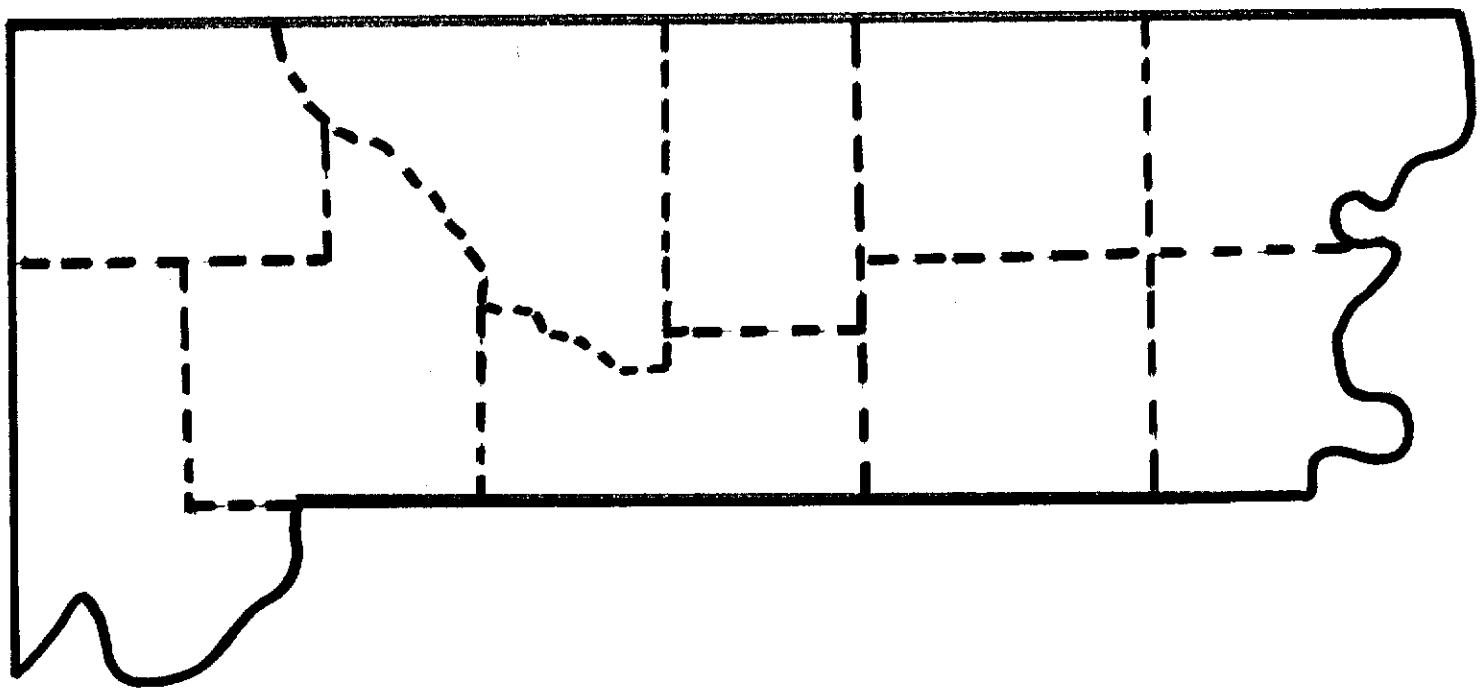
RESOURCE PROTECTION PLANNING PROCESS

Study Unit: Ranching in the Cherokee Outlet
Region Two



Project Director: Mary Ann Anders
Text and Research: Charles Brooks
Additional Research: Linda Holubek

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April, 1984

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INTRODUCTION

This study unit manual has been prepared by the Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, History Department, Oklahoma State University. The manual has been designed for those individuals and groups responsible for management decisions for historical resources in Oklahoma. The theme and geographical location follow the statewide system for organizing information on historic resources. Specifically, this manual focuses on ranching in region two. Materials included are: (1) A narrative describing ranching activities in the Cherokee Outlet of Oklahoma between 1870 and 1930; (2) Information about the most significant pre- and post-settlement ranches; (3) Maps; (4) A list of National Register Nominations; and (5) Criteria for evaluation of properties to be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

The information in this manual is the basis for those preparing operational plans and management units for the preservation and protection of historic resources. Funds for the research, preparation, and publication have been provided by (?).

