter Karen was the 1963 Freedom Rodeo Queen and granddaughter, Kelli, was the 2004 Freedom Rodeo Queen.



Lewis Kamas—1996

Lewis Kamas was well known to most everyone not only in the Freedom community, but also across the state. Lewis was born in Knowles, Oklahoma, and came with his parents, Frank and Mabel, to Freedom in 1923 before he was two years old. His parents were so impressed by the good nature and helpfulness of the residents that they decided to “plant roots” in the community. Lewis’s parents soon purchased the General Store and operated it

for a number of years while Lewis was growing up. Lewis quickly found ways to “make a dollar” to pay for his FFA projects and began his interest in agriculture. He attended school at Freedom and graduated with the class of 1939. Lewis attended college and he volunteered to serve his country in World War II. He married Darlien Cohlma in 1943. Lewis soon found himself in Europe and was “shot down” over Germany. Lewis was a P.O.W. in Germany for the remainder of the War. Finally, after the War was over, he returned to Freedom in 1945 and he became a partner with his parents on the ranch. In 1955, Lewis and Darlien moved into Freedom. He began a long career of public service as President of the Cimarron Watershed and as a member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives for 22 years. He also was a member of the S.C.S. Board in Woods County and the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. He was always supportive of his home community and loved to be on the ranch. Lewis and Darlien had two children, Leslie and Carol. Les lives in Freedom and Carol was crowned the 1965 Freedom Rodeo Queen.



Orval Lee Darr—1997

Orval Lee was truly a “horse loving cowboy” and spent his entire life working the land and working with horses. Orval moved with his parents to various farms around Freedom eventually moving to the Farry community where he met his wife, Louise. They married in 1948 after Orval served his country during the latter part of World War II. Orval and Louise leased the Richardson place in the Farry community and lived there for 21 years. Their children, Terry, Judy, Janet and Ginger were all reared there. In 1969 Orval went to work for Bob Brass on the Oklahoma ranch north of Lookout. He

worked for the Brass Ranch for the next 20 years. Orval also helped many around the Freedom community through the years and leased the Wilbur Olson place for a period of time. All three of the Darr girls were Freedom Rodeo Queens. Judy in 1964, Janet in 1972, and Ginger in 1977. Orval's granddaughter, Tiffini Darr, was the 2000 Freedom Rodeo Queen. Orval loved the rodeo and helped out with the catch pens for many years. He and Louise had a great life together living the "cowboy way".

Vernie Hackney—1998

In 1903 near Lookout, Vernie Hackney was born to Henry and Lottie Mae Cooper Hackney. After his schooling, Vernie joined the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s sending the majority of his earnings home to help his folks. This experience took him to Arizona, Colorado, California and Wyoming. In 1939, Vernie married Rose Thompson, who was also from the Lookout community. Their daughter Sharon was born in 1940. Vernie served his country during World War II and returned to Freedom in 1946. Through the years, he worked with a number of folks in the Freedom area including Rudy Eden, Boss Parker, Jim Selman and others. Vernie served as the County Commissioner of District II for over 20 years and during his tenure the streets of Freedom were paved. Vernie served as the Freedom Rodeo Chairman for many years and was always willing to help his home community anyway he could. His wife, Rose, passed away in 1967 and Vernie later remarried. He spent his retirement years at his home in Alva, but came out to the ranch nearly every day where his smile and laughter were familiar at the local café during lunch time. Vernie's daughter, Sharon, was the 1967 Freedom Rodeo Queen.

Wesley Nixon—1999

Wesley Nixon is certainly one of the most humble and likeable individuals ever to live and work in Freedom, but in his quiet, reserved manner has been able to "get more things accomplished" than most folks can even dream about. Wesley was born in 1922 southwest of Freedom near Ellendale to Arthur and Lula Mae Plumlee Nixon. He spent his childhood in the West Union community and attended school there before attending Freedom High School where he graduated with the class of 1939. Wesley started working for the Freedom State Bank in 1937. In 1942, his country called and he joined the Air Force. His military service took him to the China-Burma-India Theater for the remainder of World War II. Upon his return to Freedom, Wesley rejoined the bank and soon began his courtship with Maxine Coles. They were married in 1947 and made their home in Freedom. They have four children, Kayle, Sue, Mark, and Julie. His granddaughter, Lori, was the 1999 Freedom Rodeo Queen. Wesley served for many years on the Woods County Excise Board, the Freedom Chamber of Commerce, the Woods County Soil Conservation Board, the Cimarron Cowboys' Association, the American Legion and the Freedom

Museum Board among many other associations. Truly, Freedom and its citizens have been the beneficiaries of his lifelong devotion to his hometown.



