

THE LONG DRIVE

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P R E F A C E

The following work is an attempt to give an account of the preparations, hardships, and results of the long drives from Texas to Kansas during the years from 1867 to 1895.

An attempt has also been made to give the importance of the cattle industry as a social as well as an economic factor in the development of the West.

Materials used in this study have been made available by the assistance of: Franklin Leroy Stewart, Librarian in the Frank Philips Collection of the University of Oklahoma, Miss Vernon Johnson, Librarian in the Central State Teachers College, and Mrs. Virginia M. Harrison, Assistant Librarian in the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College.

O. G. A.

INTRODUCTION

The long drive is a part of one of the greatest financial enterprises the West has ever known, that of the range cattle industry. It followed the conquest of the Indians and the destruction of the buffalo, but in turn it met defeat by the small stockman and the army of settlers.

The raising of cattle had been practiced for centuries but it entered into a new light after the close of the Civil War and lasted for a quarter of a century.

All during the nineteenth century as the area of cultivated lands moved westward there was to be found along the outer edge a comparatively narrow border of pastoral life. The Indians kept the ranchman from pushing far out into the wilderness and the homesteader kept them from staying on their original ranges. As Dr. E. E. Dale, a leading historian of the cattle industry, expressed:

"....the cattlemen occupied a kind of twilight zone with the light of civilization behind them and the darkness of savagery before."¹

Credit must be given to those participating in the cattle industry for the great part they played in the settlement and development of the American wilderness.

1

Edward E. Dale, Range Cattle Industry (Norman, 1930) p. 14.

THE CATTLE COUNTRY

Chapter One

The original home of ranching on a large scale began in the state of Texas. From the time of its earliest settlements it has proven to be a profitable place for cattle raising.

The first Spanish settlers brought with them cattle of the long-horned Spanish type which increased rapidly under the favorable conditions of range and climate. Some of these escaped from their owners and roamed the plains as wild cattle.²

When the Anglo-American settlers came in they brought with them a few cattle of European breeds which mixed with the Spanish breeds and soon grew into considerable herds.³

The climate and range conditions allowed the cattle to roam freely over the hills, valleys, and prairies in grass that was knee high. The longhorn was in the hey-day of his glory.⁴

The land system was a help to the cattle industry. Spain and later Mexico were both liberal with their land grants. In 1825 the state of Coahuila and Texas gave a labor of land, one hundred and seventy-seven acres to each family whose occupation was to farm. To those who should raise several live stock, a league, or four thousand four hundred and twenty-eight acres of land was given.⁵

2

10th census, III, p. 965.

3

Dale, op. cit., p. 21.

4

J. Marvin Hunter, The Trail Drivers of Texas (Nashville, Tennessee, 1925) p. 1.

5

Dale, op. cit., p. 21.

When Texas became a Republic she gave all of her citizens who were heads of families one league and one labor of land, and later when admitted to the union as a state kept the same liberal policy in disposal of lands. As a result of these policies, the average size of Texas farms by 1850 was nine hundred and fifty one acres.⁶

As the number of cattle increased, the ranchers moved their cattle to the unoccupied public lands. Many men invested their capital in cattle instead of land. Sometimes ranchers owned thousands of cattle and did not own an acre of land.⁷

After this rapid increase in cattle the chief problem that arose was that of a market. Although many cattle were sold as work oxen for use in freighting upon the plains and for local consumption as beef, the supply was much more than the demand.⁸

The first cattle driven to market were driven eastward.

In 1842 the driving of cattle began and New Orleans soon became the chief market for Texas cattle. Cattle were often driven to Shreveport and from there shipped down Red River to New Orleans. The cost of the drive was slight and the freight from Shreveport to New Orleans about five or six dollars a head. Others were sent by sea from Galveston and other Gulf ports, and not a few were sent by sea from Galveston to Mobile or Cuba.⁹

A few years later cattle were driven from Texas to Chicago, Ohio, and as far east as the Atlantic seaboard. After the gold rush in 1849 to California, there was a great demand for beef and the first cattle drives to that state began in 1850.¹⁰

⁶
9th census, III, p. 341.

⁷
Dale, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁸
Ibid., p. 24.

⁹
Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁰
Louis Felzer, The Cattlemen's Frontier (Glendale, Calif., 1936) p. 37.

This movement of cattle northward and eastward brought on an epidemic of Texas fever among the native cattle. It has been proven that this epidemic was caused by the bite of a tick from which the Texas cattle were immune. Many homesteaders lost all their cattle within a few days.

....by 1858 the drive northward through Missouri had been checked and was not resumed very much until after the war.¹¹

During the Civil War it was impossible to send cattle out of Texas. It was a part of the Confederacy and cattle were not sent to the states belonging to the Union side. The Mississippi was controlled by the armies of the North, making it impossible to send cattle to the Southern states. During all these years the cattle of Texas multiplied until the statistics show that at the close of the Civil War there were over 3,000,000 cattle on the farms and ranches.¹² This rapid increase in cattle was partly due to the fact that Texas was the least touched of any southern state by the Civil War. While the

....armies of Sherman swept through Georgia and the Carolinas leaving little in their wake, while the border states were being devastated by the forces of both sides, and while the fields of Alabama and Mississippi lay fallow and waste or grew up in bushes and briars from want of laborers to till them, the cattle on the broad plains of Texas grew mature and fat, and in many places increased rapidly in numbers.¹³

In the beginning of the Civil War, Texas was able to send cattle to her sister states by:

11

Dale, op. cit., p. 24.

12

Sam P. Reding, The Chisholm Trail (Guthrie, 1936) p. 4.

13

Dale, op. cit., p. 28.

....swimming them across the Mississippi below Vicksburg and then hurrying them east to the Confederate armies but the vigilance of the Union gun boats rendered such operations extremely hazardous, even from the first and soon stopped them entirely.¹⁴

The isolation of Texas during the Civil War did not help the price of cattle in that state at the close of the war.

The Texas soldiers released from the armies of the Confederacy in 1865 returned to their homes, in many cases ragged and penniless, to find their ranges overflowing with mature, fat cattle which were almost worthless at home but of great value in the North and East.¹⁵

The prices of cattle according to some historians were as low as one dollar each, but all agree that the top price was five dollars in Texas at the close of the Civil War. Cowboy Nabours expressed it as follows:

Every man in Texas was land poor and cow poor--if he was so ignorant and foolish as to buy land script at two to five cents an acre when he might have all the range he liked for nothing at all and all the cows he cared for without the bother of counting them.no money in anything that has anything to do with cows. Look at the record; Rockport, Indianola, Galveston, Mobile, New Orleans, Little Rock, Iowa--all them foreign countries full of d---Yankees and thieves. What ghostly chance has a Texas stockman got? There's cows thicker'n lizzards all the way from Matagorda to Doan's Store on the Red and west far as the Staked Plains. We're busted the South is licked. We've got a carpet bag government and no hope of change. If all Texas was worth one solitary whoop do you reckon you could buy a mile square of vine-mesquite land for fourteen dollars? Not that I could or would--I haven't got fourteen dollars. Nor it don't look like any stockman in the whole state ever will have fourteen dollars, the whole caboodle from Santone to the Sabine.¹⁶

¹⁴ Joseph McCoy, Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade (Kansas City, 1874) p. 20.

¹⁵ Dale, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁶ Emerson Hough, "North of 36", Saturday Evening Post, (Philadelphia, April 1923) Volume 195, No. 41.

6
1875

However, there was a need for these cattle in the north, west, and east and were willing to pay good prices for them if they could be transported to the localities of the demand.¹⁷ The Union and Central Pacific Railroads were in process of construction, employing many thousands of men who had to be fed. A succession of drouthy seasons had destroyed nearly all the cattle in California and the supply had to come from east of the Rockies.¹⁸

The completion of the Kansas Pacific Railroad to Abilene opened a northern market for Texas's surplus cattle. The difference in price was that cattle in Kansas sold for ten times the amount they cost in Texas.¹⁹ This vast difference constituted a wide and tempting field for cattle speculation. And it was this difference that brought about the drives with all its many dangers from Indians, outlaws, snakes, high water and storms.

18

McCoy, op. cit., p. 73.

19

McCoy, Cattle Trade of West and Southwest (Kansas City, 1875) p. 94.

