

## [R. L. Burns]

1

FOLKSTUFF-RANGE LORE

Gauthier, Sheldon F.

Rangelore.

Tarrant Co., Dist., #7

Page #1

FC 240 [63?]

R.L. Burns, 70, living at 3808 Race St, Fort Worth, Texas, was born at Paris Lamar County, Texas February 28th, 1867.

After the death of his father in 1878, the family moved to Brown County and the following year Burns became employed by Howard and Wooten as a sheep herder. Two years later he went to Tom Green County, Texas and there he worked on the Boatwright sheep ranch.

Boatwright sold the sheep and bought cows in 1883. Burns continued to work for Boatwright as a cowhand.

Burns returned to Paris, in 1885 and engaged in farming and trading in cattle, acting as a buyer for the Daggett Brothers of Fort Worth.

He married Mary Crowley, in 1894. One child was born to the couple. His wife died in 1915.

## Library of Congress

His life's story follows:

"I [am?] an exsheepherder, cowhand, farmer, cattle buyer and am now retired. It will not be long until I am an ex-retired man. I am now past 70. I was born in Paris, Lamar County, Texas, February 28th, 1867. Therefore, I am living in my 71st, year.

"My father died when I was nine years old, that was in 1879. The following year mother moved to Brown County, Texas.

"Due to father's death, it was necessary for me to go working and in 1879 I secured a job with the Howard and Wooten sheep outfit. I worked for them two years, after that I went to Tom Green County, and started work with the Boatwright sheep outfit. C12- Texas

"The Boatwright outfit had, about 18 thousand sheep. They were divided into flocks of 15 to 200 hundred, each were under the care of one herder. Sometimes two herder would work together. The herds were kept out on the range and the herder's 2 [?]

work was keeping the sheep from straying and on the proper range for grazing, also, protecting the sheep from wolves and [panthers?].

"During the day the animals would graze, then at night they were returned to the bedding ground. The bedding ground was a spot where some protection from the elements was provided, such as a spot behind a bluff, in a ravine, or a cluster of timber.

"The life of a sheep herder is a solitary one. For weeks and weeks, we would not see another human, except the chuck wagon driver, that occasionally delivered supplies. Of course, if one worked with another herder one had him for a companion. If the herder was an agreeable fellow, it was an advantage, but if he was [otherwise?], a partner was worse than no company.

## Library of Congress

“We herders always had one companion, and I particular, that was agreeable, kind, faithful and dependable. That companion was our shepherd dog.

My dog Jettie, was the pup of Big Nigger. Big Nigger belong to Boatwright and was imported from Kentucky and was from a pure line imported from England. Each of them dogs could do [anything?], with cattle, but talk and to some extent were able to do that. When herding sheep is being considered, Jettie could do more than I, or any other person.

“I shall tell of a few things that Jettie could be depended upon to do. What I say of Jettie is true of Big Nigger, her father.

“While sheep are grazing they will keep moving and sometimes 3 will wander too far, or in a direction the herder does not want the herd to go. When I wanted to turn the herd in another direction, [than?] the way they were going, all I had to do was to take my hat in my hand and wave it, back and forth, over my head. Jettie would immediately go to the head of the [?] begin working to turn [? ?] long as I kept my hat waving she would continue working and for the direction I wanted the flock to be turned, I would swing my hat in that direction. When she had the flock at the proper position and I wanted her to stop I would swing my down. Yes, she would have made a fair railroad worker.

“It is necessary to switch sheep from one grazing ground to another, in order that the grass may replace itself. In so doing I had a creek to ford. Now, everyone that know sheep understands that sheep will not go into water without force. Also, that sheep will follow the bellwether. To cross that creek, without Jettie as my helper, would have been impossible. A man could not get the job done, because the sheep would/ turn from the water and start back on him. To cross that creek, we would bunch the sheep at the bank, when that was done I would say: “Put them across, Jettie”. She would then jump on the backs of the sheep at the front and bark, running back and forth, That act would scare the leaders and to get away from Jettie they would go into the water and on across. She would keep

## Library of Congress

up that work until the leaders were to the opposite bank. Of course, the remainder would follow, as is the sheep nature.

“When night came, Jettie would bring the flock in at the 4 proper time. We always brought the flock in just befor sundown to have it on the bedding ground befor sundown.

“At the proper time, without any command, the dog would start the sheep toward the bedding ground. When they were all in the dog would lie down and there would remain keeping a watch all night.

“Wolves and panthers, were one of our troubles, and without Jettie I would have lost a good many sheep, but with her it was seldom a vermine got a sheep and then it was because it strayed away from the flock too far.

“Jettie had, by some means, learned to imitate a wolf when quite young. Off some piece, I could not tell the difference and when I herd that yelp, I knew that a wolf was in that neighborhood, and I could depend on the yelp. So at night while I slept Jettie would be on watch. Many nights I have been awakened by the dog coming to my tent giving her warning of the presents of wolves bt her yrpl. I would then pick up my rifle and, her and I, would circle the flock. She would lead in the direction that she scented the wolves. She, of course, scented the wolves befor they could get to the sheep, a man can't do that, and we because of her could start after the animals befor they could get to the sheep. The wolves would scent use moving and skedoo.

“When shearing season was on, Jettie and Big Nigger worked together and did what would have required six men to do. The flock to be sheared were kept bunched next to the chute and ten sheep at a time placed in the chute to be taken by the [shearer.?] Jettie would work around the edge of the folck keeping 5 the sheep bunched while Big Nigger attended to driving the sheep into the chute, ten at a time, when the chute gate was opened.

