

The cattle kingdom



Cattle ranching was important in the West's changing economy. The open range provided a place where herds could graze free of charge with no boundaries. Mexican ranchers were the ones who developed the techniques and equipment that was later used by all ranchers and cowboys, including branding, roping saddles, chaps, spurs and roundups. Texas had the largest herds of cattle and their cattle came from good Spanish stock, as well as small muscular broncos or mustangs suited to cattle country.

At the end of the Civil War, about 5 million cattle roamed the Texas ranges and early in 1866, some ranchers began driving their combined herds north to Sedalia, Missouri on the railroad. Due to hardships along the way, many cattle were lost, but the drive proved that it could be done and it laid the groundwork for the expansion of the "cattle kingdom." Abilene Kansas reigned as the railroad of the cattle kingdom due to many market facilities there. Millions of cattle were driven up the Chisholm Trail to Abilene between 1867 and 1871, but shortly after that, agricultural development in western Kansas was taking much of the open range land.

Cattleman had to develop other roads and other markets outlets farther west, in Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming and Montana. The combined herds usually numbered two to six thousand head. Most of the cowboys in the early years had served in the Confederate army, the next largest group being African Americans. Ranches emerged next so that the cowboys had a base, starting small but eventually becoming larger due to competition of the farmers and breeders, raising their stock on their own fenced land.

Farmers from the East, called Nesters, blocked trails and broke up the open range and a series of range wars broke out of the tension between competing groups. This resulted in loss of life and property damage. After 2 severe winters and dry summers between 1885-1887, many ranches disappeared. The open range never recovered, the long drives were a thing of the past and railroads took the place of the trail. The established ranches with fenced in land and stocks of hay, survived and grew, producing more beef than ever before.

It is true that the cattle industry was mostly male in it's early years, there were a few women involved in ranching and driving and this trend increased as time went on. They found that the regions in the western states provided them with more opportunities than the east, such as being involved in politics, woman suffrage and officeholders. Women won the right to vote in the West earlier than the rest of the nation and persuaded men that they could help bring a moral voice into politics and strengthen the sense of community. 2-No single endeavor has marked the image of Texas in the national mind more than the cattle drive.

Cattle have been raised in Texas from the time the Spanish attempted to establish missions and domesticate the Indians, beginning in the mid-18th century continuing to increase fast as it became plentiful to the point that the value dropped. In 1861, Civil War broke out was disaster, the South's economy was destroyed. There were millions of cattle in Texas, but was no market from them in the south. There was however, a market in north, but ranchers could drive their castle to the North where they would fetch ten times what they were worth in the South.

Although they try to cross the river during the war we can consider that no more than approximately 260. 000 had crossed the river. So on that how was the cattle's business in Texas until near 1866. 3-From the traditions of the Old West and the strong requirements of the job, the Western cowboy made his way from a simple hired hand to a true American icon. " Ranch Life And The Hunting Trail" by Theodore Roosevelt's describe life and experiences during his time in the Dakota Territory of the 1880s. Cattle and horses were left to feed on the open range.

The herds were divided during the roundup, with the calves given the brands of their mothers, as the way to assert property rights in the cattle. The image of the courageous, spirited horseman living a dangerous life carried with it an appeal that refuses to disappear. Will always be the same, Driving a thousand to two thousand cattle hundreds of miles to market; facing lightning and cloudbursts and drought, stampedes, rattlesnakes, and outlaws; sleeping under the stars. There are Some changes that have been made in the cowboy's lifestyle in the 80s, as well some aspects of the American cowboy that will always remain the same.