THE TRAILS

Chapter Two

The honor of being the originator of the Kansas and Texas cattle trails goes to an Illinois stock dealer, Joseph G. McCoy, who was familiar with the need of a market for Texas cattle and conceived the idea of making Abeline, Kansas, the shipping point.²⁰ No better point could have been selected as it was almost on a due line north of the point where the herds would leave the Indian Territory, and there were no settlements in between to interfere with the driving of the cattle to reach the pens.²¹

Joseph McCoy went to the office of the Kansas-Pacific railway in St. Louis, Missouri, and laid before them his plans for building pens, yards, and other equipment needed for the handling of these herds of cattle. The railway company refused to do the building of these stock yards but made a contract with McCoy for him to build the necessary equipment himself, and the company agreed they would pay him one dollar for each car of cattle loaded from these pens.²²

After the shipping point was selected, the next task was to select the best route to follow. The ideas in mind in selecting a route were to avoid the deepest waters, to avoid the most savage Indians, to have plenty of grass and at the same time make the route as direct as possible toward the terminus.

The cattle trail selected by Joseph McCoy, Charles Goodnight, Col.

20

Floyd B. Streeter, Prairie Trails and Cow Towns, (Boston, 1936) p. 63.

21

Ridings, op. cit., p. 91.

22

Ibid.

Wheeler and dozens of their contemporaries was the one named "Chisholm Trail". It was the greatest one of its kind in the history of the world.²³ This trail received its name, according to historians, from the following story:

The Chisholm Trail was named for Jesse Chisholm, a half breed Indian of Indian Territory, now known as Oklahoma. He was a man of sterling worth and known for his integrity, courage, generosity, and fair dealings. Jesse Chisholm was in his young manhood, a trapper and a trader. His wagons loaded with hides, pelts of fur bearing animals, as well as other commodities, pushed their way through the wilderness northward into Missouri, cutting ruts and furrows so deep that they blazed a path easy to follow, and it was from these wagon ruts and furrows that the first Chisholm trail was named.²⁴

The length of this trail varied according to the different periods of time during its existence. In its beginning it was traveled all the way from San Antonio, Texas, to Abilene, Kansas, a distance of about eight hundred miles.²⁵

The early herds coming in from Texas to the Indian Territory crossed the Red River at many different places, but when established the Chisholm Trail crossed the Red River at a point north of the City of Ringgold, Texas, and entered the state of what is now Oklahoma below the mouth of Cache Creek and south of the City of Waurika, near the line between the present Cotton and Jefferson Counties.²⁶ It then went northward following near the present line of the Chicago, Rock Island

²³

Ibid., p. 15.

²⁴

Mory Taylor Bunton, A Bride on the Old Chisholm Trail (San Antonio, 1939) p. 4.

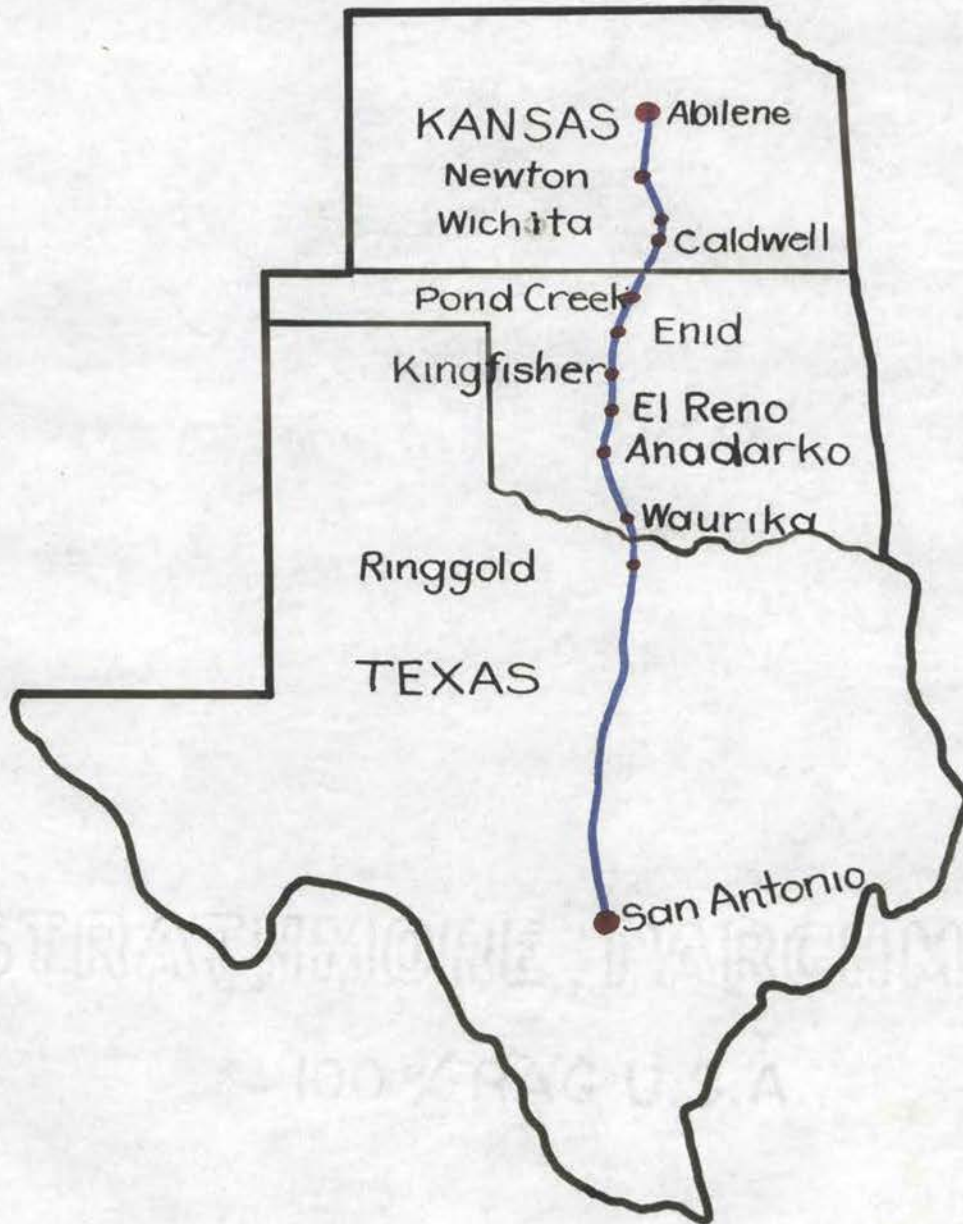
²⁵

Ridings, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁶

Ibid.

CHISHOLM TRAIL



and Pacific Railway, and the route of the Meridan Highway, known as Government Highway 81, and crossed the Kansas line south of the City of Caldwell, then north Abilene.²⁷

The principal camping points on the Chisholm Trail in Oklahoma were Pond Creek (near the present town of Jefferson) Skeleton Ranch (near Enid) Buffalo Springs (Bison) Kingfisher, mouth of Turkey Creek, Cheyenne Agency (Darlington) Canadian River, and Wichita Agency (Anadarko).²⁸

By the year of 1869 the main trails were well defined. They twisted and turned first east then west, winding their ways to suit the irregular bearings of the streams and to strike the most convenient places to camp.²⁹

There were several other trails though not as important as the Chisholm. Among these were; the "Old Shawnee Trail" which led from the Red River to Baxter Springs in southeastern Kansas, "West Shawnee Trail" which left the "Old Shawnee Trail" near the Canadian River and ended at Junction City; and the "Ellsworth Cattle Trail," which ran by way of Kingman to Ellsworth.³⁰

During the earlier years of the cattle industry, the Sedalia Route going from Texas to southwestern Missouri was used unsuccessfully for cattle drives. The Goodnight Loving Trail, which followed the route used by the Wells Fargo Express Company, was used for a few drives. This route passed through Sherman, Texas, up the Concho, crossing the Pecos at Horsehead Crossing and then to Roswell, New Mexico.³¹ These

27

Ibid.

28

T. U. Taylor, The Chisholm Trail and Other Routes (San Antonio, 1936) p. 55.

29

Streeter, op. cit., p. 64.

30

Ibid.

31

Taylor, op. cit., p. 77

two trails were not used after the direct northern trails were established.