## Library of Congress

“The real busy time for a herder is lambing [season?]. There exist a peculiarity about ewes and their [lands?]. A large number of ewes will abandon the lamb. However, it is the ewes that that are not in good shape. A well feed and healthy ewe will not, as a rule, do so. Among 1000 ewes there is always, more or less, those that will abandon their lamb. So the herder must constantly be on the hunt for motherless lambs, ranives and all secluded spots must be hunted for the lambs. They will die if not cared for in a few hours, especially if a spell of weather is on.

“Again Jettie, during lambing season, was worth note than several humans. She would find the lambs as soon as the ewe left it. During the seson season she was a busy dog, going among the flock and when a lamb was found she would bring it to me unharmed.

“How abandoned lambs were handled by us has been often asked of me. me. When a motherless lamb is [roundedthen?] the lambless mother must be found, the ewe's condition will indicate the ewe. We would tie the ewe's front foot to a stob and also one hind foot, then tie the lamb with a three foot string to the ewe's front leg and leave to two for about one day. The ewe can't get away and the lamb can suck. After the milk is digested and began to pass from the lamb the ewe will, thereafter, properly mother her young. 6 “One more statement about Jettie, then I shall/ /talk about something else. I could lie down at night, or day, and always feel safe and contended about the safty of my sheep. No matter what would happen that would desturb the flock the dog would awaken me. She would tap me with her paw and bark softly. When I would be awake she then would bark and trot in the direction of the object of her notice. I could always tell what nature of critter it was, human, [?], or something the matter with some sheep. If it was something the matter with the sheep, she would whine, if some vermin, she would give forth a growling bark. So, when I say Jettie could talk to some extent. I was stating a fact for sure.

“Yes sir, I don't think there ever was a nother dog like Jettie and Big Nigger.

## Library of Congress

“There was another pestering element we sheepmen had to contend with and that was the cowmen. They were everlasting stealing sheep and pestering us herdmen. What they did was done for the purpose driving the sheep men off of the range. I could tell when some human was trying for my sheep, because [?] cause Jettie would come to me with a deep throated growl. I would shout in the direction she indicated and scare the human vermin off.

“However, one day a bold cowhand attempted to rustle some sheep in day light. He took a shot at me, I guess, thinking that I would get scared and let him take the sheep. He underestimated me. I took several shoots at him. In fact, there was an exchange of shots. One bullet went through my coat sleeve and one 7 through my hat. I do not know whether or not I made a hit, but he did not get any of my sheep.

The following week after the shooting there appeared notices, stuck up by the cowmen, all over the range telling us sheepmen to vamoose. A few days after the vamoose signed appeared, there were repeated visits made by cowmen. Several of them would ride pass and shoot up the herders tent and into the sheep killing a number of them. I don't think they actually wanted to kill us herders, because there were none killed. However we [?] not move as per notice. I can't guess what would have happened if it was not for the fact that the Government men came and took a hand and put a stop to it.

“Well, I suppose that something about how we lived would be in order. When I say we, I mean Jettie and I.

“We lived in a tent, slept on the ground with a blanket for a cover when needed. I did the cooking over a camp fire. “My food consisted of, lots of beans and meat. The meat was mostly mutton and considerable antelope. Those days antipole were plentiful. I could kill one at anytime I wanted one. I made my own bread and it was mighty sorry stuff and sometimes worse than that. You see, we had no milk, so the bread was a mixture of water, flour, baking powder and salt. [I cooked?] it in a lid skellit with hot coals. The boss

## Library of Congress

furnished can goods to some extent. The herders greatest cooking trouble was in wet weather. We depended upon buffalo chips and [mesquit?] for our cooking fuel. So when there was a long wet spell cooking [became?] such a hard job that 8 it would make a preacher cuss. I have often eaten half cooked bread. Far as the bread is conserved, it tasted just about as good one way as another.

“Boatwright sold all of his sheep in 1883 and bought cows. I continued to work for the outfit. That was a welcome change for me, because I then had company, but only worked as a cowhand for nine months. Boatwright had built up his herd to 1500 cows, when I quit.

“During the few months that I worked on the cow ranch I had a change to make up for some of the lonely times I put in as a sheepherder. Just as sure as pay day rolled around the boys would pull a [?]. They would drive into town and there turn themselves loose. Sometimes they became a little too rough.

“I recall one occasion when about 15 of us rushed into a dance hall at the town of Pullman and began shooting from sixshooters, one in each hand. There was a rush to the windows by the [?]. They critters sure made a quick vammoose, some feet fist and some feet last. They were not particular how they got out. I still laugh when that [scene comes?] to my mind. One time the law picked up one of our boys, because he was too rough with somebody. We learned about it when we were getting ready to leave town, he was missing. So we went to the jail and there he was, we took him out. Of course jails those days were not built like they are now.

“What I think is the hardest job a cowhand has is working a herd when it stampedes. They get started by fright, sometime what is the cause is hard to asertain. Lightning, or hail, storm 9 can star a herd. A hail storm most surely will. It is necessary to keep the critters moving in a circle to keep the herd from scattering and at the same time to divert their attention from the element that has scared it. Noise of any kind was tried. Yes singing if

## Library of Congress

you can and some of the boys did, but I, like most of the cowhands, could not sing. We that could not sing would howl the best we could, such as 'yepee, tu yi yo!

“As I said a moment ago, I quit the range in 1884 and returned to Paris Texas, and started to farm, also engaged in cattle buying and selling. I was a buyer for the Daggett brothers of Fort Worth. I spent the time from 1884 until 1925 farming and trading stock. I came to Fort Worth in 1925 and then retired from active business.

“I married Mary Crowley of Paris Texas, 1894. We reared one child. My wife died in 1915. Since then I have made my home with my brother.