Chet Dauphin—2000

Chet Dauphin has a long history with the Freedom Rodeo having been involved as a contestant for much of his adult life. Chet was born in 1916 to Max and Cora Shaw Dauphin 7 miles northwest of Quinlan, Oklahoma. He attended the Enterprise country school northeast of Mooreland. He learned how to rope calves while still a boy at home. The rodeo life was his way of “relaxing”! In 1935, Chet married Evelyn Russell and they had 6 children: Dale, Jerry, Dean, Monte, Lynda, and Mary Lynn. Chet worked with his father on the farm for a time and later went to work on the Eversole Ranch southeast of Freedom near Chimney Rock. In 1942, Chet and Evelyn purchased his folks’ place and leased another ranch. Throughout his life, Chet rarely missed a Freedom Rodeo and he always enjoyed the dances that followed each night’s performance. Chet and Evelyn moved to Mooreland in 1974 where he drove the school bus for over 25 years. Chet continued to attend area rodeos throughout his life and helped many a youngster learn “how to rope” a calf. His grand-daughter, Patricia Dauphin, was crowned the 2008 Freedom Rodeo Queen.

Foy Wardrop—2001

Just west of Camp Houston a few miles one will see the Wardrop place just off Highway 64 nestled along the banks of Sand Creek. Foy Wardrop was born to Jim and Marie Olgevie Wardrop in 1925. He grew up in the Plainview and Lookout communities and moved with his folks to their place 7 miles west of Camp Houston in 1940. Foy graduated from Freedom High School in 1943 where he was active in the FFA program. He spent his boyhood working on the farm and followed in his father's footsteps by purchasing his first set of registered Hereford cows in 1943. His dad, Jim Wardrop, was the 1973 Honored Old Cowhand. It was not long before Foy started courting Nena Olson, who also grew up in the area, and they married in 1947. Foy and Nena have enjoyed many years together and reared their children, Doyle, Connie, Jana, and Jill on the farm. Foy and Nena both have helped out with the Old Cowhand Reunion for most of their adult lives and do not miss a Freedom Rodeo! Good neighbors to all and strangers, to none would aptly describe the Wardrops.



Lynton Gerloff—2002

The Gerloff homestead, located just north of Freedom, was settled by Lynton's grandparents, John and Margaret, in 1893. Lynton was born in 1918 to Henry and Emma Gerloff. However, Lynton's mother passed away when he was only 3 years old and his father never remarried. Outside of the 4 years he

served in the Air Corps during World War II, Lynton spent the majority of his life on the place he was born enjoying the view of the Cimarron River Bluffs every day. Lynton married Claretta Lewis in 1943 and their son, Gary, was born in 1944 while Lynton was stationed in Savannah, Georgia. After the war, Lynton returned to Freedom and began a partnership with his father. Claretta passed away in 1978 at which time Lynton and son, Gary, formed a partnership and began raising race horses at that time. In 1980, he married Bobby Sue Davis. He served his community as County Commissioner for 8 years and was on the Board of the Freedom Farmers Coop, the SCS Board and the Woods County Fair Board. Lynton was an avid supporter of his home community throughout his life and always made it to the Rodeo and Old Cowhand Reunion.

Arlo Darr—2003

Arlo Darr is no stranger to most in the Freedom and Alva communities. He has spent his life working with cattle and horses, but also served the public in his career in law enforcement. Arlo, the eldest of 10 children, was born in 1930 to Otis and Retha Darr. He spent his early life in the Freedom, and always found work to do! As a youngster he helped local ranchers doing “just about whatever needed done”. Upon finishing his schooling, Arlo headed “out west” with his Uncle Fred to California. While in California, Arlo was offered a job by Wilbur May, up near the state-line north of Freedom, so he returned home. He went to work for Simpson Walker, Sr. in 1952. Shortly thereafter, he married his girlfriend, Verlene Stewart (1951 Freedom Rodeo Queen), and they began their life together on the Walker Ranch with Arlo as ranch foreman. In 1969, Arlo joined the Woods County Sheriff’s Office as a Deputy and was later elected Woods County Sheriff. Arlo was then elected City Marshal of Alva and was named Chief of Police, a position he held until his retirement a few years ago. Arlo and Verlene have one daughter, Shelley, and a son, Shawn. Verlene and Arlo reside in Alva, but one can find him in Freedom quite often helping different ranchers and farmers out when they need a “good, experienced cowhand”.