In traveling southward on the Chisholm Trail, a traveler could look to the north of the Kansas and Indian Territory line and see the small town of Caldwell and the surrounding huts or dugouts of the farmers, but further south on the trail this view was soon lost.³²

Often when passing over this trail in early days the writer has paused to observe this view; and while doing so, has pondered upon the fact, as to how many travelers upon this cattle trail have from this point looked back upon civilization for the last time for many months or years, and many of them forever; and how many wayfarers upon this trail coming up from the South dirty, dusty, travel stained, and travel worn, after hundreds of miles on the plains, have been gladdened by the first sight of civilization that they had had perhaps for many months or many years. Persons who have never spent months or years on the plains or on the extreme frontier, cannot appreciate what civilization or settlements mean on his return, to a traveler who has done so.³³

Soon after the trail left the border line it passed through a continuous prairie dog town which covered a distance of twenty-three miles. The barking of these little animals could be heard along the entire route. With each bark, the tail of the barker would give a quick jerk.³⁴ All the other stretches of upland along the route were covered with prairie dog towns.³⁵

The prairie dog owls, about the size of a quail were seen perched upon the prairie dog holes. When a traveler attempted to catch these birds, they would either drop into the prairie dog holes or rise and fly away.³⁶

³² Ridings, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 37

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

The traveler in camp would often be disturbed in his sleep at night by the snapping, snarling and fighting of the angry, hungry, wolf packs as they came closer and closer to the camp in their search for food.³⁷ If this noise did not awaken him, the scream of a panther would cause him to leap from his bed.³⁷

Occasionally the vicious buzz of a rattlesnake would be heard by the traveler as in the following:

Its body coiled around and encircled its head for protection of the same, from this position, when the stronger came close enough, the body of the snake would straighten out like a spring that had been compressed, its mouth opening wide automatically raised the long fangs lying down along its jaws, and it would if close enough, sink these fangs into its victim. On the extreme end of these snakes' tails were carried rattlers. When disturbed this tail began quivering and these rattles started a continuous and monotonous buzzing. The sound had a vicious menacing meaning that no one could mistake.³⁸

All of the scenic features along these cattle trails were not so frightening as those described. Mrs. Mary Bunton, who went up the trail with a herd of cattle, says there was another side of the story which she describes as follows:

How my eyes and ears were charmed with the sights and sounds of Old Mother Nature's handiwork! There were so many, many birds in the forest and I marveled at their songs and their varied and gorgeous plumage. I was always looking for the Bob Whites calling from the tall grass or listening for the mocking birds singing their songs in the beautiful old trees. Ofttimes, leaving the trees they would fly higher and higher while a trail of song floated back as if to cheer me on my lonely way, long after the clouds had hidden the birds from view. Another fascinating sight was the great patches of wild berries ripening along the roadside. Early in the morning, wet with dew they would sparkle in the sunshine as if the fairies had sprinkled them with diamond dust.³⁹

³⁷ Bunton, op. cit., p. 37.

³⁸ Ridings, op. cit., p. 38

³⁹ Bunton, op. cit., p. 44.

During the shipping season many herds passed over this Chisholm trail. The main portion was beaten as hard as the concrete of the highway that now parallels it. This was done by the millions of hoofs that had trampled it.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Ridings, op. cit., p. 37.

THE NORTHERN DRIVE

Chapter Three

Those participating in the drive consisted usually of a trail boss, a cook, two horse wranglers, and two cowboys for each hundred head of cattle.⁴¹ The trail boss or "drover" was in charge of the entire drive; the cook prepared the meals and drove the chuck wagon; the horse wranglers were employed to look after the band of horses usually called the "saddle band" or "remuda"; and the cowboys did the driving of the cattle.⁴²

Of all those taking part in the drive, the most important and interesting characters were the drivers or cowboys. This hero of modern western stories was a gallant horseman, and Robin Hood or Captain Kidd never led a freer life than the cowboy. A vivid description of his appearance is given in the following:

Riding by his side you find that in his dress, manners and views of living he lives in another world than yours. His home is his saddle and this has made him put away his dress of cloth and put on trousers of enduring leather or duck; free fitting flannel shirt open at the neck, meets the need of warmth or cold. The big hat, or sombrero, borrowed from the Mexican, shades his face from scorching heat, and shields it from driving rains or pelting sleet. And this cowboy loves the picturesque in form and color and accoutrement. About his lithe waist is a broad cartridge belt from which dangles an ivory-handled or silver mounted six-shooter in holster of embossed leather. His saddle is his pride for it has cost him more than the price of the justly prized horse upon which it is cinched. Over his trousers he wears the showy and somewhat grotesque "chaps" of white-fleeced Angora skin. His boots, box-toed, curved, creased and French-heeled, have high taps quilted and embroidered and long, strong straps pendant on the sides; nor is this foot gear complete without jingling spurs, steel or brass or it may be silver mounted. A hat band of woven horsehair,

41

Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

42

Dale, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

plaited leather or of silver cord and with a bright colored handkerchief of generous size carelessly knotted about his neck, complete his costume.⁴³

The cowboys playground in those first days of prosperity included battle and sudden death as everyday matters. He fought his way with knife and gun. When this news spread eastward from Texas, the adventure seeking young men rushed to the cattle country, as expressed by Owen Wister:

Saxon boys of picked courage because none but plucky boys could survive from south and north from town and country. Every sort of home tradition came with them from their far birth place. Some had known the evening hymn at one time, others could remember no parent or teacher earlier than the streets; some spoke with the gentle accent of Virginia, others in the dialect of baked beans and cod fish; here and there was the baccalaureate already beginning to forget his Greek alphabet but still able to repeat the two notable words with which Xenophon always marches upon the next stage of his journey. Hither to the cattle country they flocked from forty kinds of homes, each bringing a deadly weapon. Yet this tribe did not remain motely but soon grew into a unit. To begin with the old spirit burned alike in all, the unextinguished fire of adventure and independence.⁴⁴

There were no laws to adjust the differences between the cowboy and the persons with whom he came in contact in this range country. From this condition grew the fact that the word of a cowboy given to a companion was the most binding obligation that could exist between men. It was more binding than a mortgage or bond because it needed no law to enforce it. The man who would violate this obligation was ostracized from companionship with his fellow men and conditions were made such

43

Charles Evans, Lights on Oklahoma History (Oklahoma City, 1926) p. 147.

44

Owen Wister, The Evolution of a Cowpuncher. Harper's Magazine, XC 1, September, 1895. p. 610.

that he shared the lowest rank in society.⁴⁵

Almost every cowboy was generous with his money. If a man had but a few dollars he would divide it with anyone in distress, or if he thought the person needed it worse than he did, he would give it all to him.⁴⁶

The young man who had been a cowboy had but little taste for any other occupation. He lived hard and had but few comforts and fewer necessities. He did not care for reading, but enjoyed a practical joke or smutty story. The cowboy had rather fight with pistol than to pray. He was fond of tobacco, women, and liquor.⁴⁷ Mr. Ridings, an ex-cowboy, gave the following defense for the cowboys:

Whatever the faults and frailties of the old cowboys were, and being merely men, they must have had many, their commendable customs, habits, and everyday life will measure up and stand a favorable test with any class of men.⁴⁸

Women of good character were held in the highest esteem in the cow camps, and if a woman should have happened to be stranded or left there without a companion, she would have been in the safest place in the world and protected by the cowboys better than all the officers of the Government could have protected her.⁴⁹

A description of the cowboy would not be complete without mention-

⁴⁵

Ridings, op. cit., p. 278.

⁴⁶

Ibid.

⁴⁷

McCoy, op. cit., p. 85.

⁴⁸

Ridings, op. cit., p. 302.

⁴⁹

Ibid., p. 295.

ing the cowboys horse. As the horse was the principal part of his equipment. This pony of the plains may not have looked on when Montezuma fell but he certainly hailed from Spain.⁵⁰ It is not known whether it was missionaries or thieves that carried this horse called "mustang" northward from Mexico, but it is certain that it ran wild for a century or two either alone or with various redskinned owners. He experienced war and peace, and of being stolen, abandoned in the snow, carrying of two squaws and a baby at once, attacked by bears, and many other experiences. From these he obtained a sharp wit and a fearless nature. The hoofs of this horse were tough as iron and he waged the joyous battle of self preservation as stoutly as his rider did.⁵¹

The preparations for the long drive, in which these cowboys and horses played a major part, began in early spring. At that time the drover went into the section of the country from which he decided to bring his herd and riding from one ranch to another contracted with the owner or agent for the delivery at a given place for a certain number of cattle.⁵² The ranchmen in gathering the stock to fill their contract drove together or in drover parlance "rounded up" a large number of cattle.⁵³ The "round up" brought the range cattlemen together and welded them in defense of their business.⁵⁴

During the "round up" season the yell, "come and get it" could be

50

Wister, loc. cit., p. 608.

