

## Socorro County Historical Society, Oral History Tapes

Bill McCarty interviewed by Gladys Long

*Bill McCarty is a native New Mexican who was born in Reserve 77 years ago. Can you tell us something about Reserve?* It's just a Spanish settlement, and they got their mail just once a month. It came from Alma when they did get it about once a month - 35 miles south of Reserve. *Is that town still around?* It's practically a ghost town. *On the main highway between?* --Reserve and Silver City. My father came in 1882 with the John B. Slaughter trail herd and he stayed there the rest of his life. His age at the time was nineteen - he was nineteen years old. He spent his lifetime there- he went first into the mercantile business and then he went into the livestock business. The business he spent his life in. *Did he start with a store or did he - I thought you said he came from Texas.* My grandfather, that's my mother's father, organized this store. They organized it in eighteen and eighty seven. And then in eighteen and eighty eight my father did the framing then that was the winter of the big blizzard over the whole country - 1888. The blizzard of '88 they called it, and he waited (waded?) for 120 days from Magdalena to the Patterson place. *Where is the Patterson place?* The Patterson Lake? Well it's about ten miles below Horse Springs on the road going to Beaverhead or maybe Mogollon. *Is it more of a path?* Oh, it was just a path, but he was able to rent a house there to store his groceries in until the wagons would pick it up and take it to my grandfather's store in Frisco. He waited that winter, and then in 1889 my father married Edna Jones which was my father's partner in the mercantile business. They went into the livestock business which they stayed in all their lives. Then my father sent me when I was about fifteen or sixteen and then I stayed in the livestock business until I was getting along in years and we moved here to Socorro. That was in nineteen and thirty eight. I was really born in old Socorro County but when in nineteen and twenty four Catron County was divided off and Reserve was made the County Seat. Prior to that time the name, Frisco, had been changed to Reserve. In the early years it was known as Frisco, but why it was named Frisco, it was located on the San Francisco River. *How did your mother happen to come to Reserve in the first place?* Well, her folks were going to the State of Washington from Texas, and they got to Frisco and the stopped off there and never did leave. *The mercantile business?* Well my father left it in eighteen and eighty nine, that's when he got married. As I was sayin' when he was with Slaughter that was Indian times there. He had his bed burned up by Indians and they destroyed his house and things. *How were those raids - did you have any advance notice?* No, even though the Indians were out and Slaughter's foreman was staying at this cabin and they got close to it and they smelled smoke and they got up close to it and in the meantime they noticed some rawhide moccasins just by the river and that had come off the horses' feet. They looked in there and his bed was out in the middle of the floor burning and they looked around an - well that's the Indians. They immediately left and went to a settlement they called Dog (--). *How far was that that they had to go to be safe?* About four miles. When they were gone in this party was sixteen warriors - sixteen warriors had been there and set the bed on fire and destroyed all the stuff they had. Then the Indians stayed around in that country for about a year. *And did you say these were Sioux Indians?* No, they were Apaches. *Who was Victorio?* He was Apache too. *Was he a chief?* Yes, he was a chief, he had passed through in eighteen and eighty two. *I kind of want you to tell more about Victorio and the Apaches and how close they were to you that they could come and raid like this.* Well, they hadn't been gone but a short time and they had climbed out on the mountain by the time my father and the foreman - they come in one way and the Indians had crossed another and just stopped there and destroyed this camp. And that was Geronimo. But Victorio was in 1882 and there was more people killed and damage done to that section controlled at that time mostly by sheep men and a lot of sheep herders. They did destroy several houses - that is what was known as the (Spur Nights?) *Why would they go after the sheep herders? Did they want the sheep? Or was this just one way of getting rid of the population?* It was just one way, that's right, they had nothin' against them and then the soldiers came out to that country. They were under the command of General Nelson ---Nelson ---. Well, when my father came out there that was in 1885. *Was he sort of like a Governor, then? Would this have been New Mexico Territory?* It was Territory but it wasn't rid of the Indians until about 1912. He was in the regular army. *What were they doing there?* Fighting the Indians - they was chasin' the Indians and there was quite a few soldiers killed all around. On an ambush on what they call Soldier Hill there, the Indians slipped up on them and they killed 18 warriors. Well, I was going to tell you Victorio was ahead of my father he wasn't in that and then when Geronimo went through and what I was going to say to you - at that time the Cooney Mines was working then. That was gold mines

