

INTERVIEW

Pickrell: "Harry, you told me you were born in Ohio. Is that right?"

Harry: "Columbus, Ohio, 1874."

Pickrell: "When you got older you came to California?"

Harry: "1884. March 10th."

Pickrell: "How did you happen to get into the cattle business?"

Harry: "I was in the First National Bank in Los Angeles in 1893 when they had a run on the bank. It closed. I interviewed one of our solvent customers, Walter Vail, to see if I could get a job with him anywhere - doing anything. He asked me what I knew about horses."

"I said, 'I've had a horse ever since I was five years old. I know how to ride one but that's about all.'"

"He said, 'We're gathering cattle on Catalina Island.

We're going to take them off because they are starving to death

over there. We'll try you out over there. See if you can help the boys gather them. We're going to bring them to the Mainland and ship them to Kansas; put them on feed up there and try to get them fleshy enough so we can sell them.'"

"And that was my first job with Vail & Gates in April of 1893."

Pickrell: "When did you come to Arizona?"

Harry: "We brought these cattle over to the Mainland via San Pedro by barge. Then moved them to the Centinela Ranch owned by Daniel Freeman and located back of Redondo. There we fed a little hay and some cornstalks and got them strong enough so they would get them loaded. We loaded them up on the Santa Fe, that little station right out of Redondo by the name of Wisburn, and shipped them back to Strong City, Kansas."

"After that job was through with we came back to Centinela Ranch where we had been holding these cattle and feeding them prior to shipment. We saw that they were fed up and shod up the old horses that had been used in the Catalina roundup - some forty head."

"Mr. Vail came down one afternoon and told Ben McCullough, a Texan that was with me at that time, and I to get ready and drive the horses over to Beaumont. He was bringing some cattle down from the Warner Ranch to ship to the Empire. Some bulls and cows. He wanted us to get there the following morning. It was a ninety mile ride and I told him so."

"He said, 'Do you know the way?'"



"I said, 'Yes, I know the way to Beaumont.'"

"Of course Ben didn't know. He was a Texan. We left early that morning about daylight and went on to the Chino Ranch. We went right through the town of Whittier. At that time Whittier only had about three houses and there we met Billy Conley. I don't know whether you know him or not."

Pickrell: "He was a cattle buyer later?"

Harry: "Yes. He was working on the Chino Ranch which Richard Gerd owned."

Pickrell: "Was Bill Conley the foreman?"

Harry: "He was just a cowboy. The foreman's name was Manuel Baca."

Pickrell: "Was that Richard Gerd the same fellow which used to be in Tombstone?"

Harry: "Yes. He was the same Richard Gerd. We had our dinner there and left by moonlight. We got in Beaumont the next morning at ten o'clock. The longest ride I ever made in my life."

Pickrell: "What was the approximate number of hours it took?"

Harry: "28 hours."

Pickrell: "Since that day have you never ridden any farther than that in that length of time?"

Harry: "Never made a longer ride than that in my life and I never want to. I had all the ride I wanted. Mr. Vail was there. We loaded the cattle. We were loaded in the caboose and slept all the way through."

Pickrell: "You brought the horses, too?"

Harry: "We brought the horses."

Pickrell: "Did the Empire Ranch have lots of horses in those days?"

Harry: "Yes. These were the remnants. There was nobody that wanted them at all. They were rather shelly and old horses."

Pickrell: "You unloaded out there at Vail?"

Harry: "I unloaded at Pantano. Pantano was our shipping point. We drove the horses and the cattle, some four carloads of cattle, on up to the Empire that night. It was Dia San Juan which is the famous Rain Day in Arizona, 24th of June."

Pickrell: "How big was the Empire Outfit then, Harry?"

Harry: "The Empire Outfit then was branding about 10,000 calves a year. I presume they must have run about 30,000 head of cattle."