For further information concerning the Resource Protection Planning Process contact the Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

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RANCHING IN THE CHEROKEE OUTLET

Ranching on the Great Plains

Cattle have played an extraordinary role in the history of much of the western United States. In the late nineteenth century the range cattle industry became a dominant economic force in the country and deeply affected the development of the present state of Oklahoma. The ranching era in the Cherokee Outlet lasted from approximately 1870 until the last great run in 1893. During that time the cattle industry left an imprint on the hearts and minds of Oklahomans that can never be erased. After settlement, agriculture replaced ranching as the primary economic activity in the region, but some large ranches remained in existence and cattlemen continued to exercise great political and social influence. The purpose of this study is to briefly describe the history of ranching in the Cherokee Outlet and to identify and locate specific individual ranches in the region that existed before 1930. It should be noted that the old Outlet's boundaries do not exactly coincide with the RP2 region. Southern Ellis County is included in the RP2 region but was not part of the Outlet.

Before proceeding further, it would be useful to describe the ranching industry in general terms. In his book, The Great Plains, Walter Prescott Webb, the Texas historian, defines the ranch as "the houses and all the range of cattle, whether fenced or unfenced." Ranching is "the practice of raising cattle on a large scale, . . . and the owner of a ranch is a ranchman or cattleman. The cowboy is an employee whose business it is to handle the cattle". Webb says that ranchers located their herds in areas with ready access to grass and water. The rancher usually established his headquarters, which included a ranch house, corrals, and living quarters for the men, along a good stream and grazed his cattle on both banks. The ranch's headquarters and its employees were called an outfit. In the early days of the range cattle industry ranchers either leased their land

from the Indians or simply occupied it, without permission of any tribe or government. They owned only their cattle and equipment. Every cattleman recognized the "range rights" of others; that is, the right to one's water and surrounding grassland.

The economic significance of the range cattle industry grew tremendously in the years that followed the Civil War. This was made possible in part by the confinement to reservations of the Plains Indians and the destruction of the huge buffalo herds that had once covered large sections of the Great Plains. More importantly, economic conditions in Texas encouraged cattlemen there to expand their activities. The Civil War had barely touched the state of Texas and when its soldiers returned from the war in 1865 they found huge herds of cattle grazing on the state's fertile grasslands. These Texans discovered that while cattle sold for four dollars per head at home, they sold for forty dollars in the East where urban population growth demanded an expanded food supply. As early as 1849 some Texas cattlemen had driven their herds across the Indian Territory to Northern markets, but in 1866 hundreds of thousands of longhorn cattle moved north out of Texas toward Kansas, driven by owners anxious to exploit the situation. Their goal was the Kansas railheads, located in such "cowtowns" as Abilene, Wichita, and Dodge City. From Kansas the cattle were shipped either to slaughterhouses in Chicago or to Dakota ranges for fattening. Perhaps more than six million head of cattle crossed Oklahoma between 1866 and 1884.

There were two types of ranch ownership in the pre-settlement period: corporate and individual. The corporate ranch was characterized by the cattle company. Unlike the modern corporation, a cattle company was usually a loose association of Western cattlemen and Eastern investors. By pooling their capital resources they hoped to lower costs and maximize profits. For example, the Comanche Cattle Pool covered some 4,000 square miles in Kansas and the Outlet

(see lease map). It was founded in April of 1880 with its business office at Medicine Lodge, Kansas. Investors included Jesse Evans, Robert Hunter, Fred Taintor, W. R. Colcord, and Major Andrew Drumm. The Pool's winter camp was located near present Waynoka, Oklahoma. The Dominion Cattle Company's herds ranged over much of present Ellis County. Its headquarters were located one mile east of the Texas state line, near present Shattuck, Oklahoma. The second type of ranch was owned by an individual. Major Andrew Drumm established his own 150,000 acre "U" Ranch (named after his brand) in 1870, perhaps the first permanent ranch in the Outlet. Colonel George W. Miller established the One Hundred One (101) Ranch in 1879 and eventually created one of the most famous ranches in the American West. Such men had fewer financial resources than the cattle companies, but answered only to themselves, not faraway stockholders.

Capitalists in Europe and the Eastern United States invested heavily in this growing industry. British syndicates owned many of the largest cattle companies in the Cherokee Strip, such as the Cattle Ranch and Land Company and the Texas Land and Cattle Company. Europeans had invested $30,000,000.00 in American ranching by 1882 and many received dividends of 25 percent per year. The range cattle industry dominated the Great Plains and at the region's heart lay the Indian Territory, modern Oklahoma. Four major cattle trails crossed the Territory: the Great Western, the Chisholm, the West Shawnee and the East Shawnee. Only the East Shawnee Trail did not cut through the Outlet at some point.

Cattlemen did not originally intend to occupy the Outlet, or any part of western Oklahoma, on a permanent basis. Drovers often allowed their herds to rest or graze off the grasses in the vicinity of the Trails, but this was only for a few days or weeks and then the drive would continue northward. Permanent settlement by whites was not permitted in the Indian Territory, and it remained the last refuge of the American Indian. But its empty ranges, fertile grasslands

and mild climate nonetheless proved powerfully attractive to cattlemen, many of whom began to see Oklahoma as something more than an obstacle to be overcome. The Outlet, in particular, seemed a suitable place to graze cattle. Among the varieties of grasses that grew wild in the area was the highly nutritious buffalo grass, ideally suited for stock raising. After 1875, the open ranges of Texas and Kansas were filled with herds of cattle and the lure of the unoccupied lands of Oklahoma proved irresistable.