south of Frisco. They called him Captain Cooney, but Cooney, he heard that the Indians were out and he wanted to get to his camp. The Indians ambushed and killed him and you can see - it's really worth looking at - the big rock that he was buried in. This is in Cooney south of Reserve. *About how far? Was it between Reserve and Cliff off of the hard top? Is there any kind of marker you would know if you were driving this way?* Well, you would go to Alma and go right up to Whitewater and you can see a big round rock and he's in that rock. The miners shot it out and put his body back in that rock and filled it up. *With dynamite?* Dynamite - it's well preserved. *Did they fill it with concrete?* Yes, ma'am. *And is there a marker on it?* Yes. *Do you remember how it reads?* No I don't. That country was settled first - my father went there with the Slaughter herd and then the English companies came in, and -- *Do you mind if I backtrack a little bit that your father had already been working in Texas?* Sure, he was working for Slaughter in Texas a long time before he came out. *Did they come across the plains like a cattle drive?* Yes, close to 3000 head. You could call it 3000. *Did they lose any along the way?* Yes they did, they sure did. They made one drive of ninety miles without water and they lost 300 head of cattle. They was informed the lake was full of water, and when they got there, that lake was dry and they had to go fifty miles farther for water. They lost 300 head. *Well, how about the men, did they bring their families with them?* They were all young men and Mr. Slaughter didn't keep all of them. There were twelve and nine went back to Texas and two stayed. They were just young men, so they stayed there. So my father told me they had been in Fort Lewis and Dodge City --- *Where did they start out from?* Post, Texas - four months and four days. *What time of year was it?* They started on the first day of May and got out to Frisco on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September - four months and four days. *Did they have to build their own shelters?* Yes, they called them line camps - I've been in the line camps myself. *How are they?* Well they're just a log room and you had a little fireplace in it, a dirt floor, and then you cooked in that and had corrals for the horses. We had shelter and a dirt roof over it. *Did you do your own building with your own adobe?* We didn't have 'dobes, they was log houses, but the fireplaces was made out of rock. *Were they held together with mud?* No, you notched 'em and in the cracks you put chinkin'. You drove that into the cracks in the logs and then you used mud for plaster. You'd make a door - you hewed that out of the logs and you managed some way - now that's in my time. You had a bedstead - you made that yourself and you'd put pine needles on top. *We camped out at Red Canyon and we were lying on the ground and that was the softest ground - the pine needles kind of softened it up and it was really comfortable.* Of course, I was with the trail herd many years. You know at that time Magdalena was the biggest shipping point in the entire southwest. For cattle, and sheep too, thousands of sheep was shipped out of there too. Every year, trainload after trainload. *Can you remember the name of some of the ranchers? Could you mention them by name because I think people are going to hear this many years from now.* Well, the biggest owners was the SU Cattle Company and Stevens, Upshaw and Burns owned it I believe they owned about 30,000 cattle. The other one was the WS and was owned by Williams. *Did you ever hear of the WS outfit up north here? I feel as though I ought to.* It's been advertised for sale for over 26 million dollars. Well, their holdings was down there where I was telling you, and I was old they shipped out 24,000 head. Then the next big outfit was the (--) Land and Cattle Company that was in there. And then it was Hearst, Black and Wiley - they owned several thousand cattle and the Spurs, a big outfit from Texas that was just west of there. *When your father came out, would you say there was kind of a general migration of people finding that there was more range land in this country? You were telling me about your mother and father being the first Anglos to get married out there. Who populated this area before?* The Spanish and I think the first Spanish people that went into that country were La Joya people. They went out there and settled that country first. Afterwards, if I'm not mistaken, have you heard of Val Verde? *But that was really in the early 1880's when the Anglos started coming from New Mexico and Kansas and Oklahoma. There were just a few Indians living out here too.* No, they came out from the reservation in Arizona. *Well, why did they want to come out there?* They were going on the warpath. Now I've been thinking of (---). *Now by (---) you mean Youngblood.* That's right. *What was her(Irma) name before she was married?* Well, she was a Jones - see, my mother and her father were brother and sister. We're first cousins. I was going to tell you about this outlaw Apache, we called him the Apache Kid, that he shot stock. The country had settled up. He was able to stay in the mountains for two or three years, but he was eventually killed near Chloride. Chloride is about 20 miles off from Truth or Consequences. He was just an outlaw is what he was. *Do they know how he was killed?* No. I think he was also suspected of shooting some people. That settled it all as far as the Indians was concerned. *Well, what was Geronimo trying to do over there?* He came out from the reservation and he had 60 warriors, then he divided them up into smaller groups then he down into the Cooney district where they were mining and he killed several miners. They were ambushed - any number of people. Then the

settlers and the soldiers, they came in too, they chased him until he went into old Mexico until he came back out, and I'm sure that he surrendered. As well as I remember they put him in custody. I believe It was in Florida for a while and then back to Oklahoma. *Who took care of the law enforcement? Did you get citizens together? How did you handle things* Well, they more or less taken it into their own hands because there wasn't no other way because there wasn't any law out there. Elfego Baca had the troubles out there. At that time they had men out there watching for trouble - it might just be Indians coming in from Texas. You know Fisher? Well he was out there and Rowe, a man named Rowe. When they had that thing with Elfego Baca it was a man named Old Tom, he was Slaughter's foreman. There was cowboys running around and shooting up the town. Elfego was trying to quiet them down. They weren't trying to shoot him, they were just shooting. Young Tom's horse fell and killed him so they took his body and moved it and put it in the back of the saloon and that's where they were when Elfego came in. They couldn't understand a word that was said so they shot and Elfego went out of the house and then Elfego shot and killed a man named Curran. By that time Fisher and Rowe were there. *Did they represent the Governor of the Territory?* No, they were appointed by the sheriff of Socorro County. He sent them out there - they were deputies. Elfego Baca was electioneering. That was in 1884 and he was out there campaigning and he thought he would stop this trouble. Elfego Baca never did stand trial for it. He got a change of venue from Socorro to Bernalillo County and was never called to trial.

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