51

Ibid.

52

McCoy, op. cit., p. 79.

53

Ibid., p. 81

54

Evans, op. cit., p. 150.

heard by the cook at three o'clock in the morning. The response to the call from the cook was according to one cowboy:

To that reveille there could be no delaying, for drowsiness was one of the seven deadly sins of a cow camp. Its penalty was dismissal and dismissal from a "round up" meant disgrace. The cowboys rolled out, drew on boots and trousers, if they had taken the latter off, and grouchily or pleasantly, according to the nature of the man, rolled up and tied the bedding and lunched out to the chuck wagon. Seven or eight minutes rarely ten were allowed for the meal.⁵⁵

The cowboys were divided into four groups for the rounding up. One group in charge of day herds, one to go in front, one to the left, and one to the right. The left and right groups were called circle riders.⁵⁶ The circle riding covered steep ridges, slippery cliffs, winding ravines, jagged hills and across boggy creeks.⁵⁷ But the boys had to enter such places in order to drive everything that makes a cow track towards the agreed on meeting place.⁵⁸

Noon was the appropriate time for dinner, but dinner on a "round up" was not a leisurely meal. It was a case of eating the greatest quantity of food in the shortest possible time. The range rider may have had a sandwich and a sip from a cow tract in the marsh. But he probably did not want to bother with a bundle so just buckled up his belt another notch or two, or chewed the end of his rawhide rope which is the classic way of describing a "no dinner and mid-night supper" diet.⁵⁹

55

Francis Rolt-Wheeler, The Book of Cowboys, (Boston, 1921) p. 335.

56

Ibid., p. 341.

57

Ibid.

58

Randall R. Howard, The Passing of the Cattle King, The Outlook, XCVIII, May 27, 1911, p. 200.

59

Ibid.

After the rounding up was completed, the "cutting out" and branding process was the next movement in the preparation for the Northern drive. In the "cutting out", the cows and calves were driven in one group, the strays in one, and the "beeves" or cattle to be driven up north in a third group.

Immediately after the cattle were divided, the calves were branded. In branding, the roper caught a bleating and frightened calf by the two back legs, took a twist with the lariat rope around the horn of the saddle and dragged the little calf in the direction of the fire. Two other men grabbed the calf and held it. The brander rushed over from the fire with a red hot iron and in a few strokes the brand was put on.⁶⁰

A traveler may have thought this process of searing an ugly big brand deep into their hides and hacking off a big fraction of each ear as heartless and useless. The following proved its use according to Mr. Howard of the Outlook Magazine:

A historic, tender hearted humanitorian named Sam Moverick came from Boston to Texas to make his fortune in cattle raising. He trusted humanity and his cattle and calves carried their ears and their hides as nature had given them. The catching up of Mavericks slick ears became very popular among the worldly, get rich quick, ambitious stockmen of the section. This story became sectional parlance and today Webster tells us that a Maverick is a "bullock or heifer that has not been branded and is unclaimed or wild."⁶¹

The cattlemen took great pride in knowing hundreds of different brands at a glance, and had a mania for branding everything in sight. On fence posts, spur straps, saddles, boots, pistol handles, would

60

Rolt-Wheeler, op. cit., p. 347.

61

Howard, loc. cit., p. 198.

appear the insignia.⁶²

The last preparation before the herd started north was loading the chuck wagon. After it was loaded, it contained several saddles and horse blankets, a camp kettle, coffee pot, bread pan, tin cups, mess chest containing the food, sleeping blankets, an ox yoke, a log chain, spurs and quirts, a coffee mill, an ax, bridles, picket ropes, and last but not least several sides of bacon. To this very important food the cowboys dedicated the poem, "To a Bacon Rind" by E. A. Brininstool which reads as follows:

We packed you along when we tamed the wild west,
 You helped grease the way for the brave pioneer,
 Of all the grub carried you sure was the best,
 We stuck to and swore by you year after year.
 The cowman came in and your smoky ol'hide
 An' savory smell was the buckaroo's friend,
 On fires of sagebrush your slices were fried
 An' out on the round up you stuck to the end.⁶³

After the drover had everything ready, he secured a bill of sale from each ranchman from whom the stock was purchased. The bill of sale showed not only the brands but all the ear marks. The appearance of a bill of sale was much like Egyptian hieroglyphics. The more a northern man looked at it, the less he knew about it. But it was necessary for the drover to have it or he might have been arrested as a thief.⁶⁴

As the herd was started north, the participants took their designated places in the drive. The drover or trail boss took the lead followed by the chuck wagon. The herd of cattle followed behind

⁶²

Montgomery-Mosier-Bethel, Growth of Oklahoma, (Oklahoma City, 1935) p. 120.

⁶³

Felzer, op. cit., p. 55.

⁶⁴

McCoy, op. cit., p. 92.

the wagon. The cowboys were divided into pointers, swing men, flank men and drags and their positions were: the point men, usually old and experienced hands, directed the herd at the front; the swing men followed directing the front sides; the flank men directed the back sides, and the drags or "green horns" drove at the end. In the rear, there was always a group of lazy, slow or lame cattle and this post of "bringing up the drag" was the most disagreeable of all since the riders were exposed to the dust raised by the entire herd,⁶⁵ which was from one to two thousand head of cattle. In the later drives the herds consisted of five or six thousand head of cattle.⁶⁶

The first few days the custom was to do hard driving. The three reasons for this were: first, to get the stock off of the accustomed range wherein they knew the country and were much harder to keep under control than when on strange ground; second, to "break" or accustom them to being driven; and third, to tire them by hard traveling so they would want to lie down at night fall instead of running off.⁶⁷ The herd became "broken" to follow the trail. Certain cattle took the lead and others would select certain places in the line. These cattle could be seen every day at their post marching along like a column of soldiers during the entire journey unless they became lame and would have to fall back to the end of the line.⁶⁸ A herd of one thousand cattle would stretch out over a distance of from one to two miles, and was a very beautiful sight, resembling a long strip of dark-red velvet

65

Dale, op. cit., p. 66.

66

Streeter, op. cit., p. 67.

67

McCoy, op. cit., p. 83.

68

Ibid., p. 95.

carpet with a wide border of green grass.⁶⁹

A day's drive would not average more than fifteen miles as the animals would "drift" rather than travel, feeding as they go.⁷⁰

The drive was a rather pleasant affair as long as the weather was agreeable, but when a storm came the skill and bravery of a cowboy was put to a test as described by Mr. McCoy, a cattleman and historian of that time, in the following:

When the night is inky dark and the lurid lightning flashes its zig zag course across the heavens and the coarse thunder jars the earth, the wind moans fresh and lively over the prairie, the electric balls dance from tip to tip of the cattle horns, then the position of the cowboy is far more trying than romantic. When the storm breaks overhead the least unusual occurrence, such as the breaking of a dry weed or stick, or a sudden and near flash of lightning will start the herd, as if by magic, all at an instant upon a wild rush and war to the horse or man that may be in their path. The moment the herd is off the cowboy turns his horse at full speed down the retreating column and seeks to get up beside the leader, which he does not attempt to stop suddenly but turns them to the right or left and gradually curves them into a circle, until the whole herd is rushing wildly round and round on as small a piece of ground as possible for them to occupy.⁷¹

The droves considered the cattle did themselves great injury by running around in a circle, which was termed "milling" in cowboy language, even though it was necessary to stop a stampede. The only way the cattle would slow down and finally stop was by the cowboys standing at a distance and hallooing and singing to them.⁷² Singing hymns to Texas steers was the peculiar forte of a genuine cowboy, but

69

Bunton, op. cit., p. 38.

70

House Executive Documents 7, part III, 48th Cong. 2nd Session, XX, p. 170.

71

McCoy, op. cit., p. 99.