Ranchers pressured the Federal Government to allow white cattlemen to ranch in Oklahoma and the Government did lift some restrictions concerning white occupancy of tribal lands. Unfortunately, the Interior Department and the War Department disagreed on the propriety of cattlemen leasing land from the Indians. The Interior Department declared such activity to be illegal while the War Department refused to forcibly remove offending ranchers. This intragovernmental conflict confused the legal situation and the cattlemen occupied lands in the Territory with no regard for government policy. Most tribes saw the opportunity of making a profit from their unused lands and gladly leased substantial acreage to the cattlemen.

The ranches established by these cattlemen were characterized by relatively simple social structures, the result of frontier egalitarianism. The ranch owner naturally occupied the top position in this society. Though most of his cowboys probably regarded the owner as a first among equals in the early years, the financial success of many ranchers in the 1880s increased the social gap between owners and men. The foreman also occupied a position of status. He was responsible for the daily operations of the ranch and often acted as trail boss on drives. A democratic fraternity seems to have existed among the cowboys themselves based upon common experience and responsibilities. The rough and dangerous nature of their job meant that most cowboys were young men, usually in

their early twenties. The hardships of life on the open range meant that families were virtually unknown and a cowboy normally married only after he acquired his own "spread" or left ranching entirely.

Range life, particularly during the winter months, was a lonely business that presented few occasions for socializing. Thus the biannual roundups were not only essential from an economic standpoint, but they also provided ranchers and their men with much needed human contact. In winter, cattle on the open range roamed freely and with a minimum of supervision. As a result, cattle from several herds mixed and mingled during those months. Each spring the ranchers and their men in each area assembled and proceeded to round up all cattle on the range and separate them according to owner. The cowboys then branded new calves, transferred some cattle to different ranges for further fattening and prepared others for shipment to market. This operation was repeated in the autumn. Branding was an essential procedure because unbranded cattle were the prime targets of rustlers.

The most significant characteristic of open range ranching was that ranchers allowed their herds to graze freely on the plains. It is true that these open range ranchers leased rather than owned their land; but even today the leasing of pasturage is not unknown. What is totally unique to open range ranching (and for which the technique is named) is the open, unrestricted grazing of cattle on the range. This is unique and gives this form of ranching recognizable characteristics (e.g. the semi-annual regional roundup, drift fencing, line camps, trail drives, etc.) that more settled and "modern" ranches lack. When western Oklahoma was largely unpopulated this presented no problem. But the appearance of white settlers, first gradually and then in huge numbers in 1893, created the need for fencing. Fences allowed the rancher to keep his own livestock at home, and prevented the livestock of others from encroaching upon his pastures. The

scarcity of wood on the plains required cattlemen to find another material for fence construction. The material they accepted was metal, in the form of barbed wire.

In 1868 Michael Kelly of New York patented the first practical barbed wire, but over the years inventors developed hundreds of different styles of barbed wire. The most significant feature of this type of fencing was the sharpened metal spikes that were twisted into the strands of wire. The spikes prevented cattle from rubbing against the fence and forcing it to collapse. Manufacturers developed two basic classes of barbed wire. One was called "vicious" and with good reason: its spikes were so sharp or jagged that cattle walking into it were badly hurt. Often the spikes were small and difficult for the cattle to see before walking into the fence. The second variety was called "obvious" because the spikes were sufficiently large for the cattle to easily see and avoid. After a time cattle learned to avoid barbed wire as dangerous so that even the smaller type could be used safely. Traditionally, the two most popular styles of barbed wire have been the 2-point Baker and the 2-Point Glidden. By the early 1880s barbed wire was essential to life on the Great Plains.

Oklahoma ranchers first used barbed wire to build drift fences. These were very long fences, stretching for many miles, that prevented cattle from wandering too far from their home ranges. Unfortunately, these fences caused substantial loss of livestock during the blizzards of the 1880s when they blocked the flight of thousands of cattle from the storms. Fenced pastures with windmills eventually replaced the open range and its drift fences.