Helen London—2004

The 1939 Freedom Rodeo Queen, Helen London, also earned the title “Honored Old Cowhand”—something no other old cowhand has accomplished to date, but certainly was well deserved on her part! Helen was born to Bunk and Lucy Welty Snapp (Lucy was the 1956 Honored Old Cowhand) in a log cabin 9 miles west of Freedom, and at age 2 Helen moved with her family to the ranch 5 miles east of Freedom on Red Horse Creek. She attended country schools and graduated from Freedom High School in 1930. Helen had to “grow up fast” after the deaths of her father and two brothers left her and her mother with a ranch to manage. The two women rode fences, “caked cattle” and farmed to keep things going. In 1941, Helen married Levi London and they

began their life together on the Snapp place east of Freedom. They were blessed with 2 children, Vilene and Jim, and worked side by side until Levi's death in 1978. Although she was an intensely private person, Helen never missed a Freedom Rodeo and thoroughly enjoyed watching her children and grandchildren participate as well.



Vernon Bliss—2005

Vernon Bliss was born in 1921 just north of Hopeton, Oklahoma, to Roy and Essie Bliss. Just a year later, the family moved to the Lookout community northwest of Freedom where Vernon attended the one-room schoolhouse that remains standing today. He graduated from Freedom High School in 1939. After graduation, times were extremely hard at home and Vernon joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). He worked for two years in various places with the CCC. After marrying his high school sweetheart, Maxine Thompson, they ventured out west to the shipyards in the San Francisco bay area. Shortly thereafter, he was called to military service in the South Pacific. After the war, in 1949, Vernon's folks decided to retire and move into Alva at which time the Bliss family came home to run the ranch. Times were tough in northwest Oklahoma during the 1950s with year after year of drought. Things eventually became better and Maxine and Vernon were able to focus their energy on taking care of "kids and cattle". Together they had three boys, Conn, Dale, and Ronnie and one daughter, Candi. Maxine and Vernon were married for 53

years before she passed away. He later remarried a high school classmate, Denzel Powders. Vernon served for many years on the Freedom Museum Board and was a member of the America Legion.

Edwin (Smiley) Olson—2006

Born in Hardtner, Kansas, in 1927, Smiley Olson spent time with the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict and then decided to work as a cowboy with Z-Bar near Etna, Kansas, after his discharge. However, he decided that "cowboying" did not pay enough to make a living so went back to the U.S. military and joined the Air Force. He met other cowboys while stationed at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City and soon began riding the rodeo circuit. Smiley retired in 1977 and moved back to Alva where he started working for Dr. McKinley on his ranch northwest of Freedom. Smiley met Johnnie Sue Gregory at a dance in Freedom and they soon married. They lived for 13 years out on the McKinley Ranch before retiring again. Johnnie Sue was working at the Cimarron Junction Store and they moved there shortly thereafter. Smiley was always happy to be in the saddle and living the cowboy way.

DeWayne Hodgson—2007

Dewayne Hodgson was born on a farm near the Lookout community in 1930 to Alfred and Mildred Hackney Hodgson. He spent his childhood in the area and attended Freedom schools, graduating in 1948. He was very active in FFA and was elected the State FFA Secretary. Dewayne was awarded the Junior Master Farmer Award and the American Star Farmer Award. DeWayne and Lillian Sievert were married in 1949 and soon purchased his grandparent's place near Lookout. During the tough times of the 1950s, DeWayne and his family moved to Georgia and several other states while he worked as a herdsman for the Callaway Hereford Ranch. In 1964, they returned to northwest Oklahoma and again started ranching. In 1982, DeWayne started working as a cattlebuyer for the NFO and for Hackney Agriculture Associates. Together, DeWayne and Lillian had four children. They are Rocky, Terry, Starla and Dewana. After retiring, DeWayne and Lillian moved to Woodward, but still consider Freedom "home".