72

Ibid., p. 101.

the spirit of true piety did not exist in the sentiment,⁷³ Some of the songs were not very complimentary to the cattle as expressed in this verse:

My feet are in the stirrups
I am seated in my saddle
As I ride around,
These d-- old cattle.⁷⁴

It was fortunate the cattle were not musicians for had they been some of these songs might have started another stampede. Each cowboy was usually singing a different song and not always in the correct key.⁷⁵

These stampedes were usually caused by some imaginary danger. Often the howl of a coyote or other wierd noise caused the herd to start in a panic stricken rush.⁷⁶ The herd of Wilbur White, a drover, was near Wichita Falls one night when it stampeded, apparently without any reason. But the next day the negro cook, in helping collect the scattered bunches, saw one of the steers with a tomato can on its foot. The tomato can had made such a peculiar noise in hitting the ground that the whole herd stampeded.⁷⁷

Another hardship suffered by the participants in the long drive

⁷³

Ibid.

⁷⁴

Ridings, op. cit., p. 356.

⁷⁵

Ibid.

⁷⁶

Ibid., p. 354.

⁷⁷

Taylor, op. cit., p. 177

was the need for water as in the drive in which Andy Adams was a cowboy. The foreman had scouted a full day in advance of the herd in quest of water. On his return he informed the group that a dry drive was a head of them, as it was sixty miles to the next water and reports regarding the water supply after arid stretch were conflicting. The herd traveled fifteen miles the first day, and no trouble was experienced the first night; but water was too precious to be lavish with so the boys shook the dust from their clothing and went unwashed. The second night without water, the cattle were more slowly in "bedding" for the night. Most of the cowboys didn't get an hour's sleep. The third day was one of torrid heat, and the cattle's sullen lowing surged through from lead to end and back again in a pitious appeal. The only relief the cowboys could offer the cattle was to travel them slowly. By noon the expectant water hole was reached but there was only enough water for the horses. Holding the herd the third night required all "hands". The next morning the heat was almost unbearable. Before a mile had been traveled the leaders turned and the cattle congregated into a mass of unmanageable animals, milling and lowing in their fever and thirst. After wasting several hours in this manner, they finally turned back over the trail and the utmost effort of every man failed to check them. Six shooters were discharged in their faces, yet they disregarded this and every other device, and then for the first time a fact dawned on the cowboys that made cold chills run down their spine, the herd was going blind. The cattle were allowed to return to the last water hole they had passed, traveling night and day until they reached the lakes. Then a western route was followed to the

shipping team.⁷⁸

The Indians dealt the drivers a great deal of trouble. They would make certain demands of the drover and if their demands for cattle or money were not met, they would run among the cattle causing a stampede.⁷⁹ If the whites felt strong enough, they put up a fight and drove the Indians off or compromised by giving them a few head. A description of one instance was related by a cowboy in the following story:

One day when Mr. Shane, a drover, and his cowboys were driving across Indian Territory with a large herd, they met about four hundred Comanche Indians. They were evidently on the war path but as the trail boss explained hurriedly to Mr. Shane, it was not likely they were out against the whites. They were probably on a foray against another tribe. "Keep your hands off'n your guns boys," the trail boss warned. "If any one shoots we will all be scalped." The Comanches took no notice of the cowboys but quietly and methodically killed twenty-five of the beeves, skinned them, right there, eating the flesh raw, with blood running down their faces. The trail boss, who could speak Comanche, ask the chief for damages. The war chief dropped his eyes and refused to answer. Mr. Shane rode up to the lead to point the herd, but as soon as the cowboys started the herd, the Indians bunched in front of it and held the herd back. Having feasted, the Indians wanted their fun and they spent an hour in feats of horsemanship and in shooting arrows through the beeves. They killed another thirty for pure sport. After this had gone on for a while the War Chief gave an order. The young braves drew aside and rode on their way to battle with their enemies at which, as Shane learned later, they were badly defeated and half their number killed.⁸⁰

Most of the cattlemen undertook the long drive with the knowledge that trouble could be expected north of the Red River. They prepared

78 Andy Adams, The Log of a Cowboy (Boston, 1927) p. 54-64.

79 Streeter, op. cit., p. 74.

80 Holt-Wheeler, op. cit., 235-236.

for it by taking along a supply of firearms and ammunition and by hiring cowboys that were fighters. The crews usually contained some of the roughest characters on the frontier. Some of the drovers employed professional gunmen to accompany their herd as an extra precaution.⁸¹

The Creek Indians were the most friendly toward the cowboys.⁸²

The river crossings were sources of trouble to the drivers, especially when heavy rain caused the rivers to rise. The cattle were usually taken across in groups of twenty-five or thirty. The cowboys took off their clothing and one swam his horse ahead of the herd while others rode along the sides and end. Sometimes a herd was driven across without any trouble. At other times, the cattle would reach the opposite shore and get frightened and turn back.⁸³ In a moment, the whole group would be swimming wildly round and round in the middle of a stream. Sometimes the cowboys would work for hours to break up the mill. In this procedure it was necessary for the boys to leave their horses and swim among the cattle, and possibly get on the horns and backs of the cattle. The cottonwood trees on the shore were usually loaded with hornets nests and the hornets would sting men and cattle. This caused the cattle usually to go to the shore. Often times the crew worked for days to get a herd across a large stream and many a brave cowboy was drowned during the process.⁸⁴

One other cause of trouble along the drive was that of stealing

⁸¹

Streeter, op. cit., p. 75.

⁸²

Ibid.

⁸³

Ibid., p. 72.

⁸⁴

Ibid., p. 73.

cattle by white outlaws. This never occurred very often, but when it did there were usually several killed, including both cowboys and outlaws.⁸⁵

The entire drive did not consist of hardships; sometimes the boys would enjoy a quiet evening around the camp fire singing cowboy songs and telling jokes.

Among the songs they sang were: "Mustang Grey", "The Dying Cowboy", "Roll on Little Doggie", "Sam Boss", and others of that type.

A few of the jokes they told according to E. E. Dale, an ex-cowboy and historian of the cattle industry, were:

A cowboy went in to a cafe and ordered a steak. The steak the waitress brought him was rather rare. When the cowboy discovered this rareness he said, "Waitress take this back and cook it. I've seen them get well that were hurt worse than that."

Another steak story he told was:

Four boys were in a cafe ordering steaks. The first boy said he wanted his rare; the second said very rare; the third ordered extremely rare, so the fourth said, "By Gosh! just cripple mine and drive him through."

Two romantic stories that passed around the camp fire were:

At a dance one night a girl refused to dance with cowboy Jim and said he was drunk. Jim told the girl to go to h---. The girl told her brother. Her brother told Jim to apologize or he would blow his head off. Jim apologized in the following way, "Miss, I been thinking it over. After all you don't need to go to h---, your brother and I have made different arrangements."

One time a cowboy was walking with a girl he had just met. The girl said, "I guess you own thousands of cattle." The cowboy replied, "No, I belong to the most crooked cow ranch in Texas."⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Streeter, op. cit., p. 67

⁸⁶ E. E. Dale. I heard Dr. Dale tell these stories in a lecture he gave on the campus of Oklahoma A. and M. College in the summer of 1937.

END OF THE TRAIL

Chapter Four

The herd reached western Kansas after a drive which lasted from twenty-five to one hundred days.

When the cowboys met the Kansans it was a meeting of two distinct types of people. The cowboys regarded the Kansans as narrow, intolerant, penny-pinching, Yankee abolitionists,⁸⁷ inhabiting a land where each family was confined to a petty hundred and sixty acre claim, while in their own country every man measured his land by leagues or square miles.⁸⁸ The very qualities which made the people of Kansas great in their own estimation such as thrift, and a sincere belief in the rights of the negro, were in the eyes of the Texans, little better than vices and weaknesses.⁸⁹

The Kansans regarded the men of Texas according to one historian as:

A rough, wild, lawless, set who rode hard, swore hard, and feared neither God nor man. The hot southern blood and skill in the use of fire arms branded them in the eyes of the Kansans as dangerous killers and the latter hinted quite plainly that all too many of the Texans were the descendants of men who had fled beyond the Sabine to escape the penalty for crime committed elsewhere.⁹⁰

When the herd was nearing the shipping point it was the custom to locate the cattle on some grazing land near the village until a buyer was found.⁹¹

87

McCoy, op. cit., p. 101.

88

E. E. Dale, Those Kansas Jayhawkers (Norman, 1928) p. 170.

89

Ibid.

90

Ibid.

91

McCoy, op. cit., p. 101.