"The northern part was in Happy Valley. The eastern end was in the Whetstone Mountains at Leon Conyers Ranch and extended on down to the head of the Babocomari. Then, it extended on southerly to the top of the Canellos Mountains, south of Sonoita; then on westerly again to contact Richardson's Pennsylvania Ranch later called the Crittendon Land & Cattle Company. I think it's now owned by Lew Douglas. Then back on the line of the Santa Ritas to Greaterville; from Greaterville on down to Andrades and down to Davidson Canyon. Andrades had a small bunch of cattle at that point. He always threw in with us and there was never any disagreement on the range. Vail Station, which was named for Walter Vail, at that time was called "Punta de Agua." There wasn't anybody in there then."



Pickrell: "They have a beautiful little Catholic church there now."

Harry: "That's where the water of the Cienega disappeared into the sands then back up again to the Rillito; to the Rincon Mountains and around the base of the Rincons to Happy Valley. Then, to the northerly part of the Whetstone Mountains which was near the original Mescal station. That was the extent of the range then. I presume there must have been a little over a million and a half acres."

Pickrell: "About how many cowboys did they work year around?"

Harry: "Oh, they ran about ten with twenty on the spring and fall roundup. During the rodeo season there were more. They had scattered camps. There was a camp in Happy Valley. The men from those camps worked with the rodeo."

Pickrell: "How many men would be working with your wagon in the rodeo?"

Harry: "About fifty."

Pickrell: "What size remuda would they have?"

Harry: "About a hundred horses."

Pickrell: "Who was the Range Boss of the Empire when you came there?"

Harry: "Tom Turner."

Pickrell: "When did he start working for Vail?"

Harry: "Tom Turner must have started with Vail about 1884. He was there two years prior to the partnership of Vail & Gates which was formed in 1886."

Pickrell: "He didn't take dallies."

Harry: "Tom? He did. He was as good as any Mexican around the place. Whether Mr. Vail insisted on his riding a center-fire and taking dallies, I don't know. You see the ranch was all Mexican cowboys. Tom and myself (after a time this old Ben McCullough came along) were the only white men there."

Pickrell: "Did they always have Chinese cooks?"

Harry: "Always Chinese. Except the camp cook."

Pickrell: "What about the wagon?"

Harry: "The wagon cook was a Mexican. Alcario Moreno."

Pickrell: "He always had plenty of chili-con-carne for you?"

Harry: "Yes. Jerky and beans in the summertime. Fresh meat and beans in the winter time."

Pickrell: "You ate lots of dried fruit and things like that?"

Harry: "Not lots of dried fruit. Dried fruit was a delicacy. We'd have dried apples or prunes maybe once a week. Maybe twice a week."

Pickrell: "Did you have any canned tomatoes?"

Harry: "That was another delicacy. Yes we'd have them."

Pickrell: "You had lots of beef?"

Harry: "Plenty of beef. As I said before, 'jerky in the summertime and fresh meat in the winter."

Pickrell: "I wish I had some of that jerky now. It's kind of hard to get."

Harry: "Yeah. That kind of jerky."

Pickrell: "The Empire raised their own horses in those days?"



Harry: "They raised their own horses."

Pickrell: "Good ones?"

Harry: "You know. Mixed. They weren't too good. Mr. Vail brought in some stallions from the Chino Ranch in California."

Pickrell: "Were they thoroughbreds or standard-bred?"

Harry: "No. He used some Hamiltonians. Stocky. Because these mares were light."

Pickrell: "Spanish type?"

Harry: "Spanish type mare. They were plenty mean."

Pickrell: "Who were some of your cowboys back in those days?"

Harry: "You mean the Mexicans?"

Pickrell: "Yes."

Harry: "I couldn't tell you. Blas Lopez."

Pickrell: "He eventually became boss, didn't he?"

Harry: "He became boss there. I couldn't remember the names to save-my-soul at this time."

Pickrell: "Was Fred Bennett running the wagon for the Boquillas when you were there?"

Harry: "No. Pink Murrey was running the wagon for the Boquillas."

Pickrell: "Was that after Fred's day?"

Harry: "I don't remember. Boquillas in the late 90's was managed by Henry Street, or Little Foot as we called him. This ranch was part of the Kern County Land & Cattle Company, H. A. Jastro, Manager."