Dean Wilson—2008

One of the friendliest persons one could meet in Freedom for many years would have been Dean Wilson. Dean was born in 1932 to Carrie French Wilson and Horace Wilson. When Dean was just 13, his dad passed away and he was left to help his mother and siblings on the farm north of Freedom. He began working to help support the family soon after. In 1951, Dean married Betty Hackney and they went to work for the Kamas Ranch. Not long after, they moved to Protection to work for Betty's brother Lloyd Hackney. Dean and

Betty worked at various ranches north of Freedom until 1961 at which time they rented some ground northeast of Mooreland and started running their own cows. At that time, Darrel Eden came to Dean and asked him to manage the Freedom Propane Company, which he did. In 1964, they moved back to Freedom and continued running the Propane Company. Dean and Betty were the parents of Roann, Randy, Sharil, Carol and Darol. During his life, Dean was involved with the Chamber of Commerce, the rodeo, the town council, and served as mayor for several terms. All three of the girls were crowned Freedom Rodeo Queens (Roann in 1968, Sharil in 1971, and Carol in 1978) and granddaughter, Sabrina Bowers Watson, was also crowned Freedom Rodeo Queen in 2002. Dean and Betty were devoted to each other and their family and were always willing to help out a friend in need.

Phillip Schultz—2009

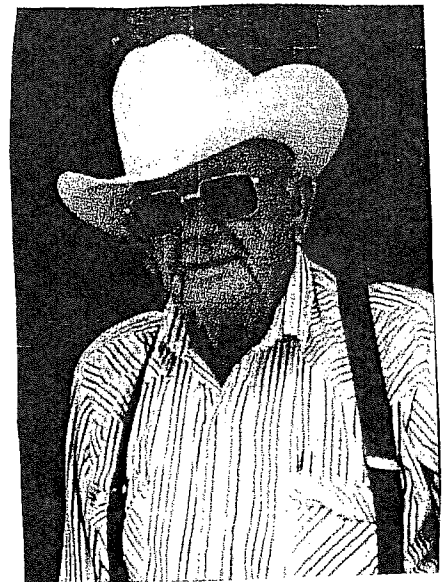
Phillip was raised “way up north” 25 miles northwest of Freedom. He was born in 1933 to Ben and Edith Schultz and learned how to handle cattle from his dad by following him everywhere! His grandfather, Boss Parker, gave him his first bottle calf and Philip owned cattle from that point forward until his retirement. Phillip attended Freedom High School graduating in 1951. He was involved with FFA and married Carol Jo McCammon in 1952. The two set up housekeeping near his folks and began caring for livestock. In 1956, Phillip and Carol Jo leased the Newkirch place northwest of the Lookout school. Then in 1961, they purchased it and began adding to their land with additional purchases through the years. The two worked hard to build up a quality herd of cows and calves. Additionally, Phillip and Carol Jo are the parents of three daughters, Lynette, Kay and JoAnn. The Schultz family has relocated to west of Alva, but will always think of the country northwest of Freedom as their home.

Leon Howland—2010

Leon’s family homesteaded on a farm 20 miles south of Coldwater in 1900. He was born there in 1926, and grew up working closely with his dad. Leon attended Coldwater schools and later school in Freedom. He met Ida Sample and they were married in 1946. In 1948, Leon went to work for the Vincent and Shelite garage in Freedom and three years later he bought the place. Leon and Ida ran the Freedom Motor Company for over 50 years and everyone around knows that Leon can “fix about anything” from toasters to trucks. Leon helped with the Freedom rodeo and the Freedom Fire Department for many years. Ida and Leon had 3 children, Gwenn, Rosalie, and Brian and Leon continues to engage in his favorite pastime, fishing!