The prairie grazing lands near Abilene, Kansas, where the herds were partly taken up by grangers who lived in dugouts. Each granger had taken up about one hundred sixty acres of land which was partly cultivated. They did not have fences, so to mark the boundaries of their homestead, they plowed a furrow around it.⁹² The grangers were compelled to use cow chips for fuel because there was not any timber in the country except a few cottonwoods which grew along the streams. Due to the fact that buyers were plentiful and the cattle sold fast, the grangers were active among the herds, asking the cattlemen to bed cattle on their land so they could get the chips for fuel. The grangers figured that a herd of one thousand cattle would leave enough chips on the ground in one night to give them five hundred pounds of fuel which would be dry in a few days.⁹³

The story is told of a cowboy named Jack Potter, who was lost from his group one night and rode up to one of those granger dugouts and asked to stay all night. The answer was in the affirmative. He went down into one room about sixteen feet square. In this room there was a nice clean bed, one table, four chairs, a stove, cooking utensils, and the man, his wife and two small sons. The wife soon prepared a good supper. After eating, the adults sat up and talked for a short time and the boys went to sleep on the bed. All of the time Jack was puzzled how the entire group was going to sleep on the one bed. Finally the mother picked up the two boys and set them over in the corner, leaving them against the wall, still asleep, then she informed Jack he would occupy the bed. She and her husband went up the steps. Jack

92

Rolt-Wheeler, op. cit., p. 261.

93

Ibid.

"turned in" and was soon asleep and slept soundly all night. But when he awoke the next morning he found himself sitting in the corner with the two little boys, and the man and woman occupying the bed. When Jack was ready to leave he asked the man the charges for the nights lodging, and the man replied, "Fifty cents". But as Jack rode away he throw down five dollars because he said he had learned things that night he would never forget. Jack ended his story by saying, "That couple would prosper anywhere even on the dry plains of Kansas."⁹⁴

After the cattle were sold to the buyers, the cowboys would assist in getting them into the railway cars. In loading the cattle, the persuader was a long stick with a sharp spike at the end with which the steer was prodded or punched. From this custom first arose the term, "cow puncher" which later became applied to cowboys in general.⁹⁵

The "true blue" cowboy was sorry to see the last steer inside the stock cars at the station, but they would almost give their lives to insure its accomplishment.⁹⁶ The climax of the cowboys year had come. The Boss's profits were assured and the cowboy had earned a holiday.⁹⁷

After settling with his employer and receiving his back pay, which was from fifteen to thirty dollars a month, the cowboy was ready to go free and have a jolly time. The first place he went was to the barber shop and had a three to six months growth of hair cut off and his long grown, sun burned beard "set" in due shape and properly blacked.⁹⁸ He

94

Ibid., p. 264.

95

Ibid., p. 266.

96

Howard, loc. cit., p. 202.

97

Ibid.

98

McCoy, op. cit., p. 133.

next visited a clothing store of the Israelitish type. The cowboy emerged a new man in outward appearance, with everything being new not excepting hat and boots. The places he went were described by Mr. McCoy, a cattle-man in those days, in the following account:

The bar-room, the theatre, the gambling room, the bawdry house, the dance hall, each and all come in for their full share of attention. In any of these places an affront or a slight, real or imaginary, is cause enough for him to enlumber one or more "mountain howitzers", invariably found strapped to his person, and proceed to deal out death in unbroken doses to such as may be in range of his pistols, whether friends or enemies, no matter, his anger and bad whisky, urge him on to deeds of blood and death.⁹⁹

In frontier towns where cattle were shipped out, considerable business was transacted and many strangers congregated. There were always to be found a large number of men and women of the very worst class in the universe. These were described by one historian as:

Beings without whom the world would be better, richer, and more desirable. When the darkness of night is come to shroud their orgies from public gaze, these miserable beings gather into the halls of the dance house and "trip the fantastic toe" to wretched music. In this vortex of dissipation the average cowboy plunges with great delight.¹⁰⁰

The cowboy entered the dance hall with a peculiar zest, not stopping to remove his sombrero, spurs or pistol. A more comical sight was not often seen than the dancing cowboy. With the front of his hat lifted at an angle of forty-five degrees, his huge spurs jingling at every step; his revolver flapping up and down like a retreating sheep's tail; his eyes lighted up with excitement, liquor, and lust; he plunged in and "hold it down" at a terrible rate, often swinging his partner off

99

Ibid.

100

Ibid., p. 139.

of the floor for an entire circle. In the "balance all" he would give a loud yell which sounded like the war whoop of a savage Indian. When the "waltz to the bar" was played, the cowboy was required to treat his partners and of course himself also which he did not hesitate to do time and time again, although each drink cost fifty cents. And this was the way the cowboy spent his hard earned dollars.¹⁰¹

During the years of 1867, '68, '69, '70, and '71, Abilene was the leading shipping point for Texas cattle, and it was in this small city that the cowboy celebrated the end of the drive. Abilene was named for a city in the Bible but after the cattle market opened there, the name was not extremely appropriate. In the early days the tough district was a mile and a half north of town and consisted of twenty-five or thirty one-story frame houses with ten to twenty rooms in each house. After McCoy became Mayor, a tract of land in the east part of town was procured for these houses. The district was called "McCoy's Addition" by some people, and "Devil's Half-Acre" by others.¹⁰²

There was but little attempt to control the lawlessness the first two seasons. There was no municipal government, no jail, and no effective police system. Everyone had a right to be drunk, to gamble when and where he pleased, and to carry and discharge firearms. Wild shouts and pistol shots kept the orderly citizens in fear day and night during those two years.¹⁰³

In 1869 a local government was established in Abilene. At that

101

Ibid., p. 139.

102

Streeter, op. cit., p. 83.

103

Ibid., p. 84.

time there were thirty-two saloons in the town and crime flourished everywhere.¹⁰⁴ The board of trustees issued an ordinance declaring that no one had the right to carry firearms. The ordinance was printed and posted. The cow-men were determined this would not be enforced and shot to pieces the copies that were posted.¹⁰⁵

A jail was started in Abilene under the supervision of this new government, but a crowd of cowboys tore it down. Later the place was rebuilt with the help of a strong guard on duty at all times. A negro cook for a trail herd group was the first occupant, but the trail drivers tore down the door; rescued their cook and thereby their daily meals.¹⁰⁶ One marshal after another resigned in despair, and two policemen imported from St. Louis were so amazed and afraid of the lawlessness that they left for home on the first train.¹⁰⁷

The first marshal to maintain peace and order was Tom Smith, who had served as marshal in several towns along the Union Pacific as it was being built.¹⁰⁸

Tom Smith's first action in his campaign on lawlessness was to enforce the ordinance against carrying guns. He secured the help of the business men and persuaded the proprietors of the hotels to use their safes as depositories for the pistols of cattle drivers and other guests. The Texas cattle owners and local merchants gave him their support.¹⁰⁹

105

Streeter, op. cit., p. 85.

106

Pelzer, op. cit., p. 56.

107

Ibid.

108

Streeter, op. cit., p. 86.

109

Ibid., p. 57.

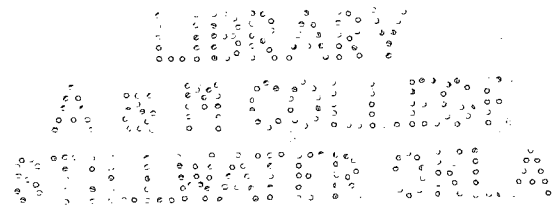
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Marshal Smith rode on horseback and used his fists to enforce the ordinance. Both practices were new to the frontier. He gave as his two reasons for riding the horse; first, as he rode down the middle of the street he could more easily see anyone waiting ahead of him, or approaching from behind; and second, he said it was more difficult to shoot a man who is riding than one on foot. This brave marshal, who deserves first place in the gallery of frontier marshal,¹¹⁰ was killed five months after he accepted the position, while attempting to arrest a desperate character.¹¹¹ Thirty-four years later the citizens of Abilene erected a monument in his memory which declared him "a fearless hero of frontier days, who in cowboy chaos established the supremacy of the law."¹¹²

The close of the shipping season of 1871 saw the last herd arrive in Abilene. In that year almost six hundred thousand cattle were sold at Abilene and Ellsworth, which was another shipping town near Abilene.¹¹³

