Marie Carter
Anthony, N. M.

1750 words.

OLD TIMERS STORIES

Mrs. Mabel Luke Madison -Husband: James Madison
Interview: June 6, 1937.

In speaking of old times Mrs Mabel Madison said: "When mother and I left Montgomery, Alabama and moved to Temple, Texas, we didn't know much about New Mexico. That was in 1880. Six years later I met and married James Madison, a Texas cattleman, and went to live in Marlan, Texas. We moved from Marlan to Rotan, but Jim couldn't get anything to do in that town so we pushed on up to Alamogordo, New Mexico where he landed a job on the Oliver Lee cattle ranche. Lee paid Jim some money and the rest in calves. After awhile we had a well stocked ranche of our own about fourteen miles out from Alamogordo."

oooooooooooooo

Following a pause Mrs. Madison continued: "I liked ranche life right from the start, for I rode the range with Jim, learned to cook and eat chuck-wagon food and to ride and rope with the best of them. Our cowpunchers were a jolly bunch and always ready for a good time. We got lots of fun out of rodeos, chuck suppers, roping contests and dances. Our ranche was the J-M ranche, and our cattle was branded with the J on the shoulder, the bar on the side, and the M on the hip.

oooooooooooooooo

Regarding the cook's culinary efforts Mrs.Madison declared: "Our

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=wpa1&fileName=18/1813/18130107/wpa118130107.db&recNum=0

Library of Congress www.loc.gov/teachers

ranch cook was famous for his sour dough biscuits. The cowboys called them 'dough gods.' And I just wish you could have seen the boys decked out for a round-up; they were as eager to get started as a bunch of school kids. To see them on their prancing ponies with their faces wreathed in smiles was something worthwhile. The cowboys always took the lead. Then came the noisy old mess-wagon with the cook perched on the driver's seat as proud as a peacock because he had a chance to show off his skill in managing a four-hand team of dancing ponies. And last came the horse-wrangler with the reserve horses, called the 'saddle bunch'. Each ranche had its own mess and bed-wagon, and its own set of men. The cattle companies from miles around met at a given point and pitched camp. At mess they usually had bacon, beans, black coffee and warm bread, or as it was called, 'hunk'. After they'd leave I could hear them singing in the distance: Oh, I want to be a cowboy and with the cowboys stand, Big spurs upon my boot-heels, A lasso in my hand.' They had good voices too and just seemed to put their hearts and souls into music."

oooooooooooooo

In recalling her life on the range Mrs. Madison observed: "We worked hard in the old days and didn't think anything of it. In fact we enjoyed it. My chief amusement was a rodeo. Once I went to one where some of our cowboys were going to ride. I was proud and yet afraid that some of them would get killed, for the ponies they rode were untamed devils. One of our boys was call-

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=wpa1&fileName=18/1813/18130107/wpa118130107.db&recNum=0

Library of Congress www.loc.gov/teachers

ed Cinnamon because his hair was the shade of cinnamon bark. Cinnamon was all decked out for the rodeo in real cowboy fashion, high-heeled boots with spurs, a red and black flannel shirt and a polka dot neckerchief. I almost forgot to mention his high crowned hat and shaps. As for the ponies I won't try to discribe all of them. The one I remember most was the one Cinnamon rode, as mean a piebald little critter as I'd ever seen a cowboy ride. First they roped and blindfolded her. Then some of the cowboys held her, and the moment the saddle was cinched on and the blinds pulled away, Cinnamon leaped onto her back."

oooooooooooooooo

Regarding the pony's antics Mrs. Madison declared: "I never saw a bronc show so much spirit in all my life; she simply went mad, and the wilder she acted the louder the audience shouted and cheered. First her back curved into a half circle. Then her legs stiffened like she was paralyzed, but no such luck, she was just bracing herself for what followed. With her head lowered until it almost met her hind feet, she shot straight up and came down with a jolt that would have unseated anybody but Cinnamon. And on top of that, with her legs still as stiff as ramrods and her head almost touching the ground, the little devil began to rock her rider back and forth with her hind legs doing a kick step between rocks. Finally she gave that up too, and going into a frenzy, tore around and around the ring with the laughing cowboy waving his hat and never budging an inch. Then as suddenly as she started she

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=wpa1&fileName=18/1813/18130107/wpa118130107.db&recNum=0

Library of Congress www.loc.gov/teachers

stopped, her little body shaking like a leaf; she'd met her master and knew it. And after two or three quivering sighs she dropped her head and trotted out of the ring with the meekness of a lamb."