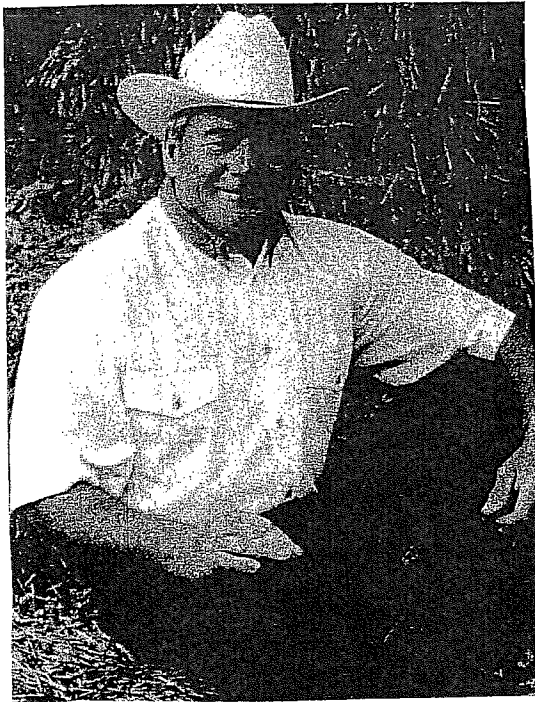
Harold Dean Hepner—2011

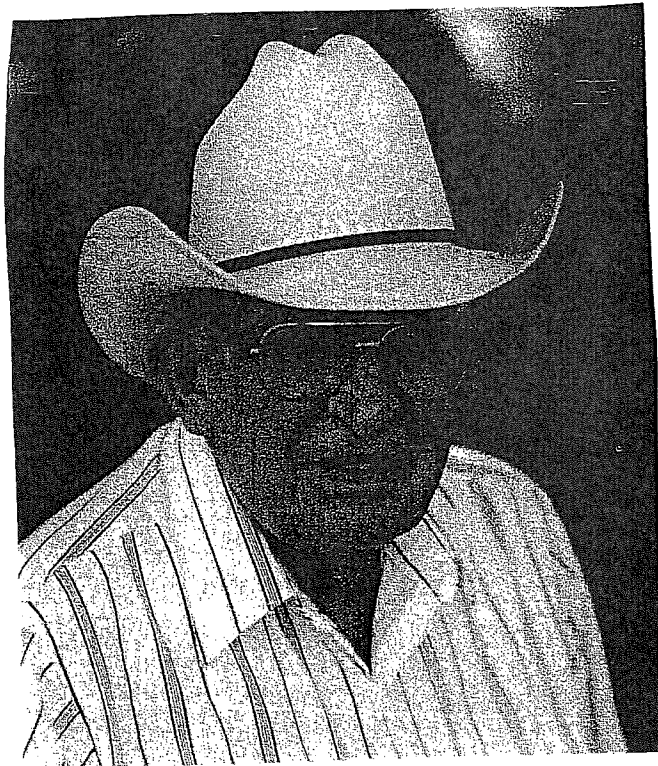
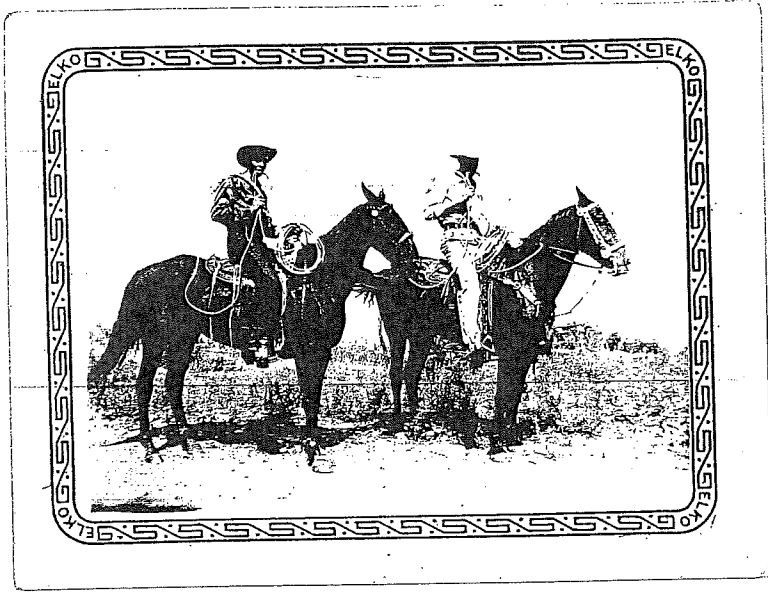
During the “dirty thirties and the heart of the Great Depression” Harold Dean Hepner was born in 1931 to Paul and Reta Hepner. His first home was north of Freedom on land owned by his grandfather, W.V. Pancoast. He learned all about farming and caring for livestock at an early age as he helped on the family farm milking cows and plowing the ground with a team of horses. Harold Dean graduated from Freedom High School and soon was drafted into the U.S. Army. Before he left, he and Jeanne Gibson married in 1951. Harold Dean and Jeanne moved to South Dakota for a short time during the drought of the 1950s, but soon returned home to Freedom. Jeanne went back to college and then taught at Freedom elementary for 22 years. They have been lifelong members of the Freedom Methodist Church and have been very active in the Chamber of Commerce through the years. The Hepners have 2 children, Lyndon and Sharon. Sharon was the 1974 Freedom Rodeo Queen, and his granddaughter, Kristin, was the 2003 Freedom Rodeo Queen. Harold Dean’s dad was the 1985 Honored Old Cowhand, which just goes to show that this Freedom tradition runs heavily in his family.

