

OKLAHOMA
TERRITORY

TERRITORIAL TALES

Bits of
History
Before
Statehood

INDIAN
TERRITORY

AUG 11 1982 *Snake Hunts Rattled Territorial Historians*

Rattlesnake hunts have become popular springtime events in several localities of Western Oklahoma, but they are not new.

Dr. Muriel Wright's "The Story of Oklahoma" reported that not long after Fort Sill was established on the site of former Camp Washita in 1869, some troopers off duty were exploring the interesting formations around Medicine Bluff.

They noticed a narrow opening in the rock on a high precipice above the creek. A narrow bank of grass leading down to the water's edge lay along the front, to which there was only one approach by means of a six-inch ledge of smooth rock.

The troopers crept to the narrow bank and made ready to explore the cave-like opening. One of the soldiers poked into it with a long stick, while the others cocked their pistols. They apparently did not know what animals lurked inside the cave.

Soon a huge rattlesnake crawled out and was quickly shot. With another poke of the stick more snakes appeared, half-stupid from the winter's chill. Again and again the snakes were poked out until about 200 rattlers had been killed.

A number of the snakes were huge old fellows several feet in length. The troopers skinned several of the bigger ones and cut off the rattles to prove their strange experience.