oooooooooooooooo

In recalling the cowboy dances Mrs. Madison said: "Dancing in the old days was a family affair. We all piled into a wagon and took the children along, and while the grown-ups danced they played outside. And when they were ready to go to sleep we found a corner, made 'em a shake-down on the floor and let 'em tumble in. We always brought plenty of blankets and plenty of food along, danced all night, and got home on time for breakfast. A Calico dress was considered to be good enough for any occasion. When we had a barbecue the men cooked the meat. Sometimes they'd be up all night, turning, basting and keeping the beef from burning. The women baked all the good things they knew how to bake and took them to the barbecue. They usually arrived driving a team of horses and some kind of a wagon, wearing their sunbonnets and old calicos. Of course they brought the children along; it was a regular picnic for them. The cowboys always brought a fiddle and a guitar along and ended up with a shindig. We mostly waltzed, two-stepped or square danced."

oooooooooooooo

Mrs. Madison related an exciting episode in her life on

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=wpa1&fileName=18/1813/18130107/wpa118130107.db&recNum=0

Library of Congress www.loc.gov/teachers

the range: "It happened early one morning while we were wtill in bed," she said. "We heard horses moving around outside, and heard men talking in low but excited voices. Jim got up and want outside. I stayed in bed, straining my ears to hear what the strange men were talking about. Then someone came into my room and by the dim morning light I thought it was my husband. I started to speak when suddenly I felt the cold steel of a gun pressed against my forehead. I started to cry out but ended with a feeble mean. When the man, whoever he was, heard my voice, he backed toward the door saying: "Oh, I thought you were Tucker." Just why he said that I don't know. But I think he was so excited that he didn't know just what he was saying."

oooooooooooooo

Mrs. Madison paused, then continued: " I was so scared I didn't know what to do, but finally decided to get up and dress, which I did. Then the door opened, admitting a small figure. It was my son who had been sneaking around outside to see what the men were doing in our corral. He put his finger to his lips and cautioned me to be quiet because Oliver Lee, our old boss, and some of his henchmen were hiding on top of the house. That the sheriff was after them because he heard that they had killed Albert Fountain over at the White Sands. The quick thud of horses hoofs sent me flying to the window. I looked out--sure enough--the sheriff and his deputies had arrived. The sheriff was Pat Garrett, the same man who had caught and killed Billy the Kid in 1881. Pat and his deputies were starting toward the corral when they saw a red saddle blanket drying on the fence.

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=wpa1&fileName=18/1813/18130107/wpa118130107.db&recNum=0

Library of Congress www.loc.gov/teachers

The sheriff paused, pointed at the blanket, then motioned his men to follow him. My husband, who was outside, told me that they went straight to the corral where Lee's horse was nosing about with several other white horses. The sheriff had no trouble in picking out the horse he wanted, for the saddle blanket, while wet, had faded, leaving great red streaks on the animal's back."

oooooooooooooooo

"Shortly after finding Oliver Lee's horse in our corral," Mrs. Madison said, "Pat Garrett, Lincoln County Sheriff, caught sight of the fugitives on top of our house and opened fire. The charge was returned with a volley from the guns on the roof, and we could hear the bullets falling like hail all around us. Just as I grabbed my son and pulled him down beside me on the floor, a bullet crashed through the window, whistled through the room, and buried itself in the wall above the bed. My husband told me that the sheriff went up to bring Lee and his men down, but just as he reached the top of the ladder one of his deputies who had climed up on the other side, was shot and rolled off the roof into a wagon just outside the kitchen door. The accident brought the shooting to a sudden stop, for Garrett and his men went back down to look after their companion. Finding him still alive they decided to take him to the station and when the train came in send him to Alamogordo. So they called my husband and told him to get out a team of horses and hitch up the old wagon. He told them that he hadn't used that wagon for years and didn't have any way to hitch 'em. Then they did the next best thing; they tied

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=wpa1&fileName=18/1813/18130107/wpa118130107.db&recNum=0

Library of Congress www.loc.gov/teachers

a rope to the tongue of the wagon, rode along in front and dragged it after 'em. As they started toward the station they called back to the men on the roof, "We'll be back to get you fellows by eleven."

"Be sure ye don't get here before that time, or we might get ye first." Lee answered."

"The injured man died on his way to Alamogordo, and the sheriff and his deputy were back by eleven o'clock, but Lee and his henchmen were gone."

oooooooooooooooo

M. C. Book rights reserved.

Mrs. Mabel Madison was born in Montgomery, Alabama, 1870; moved to Temple, Texas with her mother, Sofia Luke, 1880; Married James Madison in 1886; moved with husband to Marlin, Texas; moved to Rotan, Texas, then to Alamogordo, New Mexico; worked for Oliver Lee three years; moved from Lee's ranche to own ranche, fourteen miles out from Alamogordo.

Mrs. Madison has lived in La Mesa, New Mexico for twenty years, where she lives on the family ranche. She is the mother of six children, Zara Madison, Rotan, Texas; Mary Iris Madison, wife of R. F Hymen, Hebe, New Mexico; Willie Reece Madison, whose wife was the former Opal Chalk of El Paso; Robert Lee Madison, El Paso, Texas; Charley Madison of La Mesa, John James Madison, El Paso, Texas.

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=wpa1&fileName=18/1813/18130107/wpa118130107.db&recNum=0

Library of Congress www.loc.gov/teachers