Pickrell: "The Rail X was one of Vail's outfits, wasn't it?"

Harry: "That was Vail & Ashburn. Oscar Ashburn ran the outfit. I think it was called the Whetstone Land & Cattle Company at Benson."

It was located just below Benson and St. David on the San Pedro."

Pickrell: "His family drowned, didn't they? Some of his family drown?"

Harry: "I think so. I don't know. Mr. Vail finally got him to sell out that outfit in which Vail & Gates had a half-ownership and come down and buy from R. R. Richardson the Pennsylvania Ranch which later became the Rail X."

Pickrell: "It lies in a beautiful piece of country."

Harry: "Later Vail & Gates bought that from Oscar. I think Oscar died."

Pickrell: "Recently I was talking with his step-son, Glen Perry, who lives in Yavapai County."

Harry: "Yes. He was there as a boy."

Pickrell: "Who were your principal neighbors on the west?"

Harry: "Lander Young up in Gardner's Canyon and his father-in-law, Old Man Gardner - Tom Gardner. Edward L. Vail, Walter Vail's brother over at Rosemont who ran the V. R. and George Schofield who was later an inspector here in Tucson."

Pickrell: "I guess his son was the one that was a Ranger. I knew him. You didn't have any other neighbors on the Tucson side of your ranch?"

Harry: "There wasn't anybody."

Pickrell: "You didn't have any close neighbors until you got to the San Pedro and then over?"

Harry: "No. The Whetstones were the dividing line between our outfit and the San Pedro. They always adopted these mountain



ranges as dividing lines, you know."

Pickrell: "What was the largest outfit over the other side of the Whetstones?"

Harry: "The Wagon Roads was the largest at that time. That's the Jastro outfit."

Pickrell: "It was known in those days as the Wagon Rods?"

Harry: "It was known as the Wagon Rods. If you went south up the San Pedro (I want to say down but it should be up. I say down here at the Santa Cruz and I should always say up) you ran into three or four small outfits which later Greene bought out. There was the Babocomari between Elgin and Fairbanks."

Pickrell: "Who had the Babocomari in those days? Colonel Green? That was before Perrin got it, wasn't it?"

Harry: "Perrin had it but he had it leased out. Tom Turner later acquired a piece of it. He rented the upper piece near Elgin. This was after he left the Empire."

Pickrell: "For years the Vails had a pasture which was cut out of that Babocomari. They called it the Heart Pasture or something like that. I think Frank Brophy has it back now. He bought it from the Boice boys."

Harry: "I think that was a piece that Tom acquired after he left Mr. Vail. Later, Mr. Vail bought it from Tom."

Pickrell: "Was Tom working for Mr. Vail when he got to be sheriff of Santa Cruz County?"

Harry: "No. He didn't make a success of this small ranch there at Elgin at all. He had a partner."

Pickrell: "He had a partner? Who was it?"

Harry: "I don't know."

Pickrell: "John Barleycorn?"

Harry: "Yes. Very famous partner. They got him into politics. He was elected sheriff of Santa Cruz County."

Pickrell: "How long was he sheriff? How many terms?"

Harry: "Two years I believe. I don't think he lasted over two years."

Pickrell: "He worked for the Greenes at one time?"

Harry: "He worked for the Greenes. They had him down there but John Barleycorn interfered again."

Pickrell: "Just couldn't cast his partner aside?"

Harry: "No. He couldn't leave it alone."

Pickrell: "What year was it they drove those cattle to California?"

Harry: "That was in 1886. It was Tom's first big job."

Pickrell: "Drove them all the way from the Empire Ranch to San Diego?"

Harry: "Not to San Diego. From the Empire Ranch down to Pantano; followed the Cienega to where it joins the Rillito; down the Rillito where the Rillito joins the Santa Cruz; down the Santa Cruz to where the Santa Cruz joins the San Pedro; down the San Pedro where it joins the Gila; down the Gila to where it joins the Colorado; down the Colorado to where Pilot Knob is now located. That was the old ford for the stages. It had a rocky bottom down in there."

"That was the only available ford in the Colorado. There