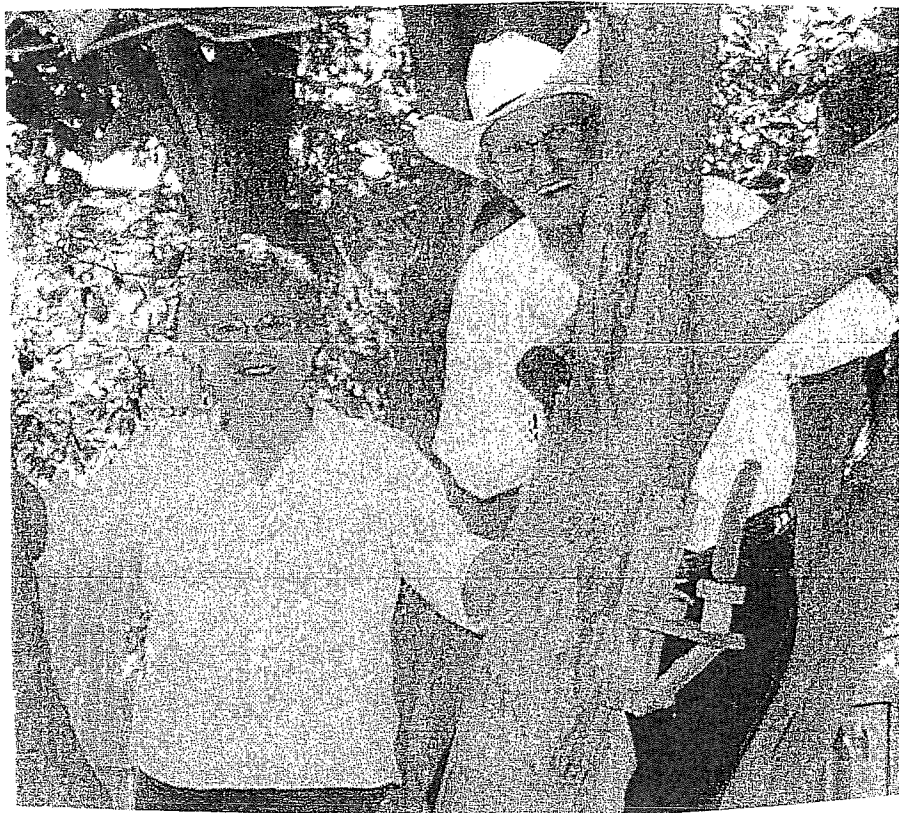


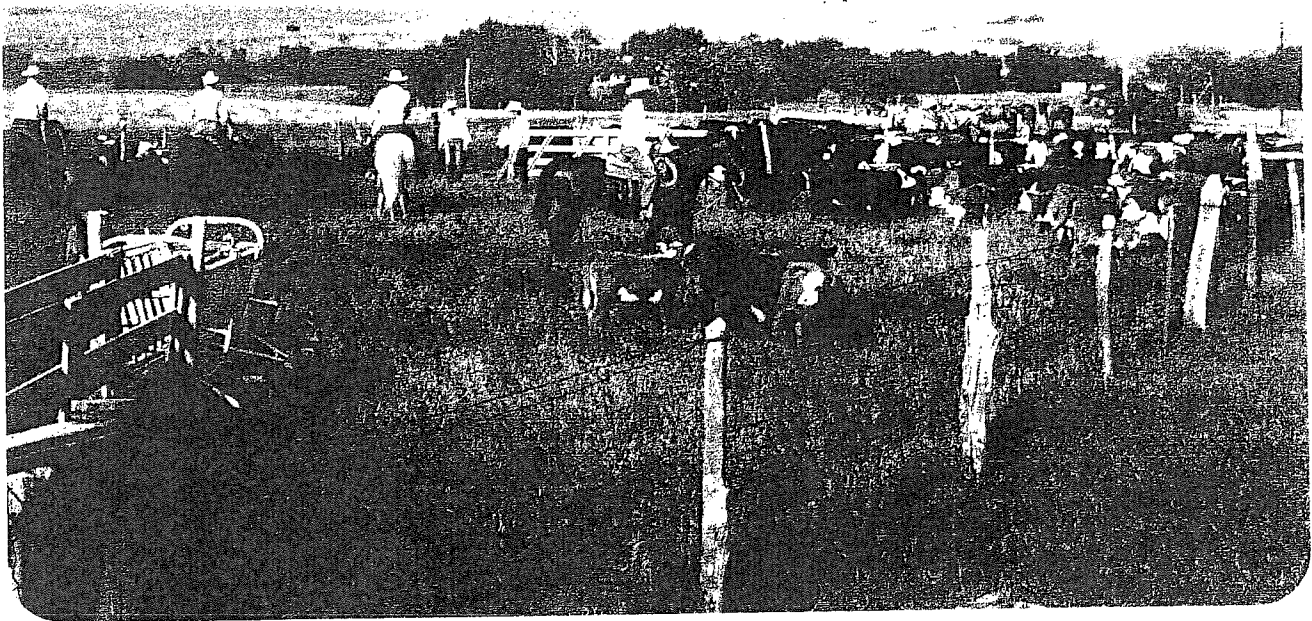
Elmer Maddux—2012

Elmer was born in 1934 to Oren and Norma Maddux on a farm south of Freedom. Like many of his generation, he spent his childhood working on the family farm, learning how to milk cows, feed chickens, and plow the ground. He was active in the 4-H and FFA programs while in school and earned his Junior Master Farmer Degree. Elmer married Rita Jo Hepner in 1955 and they moved to Pueblo, Colorado, so that Elmer could work in the flour mill there. They soon moved back to Freedom and helped Rita Jo's dad, Jess Hepner, on his place. They bought a place north of Mooreland and began building their cow herd and home. Elmer served 2 years as a Woodward County Commissioner, and for 16 years in the Oklahoma House of Representatives. Since his retirement, he continues to farm and provide service to civic organizations. Elmer and Rita Jo had 3 children, Ronnie Bambi, Nancy, and Dallett. Elmer is proud to be involved in farming and ranching and marvels at how things have changed since he was a boy on the farm south of Freedom. Visitors to the Maddux place will surely be entertained seeing the hundreds of antique farm implements that he has brought together over the years!

