

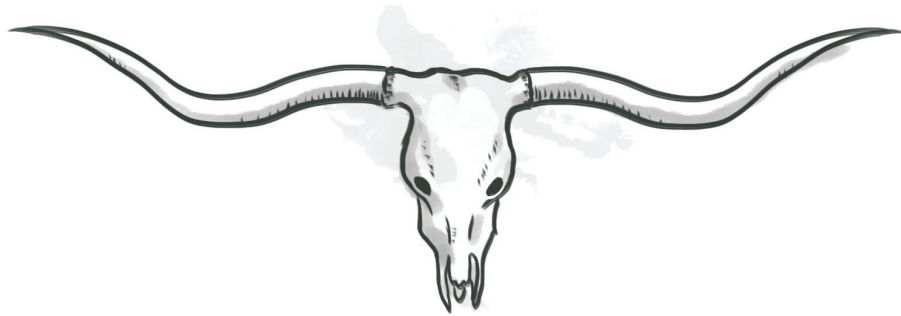
Adventures on the American Frontier

COWBOYS

and Cattle Drives

Part Four

Will Rogers
Chasing the Cowboy Dream



A Royal Fireworks Production

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In the mid-1800s, the old West was filled with cattlemen who drove large herds from Texas and other western states to places like Kansas to ship them to market. But by the 1890s, the ways of the old West were starting to die out.

Homesteaders and barbed wire began blocking the way of the great herds of cattle. The railroads built lines down into the Texas ranch country, and there was no longer a need to drive the herds to far-off places.



On a ranch in Indian Territory, a part-Cherokee boy named Will Rogers was growing up in those years of change. But to him the world of the cowboy was the only world that mattered. From the time a cowhand on his father's ranch sat him on a pillow behind the saddle horn, Willie wanted to be on horseback riding the range.

As soon as he could walk, Willie was playing with a rope. The cowhands taught him simple rope tricks and cheered him on. His father got him a lively little pony, and



while Willie's mother closed her eyes so that she wouldn't have to watch, the little fellow clung to the pony and learned to ride.

"Please be careful," his mother would say.



Willie's father, Clem Rogers, was an important man in the district where they lived. He had started as a boy with a small herd of cattle and had built it up to give him and his family a good living.

By the time Willie was born in 1879, Clem had been able to build a big, solid, two-story home. Soon Clem was made a judge of the district, and when it was time to form counties and a state, Rogers County of Oklahoma was named after him.



Willie was sent to a one-room school with the other Cherokee boys and girls, but it seemed to his father that the boy wasn't learning much except how to beat the other boys at running races.

So after a year or two, Clem sent Willie with one of his older sisters to a girls' boarding school, where he was to keep the school president's son company. There he seemed to learn more, and he found a love for singing that stayed with him always.