

Transcript

Oral history with George Burchett, 1957.

Interviewer: Say it again.

Burchett: Tom Purcell shot Dave Akers just out at the Whoop Up there, across the Whoop Up. He shot him over cattle. They used to be partners and they dissolved, and Tommy figured that...Purcell figured that Akers, Dave Akers had some of his cattle, and he went down to see him, and he wouldn't turn them over and got into an argument. Tom, he shot Dave. He got five years for it, but he didn't put in the five years. He got out about around three years, I think.

Interviewer: I guess justice wasn't so harsh in those days if you just got five years.

Burchett: Well, he was...it was...I think Dave Akers started it. I think it was that Dave Akers went up to his place. If it had been reversed, he'd have got longer. But, ah, he put in his time, he come out, and finally died, I think.

Interviewer: Did he come back here after?

Burchett: Oh yes, he come back to his cattle and horses. And that was that.

Interviewer: Did you see much of him around here after that?

Burchett: Oh, yes, I was very young. Although I was...oh, I was think I was around about fourteen years of age, the last time I seen Tom was...we'd buy Indian ponies, you know, and we'd turn them loose in the winter. So in the spring, we'd go out and look for these ponies. So my pal, Jack Kruse, he had a white-faced sorrel horse. Well, he gets out there, and here's the sorrel is in Tom Purcell's pens. So, we opened the gate and we went down in there and start chasing him out when old Tom Purcell come up. He ordered us out of the place. Told us if we didn't get out, he'd shoot us both full of holes.

Interviewer: He did, eh?

Burchett: Yeah, so we left the horse.

Interviewer: How did you get out?

Burchett: So we left the horse, and we went out and went down a draw in a coulee. We fooled around there until night and after dark, just as it got dark, we went back in there and got the horse and chased him out. And that was all there was to it – we got the horse back, but he claimed the horse.

Interviewer: Took a little bit of nerve for a couple of kids to go and do that.

Burchett: So we got the horse alright.

Interviewer: For all that you knew, he'd already shot one guy.

Burchett: Yeah, that's right. Oh, we never thought of that. But that's the last time I seen Tom. Of course, he was around, you know, but I never got out to see him. He might have come in town, but I wouldn't have seen him.