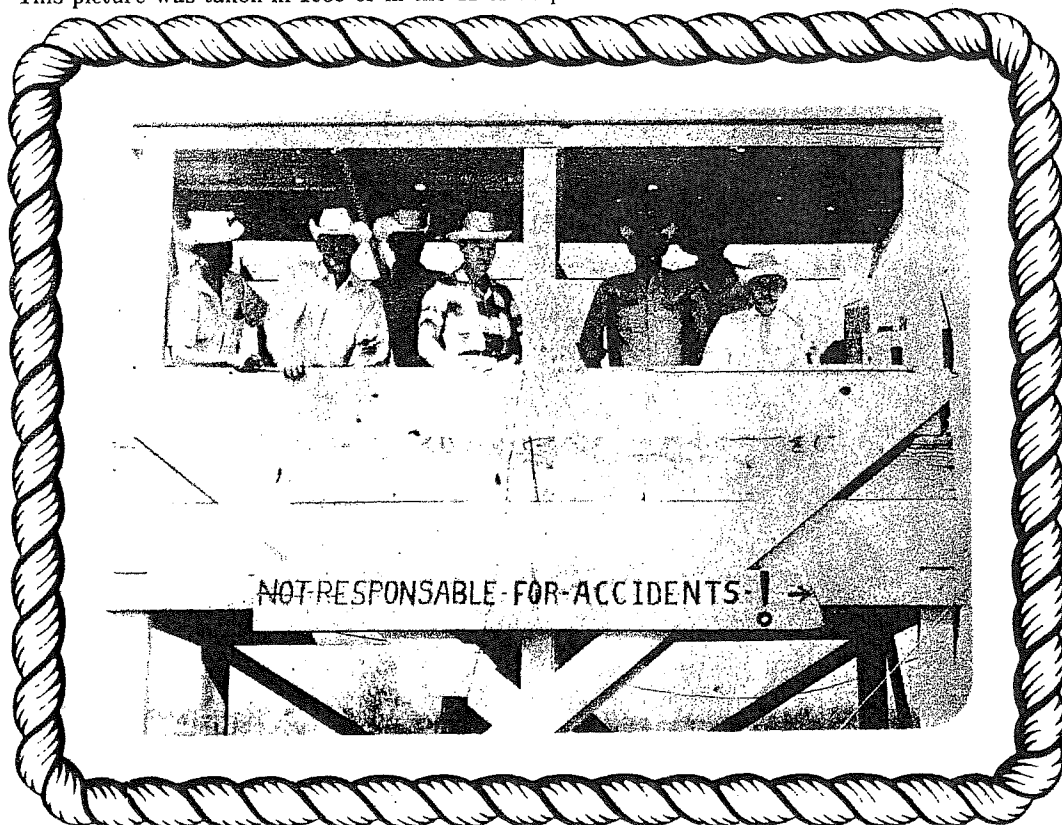








From left to right: Lewis Kamas, Wilbur May, Meredith Blevins, Wesley Nixon, George Godfrey (furnished stock for Rodeo) Lloyd Rockhold, and Bill Cunningham, Announcer from Enid, Oklahoma. This picture was taken in 1939 or in the 41 or 42 period.



Looking To The Future

The Freedom Rodeo and Cimarron Cowboys' Association undoubtedly will continue for generations to come. The hard and fast traditions associated with this region of the country have been instilled in the younger members of the community and these are not likely to be forgotten. Our heritage is the key to how we live and work today, and serves as a "backbone" of our values and beliefs. Nonetheless, the ways in which we work and communicate are certainly different today than 75 years ago.

Today, four wheel drive pickups and ATVs are used frequently to feed, count, and gather cattle. Wind energy is moving into the region, and solar panels are replacing windmills in many pastures in the area. The cattle market can be tracked on the internet as well as at the sale barn. Also, the oil and gas industry has developed new methods of exploration and production which has created an economic "boon" for many landowners in the area. No longer do we need to rely on "party-line phones" and the postal service to communicate! As a result of cell towers and smart phones, we are able to "stay in touch" with little problem. However, we also realize that there are many constants that are beyond the control of the individual in the farming and ranching business.

Despite the innovations that we use in our daily lives, Northwest Oklahoma farmers and ranchers, for the past few years, have experienced a drought that rivals the "Dirty Thirties" and the "Tough 1950s". Much of the feed hay must be trucked in from out of state, and many wells are drying up. Those who first came to this region knew that the weather was something that could not be "controlled", and the wise ones among us know to "plan for the worst and hope for the best". The lessons of the past have taught many to think and look beyond the present hardships however. Times will get better—they always do, and we will be stronger from experiencing the difficulties presented to us.

We hope that this short history will serve future generations well as a means of understanding the importance of "how we came to be" in northwest Oklahoma. We know that all of us are blessed by our way of life out here in cattle country. Finally, and most importantly we wish to express our gratitude to all those who have worked together to "put on" one of Oklahoma's "best events" each year and for sharing of their time and resources so others can enjoy "that which makes us—us"!

Freedom, Oklahoma, "Queen City of the Cimarron"

References

Cable, J. (no date given). *The Birth of Freedom: How a Town Came To Be*. No publisher or place of publication given.

Dale, E.E. & Aldrich, G. (1978). *History of Oklahoma (4th ed.)*. Thompson Book Company: Edmond, Oklahoma.

Records, L.S. (1995). *Cherokee Outlet Cowboy*. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, Oklahoma.

Zwink, T. & Reichenberger, D. (1986). *Ranchlands to Railroads*. Alva, Oklahoma, Centennial Commission.

Area Map