In the year of 1871 the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway built west from Emporia to Newton.¹¹⁴ As a result Newton became a cattle town. One historian has written that the life of Newton as a cowboy capital was brief, but what it lacked in time it made up in activity. As the result of one misunderstand, eleven men lost their

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 86.
¹¹¹ Pelzer, op. cit., 56.
¹¹² Ibid.
¹¹³ Ridings, op. cit., p. 514.
¹¹⁴ Ibid.



lives in one evening.¹¹⁵

Wichita was the next cattle town. In 1872 the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway extended a branch South from Newton to that city. Wichita, profiting by the experiences of other towns prepared itself well to receive and handle the "under world" that came in with the cattle trade. Even though a number of men were killed during the period of its supremacy, the average was not nearly so large as in most of the towns taking care of the same type of visitors.¹¹⁶

The stockyards of Wichita were described as the most convenient of any cattle town. They had a capacity of two thousand five hundred cattle, or one hundred twenty-five car loads. An average of ten cars an hour could be loaded.¹¹⁷

Wichita continued to be the leading cattle market through 1874 and 1875 when a large part of the trade shifted to Dodge City.¹¹⁸

The most important of all cow towns was Dodge City which for ten years was the greatest cattle market in the world.¹¹⁹

The story is told that a drunken cowboy got on a Santa Fe train at Newton. When the Conductor asked him for the fare, the cowboy handed him a handful of money. The Conductor asked him where he wanted to go. The boy replied, "To H---." The Conductor kept two dollars and fifty

115

Ibid.

116

Ibid., p. 515.

117

Streeter, p. 162.

118

Ibid., p. 162.

119

E. E. Dale, "Romance on the Range", The Cattlemen, Nov. 1929, o. 35.

cents of his money and told him to get off at Dodge City.¹²⁰

Such stories as that and wild night life gave Dodge City the reputation of being the "toughest town in America," and it has become the practice for magazine writers to make this place the setting of their western gun stories.¹²¹

When Eddie Foy and Jim Thompson, noted stage comedians in the year of 1878, passed by a large pile of bones located in the edge of Dodge City, Thompson wondered if this meant that they were killing people in Dodge City faster than they could bury them. He soon learned that these were the bones of buffalo and cattle awaiting shipment to the carbon factories.¹²² The pioneers had gathered them and sold them for fifty cents a wagon load.

During the worst days of Dodge City lawlessness it had for its protection some of the best peace officers of that period. Among these were W. R. Masterson, Edward Masterson and William Tilghman. There was also among these officers Ben Daniels who, according to Theodore Roosevelt, was one of the bravest marshals on the frontier.¹²³

Two grave yards were early established in Dodge City. "Boot Hill" where those were buried who died with their boots on and another for those who died a natural death. "Boot Hill" soon outgrew the other cemetery in population.¹²⁴

120

Strester, op. cit., p. 173.

121

Ibid.

122

Ibid., p. 174.

123

Ridings, op. cit., p. 518.

124

Dale, loc. cit., p. 35.

After a few days of frolic and debauchery in these wicked cattle towns, the cowboy was ready in company with his comrades to start back to Texas, with not one dollar of his summer's wages in his pocket.¹²⁵

Mr. McCoy made exceptions to this in the following:

To this rather hard drawn picture of the cowboy there are many creditable exceptions, but it is idle to deny the fact that the wild reckless conduct of the cowboy while drunk, in connection with that of the worthless northern renegades have brought the personnel of the Texas cattle trade into great disrepute and filled many graves with victims. But by far the larger portion of those killed are of that class that can be spared without detriment to the good morale, and respectability of humanity.¹²⁶

As some historians have stated, the cowboy had a yearning to get back to the great sea of tossing horns, to the feel of the saddle, to the great, free open life of the range, and to the country where "Bury me not on the lone prair--ee" was the favorite song.¹²⁷ Home cooking had a big attraction, but the calf ribs broiled before the camp fire, the Dutch oven cooked loins, sweet breads, coffee that tasted of tin, and snake, and the corn meal biscuits were foods that would always bring the cowboy back. That trail cook's call at earliest dawn seemed to awaken more appetite in the cowboy than a well set breakfast.¹²⁸

125

McCoy, op. cit., p. 141.

126

Ibid.

127

Rolt-Wheeler, op. cit., p. 259.

128

Ibid.

DECLINE OF THE LONG DRIVES

Chapter Five

There were several causes for the decline of the long drives of cattle from Texas to Kansas. This decline began in the 80's of the nineteenth century.

The quarantine laws passed by the northern states was one of the reasons for the close of the drives. The one affecting the Texan cattlemen the most was the Kansas quarantine law which was passed by the Kansas Legislature and became a law March 12, 1885. This law stated that:

In the trial of any person charged with the violation of any of the provisions of this act, and in the trial of any civil action brought to recover damages for the communication of Texas, splenic, or Spanish fever, proof that the cattle which such person is charged with driving or keeping violation of law, or which are claimed to have communicated the said disease, were brought into this state between the first day of March and the first day of December of the year in which the offense was committed, or such cause of action arose, from south of the thirty-seventh parallel of north latitude, shall be taken as prima facie evidence that such cattle were capable of communicating and liable to import Texas, splenic, or Spanish fever, within the meaning of this act, and that the owner or owners or persons in charge of such cattle had full knowledge and notice thereof at the time of the commission of the alleged offense. The violation of the act is made a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of not less than \$100, no more than \$2000, or by imprisonment in the county jail not less than thirty days and not more than one year, or by both such fine and imprisonment.¹²⁹

It was considered by a majority of the members of congress at that time that the quarantine laws were passed because of commercial and economic reasons. These reasons were; first, they did not want the competition of the Texas cattle; second, they found out the Texas

129

House Executive Document 7, part III, 48th Cong., 2nd Session, XX, p. 126.

cattle "ate out" the grass upon ranges which for years past they had regarded, as by prescriptive right, their own; third, the contact of their herds with the Texas herds tended to depreciate the breed of their cattle, owing to the fact that the Texas herds usually contained a certain proportion of Texas bulls.¹³⁰

In some instances the cattle passing by the homesteader's farm would tear down the fences and destroy the crops. As the drove of cattle went by, the farmer would be mounted on a plow horse, armed with a pitchfork, helping to rush the cattle along, demanding damages and no doubt thirsting for the life of the cowboy.¹³¹ The farmer also believed in hard laws, and that to the cattlemen was an unpardonable sin.¹³²

The cattlemen tried to keep moving westward and to stay out of the path of the homesteader but the homesteader kept pressing onward.

Railway extension added another big chapter to the history of the disappearance of the western range. After being built, the millions invested in railroads had to earn large dividends. They received these dividends by boosting the land and resources of the country and as a result started a flood of newcomers.¹³³ These newcomers were told and showed that their presence was not wanted in the land of the cattle kings, but the battle was fought and won by the newcomer.¹³⁴

In the year of 1883 the barbed wire fence came into use which was

130

Ibid., p. 129.

131

Edward E. Dale, "Passing of the Range Cattle Industry in Oklahoma", The Cattlemen (Nov. 1924).

132

Ibid.

133

Howard, Loc. cit., p. 202.

134

Ibid.

another great damage to the cattle industry as stated by one historian in the following:

The storms of winter, the mud holes of spring and the droughts of summer spilled loss to many a ranchman, but it was not that which put an end to the open range, nor was it even the gradual encroachment of the small granger and later the dry farmer. It was an enemy more insidious, more stealthy than these, which crept up week, by week, month by month, year by year, and first restricted then blotted out the cowboy life of the great plains--
Barbed Wire!

The trail drivers too are gone. It is vain to look for herds of thousands of long horn steers to come swinging up the Old Cow Trail. They have gone, and their names are but a memory, though a glorious one.

The Wild Texas long horned steer has almost gone, too. They were a rugged breed, rather to be classed as semi-wild than domesticated cattle. Yet they made the fortunes of the West, and though they were hard to fatten and harder still to handle, there is not a state in the cow country which would not do well to put up a monument in front of its capitol in memory of the long horned steer. What has changed this face of the West? Again the answer is--Barbed Wire!¹³⁵

The cattlemen leased the Indian lands for pasture because of the scarcity of grass in the early '80's but was denied this privilege in 1885 when President Cleveland issued a proclamation declaring "all leases on the Cheyenne--Arapaho reservation void and the persons must move within forty days, taking all cattle, horses and other property with them."¹³⁶ From this time on the ranch cattle industry declined as rapidly as it had arisen. It was constantly hindered by hostile public opinion, steady decline in prices, and by the losses of the winter of 1886-1887 which left almost every cattleman flat broke.¹³⁷

135

Rolt-Wheeler, op. cit., p. 360.

