Have you ever been to a rodeo? It is an exciting thing to see! You can see cattle ropers, barrel riders, and even bull riders. Many things we see at rodeos were things we might have seen on ranches long ago. Bill Pickett worked on the early cattle ranches in Oklahoma. And he was a rodeo champion, too!

Bill Pickett was born in the 1800s and grew up in Texas. He worked on ranches through Oklahoma. But he became famous while working at the 101 Ranch in Ponca City.

The 101 Ranch started its own Wild West Show. This was a kind of outdoor event where city people could see what frontier life was like. You could see cowboys ride horses and rope cattle. You could even see Native Americans dancing and singing to their native music and in their own languages.

Bill soon became the most famous cowboy in the country. His special way for roping cattle was called “bulldogging.”

Bill would race his horse up next to a running bull. He would quickly slide off his horse, grab the bull by the horns, and bite the bull’s nose! The bull would be forced to the ground, roped and tied up. People from miles around would come to see it!

In the same year that Oklahoma became a state, Bill Pickett won the World Championship Rodeo. Bill was one of many African-American cowboys who worked the ranches of our state. You can see his picture in the Cowboy Hall of Fame.

1. What made Bill Pickett’s cowboy skills so famous?

2. What were some kinds of entertainment like in early Oklahoma?

3. How are rodeo cowboys like cowboys on a ranch? How might they be different?