136

E. E. Dale, Ranching on Cheysenne Arapaho Reservation, p. 22.

137

Ibid., p. 23.

The ranchman being unable to obtain ranges in the Indian Territory by legal means were forced to secure indirectly, and by ways that were questionable, the range that they would have gladly secured at a fair price by open negotiation.¹³⁸ When they asked the government for aid and protection, they were met by suspicion and open hostility. No industry has been more misunderstood than has the range cattle industry.¹³⁹

One old Texas trail driver, in expressing the change in the cattle country, made the following comment:

The range country was intended for cattle and horses and was the best stock raising land on earth until they got to turning over the sod-improving the country as they call it. Lord forgive them for such improvements! It makes me sick to think of it. I am sick enough to need two doctors, a druggery, and a mineral spring, when I think of onions and Irish potatoes growing where mustang ponies should be exercising, and where four-year-old steers should be getting ripe for market.¹⁴⁰

The results of the big cattle drives from Texas to the Kansas markets were very important in many ways. ✓

The trail driver blazed the way that led to great commercial enterprises. They were the cause of the ranges being stocked from the Rio Grande to the British possessions that before their time was a land of wild animals and savages.¹⁴¹

It is estimated by the most conservative trail drivers of that time, that an average of 350,000 cattle were driven up the trails from Texas each year for twenty-eight years, making a total of 9,800,000 cattle. These cattle were sold by the Texas cattlemen at an average of ten

138

Ebid.

139

Ibid., p. 24.

140

Pelzer, op. cit., p. 190.

141

Saunders, op. cit., p. 24.

dollars each, which made a sum of \$98,000,000 received for the cattle during the drives.¹⁴² There were 1,000,000 horses driven up the trail during this time and sold for ten dollars each, bringing the Texas men \$10,000,000 more to add to the cattle sales, making the sum total of \$108,000,000 received for range stock between the years of 1867 and 1895.¹⁴³

The circulation of the millions of dollars produced by the industry, passing as it did, directly into channels that were opened to receive it, produced a prosperity that has been in evidence in Texas for so many years.¹⁴⁴ The great cattle industry brought about the sale of a large tract of public land in the Panhandle of Texas and the money was used to build the state capitol of Texas, which cost \$3,500,000.¹⁴⁵ The cowboys spoke of this ranch as the "Capitol reservation" or as the "syndicate".¹⁴⁶

If the trail drivers had not driven the herds to market the long horned cattle would have died on the ranges and the vast unstocked lands would have remained dormant and unproductive. Ranchmen would have left Texas disgusted and broke, and development would have been checked

142

Ibid.

143

Ibid.

144

Ibid.

145

Member of Staff, "The Huge Cattle Ranch that Texas Swapped for its State Capitol," The Weekly Kansas City Star, Vol. 48, No. 26 (August 18, 1937).

146

Ibid.

for many years.¹⁴⁷ The railroad may have never reached the Rio Grande up to now, as the inducement would not have been attractive. No one knows what would have happened had the Northern trail never existed, but in Texas the trail drivers wrote their opinions and read them at the Reunion of the Old Time Trail Drivers Association which were:

It is plain that all commercial achievements, civilization, good government, christianity, morality, our school system, the use of all school and state lands making them revenue-bearers, the expansion of the stock business from the Rio Grande to Canada, which is producing millions of dollars; the building of railroads, factories, seaports, agriculture advancements and everything else pertaining to prosperity can be traced directly to the achievements of the old-time trail drivers.¹⁴⁸

When one of the few old-time cowboys goes up the trail now that he once traveled, he will travel on a cement highway and instead of herds of long horns he will see speeding automobiles with an occasional pair of long horns for a radiator ornament. If the trail driver prefers a train ride he may step into a passenger coach of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway and travel along near the Old Chisholm Trail. He will then realize the trails he blazed and "broke" are the ones that are used for modern transportation.

Oklahoma shared with Texas and other states the benefits derived from the cattle drives and has erected a statue in honor of the early cowboy on the capitol grounds at Oklahoma City.

¹⁴⁷

Saunders, op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁴⁸

Ibid.

THE WESTERNER

E. E. Dale

I do not care for your honking cars,
And the roar of the passing trains,
But I love the joys of every noise
Of the wide and windswept plains.
The ringing spur, and the jingling bit,
And the coyotes mournful wail
And the lowing steer
Are the things I hear
When I think of the old North Trail.

By day I see the busy crowds
That throng your cities here
But nights I dream
of the sunlights gleam
On prairies brown and sere.
I see the herd as it winds along,
With a serpents sinuous grace,
And lean brown men, in the branding pen,
Each with a sun burned face.

I hate the odors foul and stale
That fill each dirty slum
But I love each smell I
love so well
Of the land from which I come
The pungent smell of the smoky fire

With its fragrant coffee pot,
And the flowers sweet,
'neath the cattle's feet
Are smells no man forgets.

I have all kinds of dainty foods
All kinds of things to drink
It's very swell at the big hotel,
But I can not help but think
Of a heaping plate of navy beans
With bacon on the side,
Or a couple of stacks
of hot flap jacks,
After a hard day's ride.

I feel the city hold me close
I hate its fowl embrace
And its tainted breath
like a thing of death
Blows hot upon my face,
And man'ries come of the balmy air,
Of the plains where I used to rest
And sleep so oft on the
grass as soft
As my own dear mother's breast.

In everything I touch or taste
Or smell or hear or see
I find in all a ceaseless call

Denied it will not be
The East has been so kind to me
And yet I needs must say
The Golden West I love the best,
And I'm going back someday.¹⁴⁹

149

E. E. Dale, "The Westerner", Prairie Schooner and other Stories.

APPENDIX

THE CHISHOLM TRAIL IN LAW

The State of Oklahoma in 1931 passed the following law:

The Two Cattle Trails

Enrolled

House Bill No. 149

An act providing for locating, tracing, mapping and filing plates of the lines of the Old Established Cattle Trails Across the State of Oklahoma, and providing for the expenses of such work, and declaring an emergency.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Oklahoma:

Section 1. It shall be the duty of the State Highway Department of the State of Oklahoma, and the said department is required to immediately locate the correct line of the old established Chisholm Trail across the State of Oklahoma, showing as near as possible the exact location that the same crossed each section of land in said state in its course from the point where said trail crossed the south line of said state in southern Jefferson County, Oklahoma, to where it crossed the northern Grant County, Oklahoma, and said Highway Department shall also locate in the same manner the correct line of the old established Texas Cattle Trail crossing western Oklahoma from where it crossed the south line of the State of Oklahoma, crossing the Red River at what is known as Doan's Store or Doan's Crossing, and following the line of said trail north to where it crossed the north line of said State of Oklahoma south of Dodge City or Fort Dodge, Kansas. The said department shall cause maps to be made of the said locations so determined by them, which said maps shall show the location of the main line of the Rock Island Railway running across said state to Dallas, Texas, and shall show the

location of the present Meridian Highway, being Government Highway No. 81, across said state, and the proximity of said highway to the said trail.

Section 2. At least one copy of the said maps above referred to shall be retained in the office of the State Highway Department, and one copy shall be furnished to the State Historical Society to be preserved in the office of said society, and that smaller copies of the same shall be prepared, either by drafts or by printing, and shall be by the said Highway Department and by the said State Historical Society furnished to all known map makers, who are making and placing upon the markets maps of the State of Oklahoma, so that the same may be copied and inserted on said maps.

Section 3. That all expenses connected with the carrying out of this provision shall be defrayed and paid by the State Highway Department out of any available funds in their hands, provided, that in no event, shall the expenses exceed five hundred dollars (\$500.00) out of the General Revenue Fund.

Section 4. It being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is thereby declared to exist, by reason whereof this Act shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

Passed by the Senate this 26th day of March, 1931.

ROBERT BURNS

President of Senate

Passed by the House of Representatives this 27th day of March, 1931

CARLTON WEAVER

Speaker of the House of Representatives

Approved by the Governor of the State of Oklahoma:

On this 31 day of March, 1931.

WM. H. MURRAY

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