A development of fundamental importance for Great Plains ranching, particularly after the period of settlement, was the windmill. The windmill solved the problem of water scarcity and low rainfall by pumping water up from beneath the ground. In appearance the windmill was usually a tall wooden structure

surmounted by a wheel of paddles. The wind caught the paddles, turning the wheel and thus powering the pump which lifted the water from the ground. Windmills became very important after settlement when extensive fencing prevented cattle from reaching natural watering places. Windmills therefore provided a valuable source of water for both humans and animals. Between 1880 and 1935, when the spread of rural electrical power curtailed their use, over six and a half million windmills were sold in the United States. The American Company of Chicago produced 80 percent of the world's supply. Historians believe that the combination of barbed wire and windmills doomed the open range ranches by restricting herds to limited areas while assuring them of water in their own pastures.

Branding was the primary means of determining the ownership of cattle, before and after white settlement. Walter Prescott Webb states (in The Great Plains) that cattle were "identified by their brands just as automobiles are today identified by their number plates." Letters of the alphabet were the most commonly used brands and, depending on their position, were described as plain, walking, running, tilting, flying, dragging, lazy, or crazy. The letter "O" was called a circle. If a half or quarter circle was placed above a letter, the letter was "swinging;" if below then the letter was "rocking." Lines were also used: a short line was a bar, a longer line a rail, and a diagonally placed line a slash. Cattlemen hoped to develop brands that were unique and complex, in order to make indentification easier and discourage rustlers from altering the brand. Each rancher branded a particular location on the animal, although that could be at any place on either side of the cow. Most commonly this was the left hip. Cattle also received earmarks, or distinctive notches cut into the ears. The purpose was also to aid in identification.

Pre-settlement Ranches in the Cherokee Outlet

It would now be useful to examine some of the factors and problems that confronted the range cattle industry in the Cherokee Outlet. The Outlet (frequently referred to as the Cherokee Strip) belonged by treaty to the Cherokee Nation. Although the Federal Government located several small tribes in the eastern portion of the Outlet during the late 1860s, over six million acres remained unoccupied in the late 1870s. As more and more cattlemen undertook grazing operations in the region, the Cherokees realized that a source of potential wealth lay at hand and they levied a grazing tax. By 1879 cattle grazed in almost every part of the Outlet. Many ranchers willingly paid the forty cents per head tax, though others refused to do so. Certain individuals shamelessly drove their cattle into the Outlet to evade the Kansas tax and later drove them back into Kansas to evade the Cherokee tax.

In order to protect their rights (as they saw them) in the Outlet, these cattlemen first created a very loose organization in 1880. It attempted to organize roundups and settle disputes among the cowmen. It also supported the payment of the Cherokee tax and sought to protect both its own members and the Cherokee Nation from those who refused to do so. The cattlemen also faced the hostility of the United States Government. Washington was always far more sensitive to the needs of farmers and homesteaders than to those of even the largest ranchers. Eager potential settlers placed great pressure upon Congress to open the Outlet to white settlement. David L. Payne's "boomers" brought the issue to the attention of the entire nation.

Outlet cattlemen recognized that their first priority was to protect their position by legitimizing their occupation of the Cherokee lands. In early 1883 they created the Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association and negotiated a five-year lease from the Cherokees at $100,000.00 per year. The Association included over

one hundred persons or companies owning over 300,000 head of cattle. Surveyors formally determined the extent of all ranges (see lease map).

The Association exercised tremendous power for about six years. It brought a semblance of law and order to the region. It treated the Cherokees with respect and earned the high regard of most of that tribe. A new treaty negotiated at the end of five years raised the annual rent to $200,000.00. However, in 1890 the Federal Government forced the Cherokees to cede the Outlet at a price of $1.25 an acre (The Cherokees much preferred the three dollars per acre offered by the Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association). President Benjamin Harrison ordered all cattle out of the Outlet by October 1, 1890. This move was undoubtedly political in nature since the famous run did not occur until 1893. It appealed to the growing anti-monopolistic feelings among the American people and went a long way towards satisfying potential homesteaders.

The Oklahoma historian Edward Everett Dale noted in "The Ranchmen in Oklahoma" (in Readings in Oklahoma History).

> The peculiar method of settling Oklahoma proved disastrous to many ranchmen. Large areas were settled in a single day; no time was given for adjustment; crowds of settlers, swarming across lands not yet open to settlement in order to reach others that were, burned the grass, cut the fences and brought disease to the cattle. Changes came with startling rapidity. The cattlemen unable to adapt themselves to these conditions suffered heavy financial losses, with the result that when the industry passed out many of them found themselves entirely ruined . . . Generally speaking the coming of agricultural settlement marked the passing of the ranch cattle industry in Oklahoma.

Dale is referring to the fact that after settlement ranching ceased to be Oklahoma's major industry. In a sense, the end of the range cattle industry or open range ranching marked the eclipse, for a time, of the ranching industry as a whole in this state. Not until after the 1940s did the cattle industry enjoy renewed prosperity in Oklahoma, far too late to save the great ranches of the Cherokee Strip. Some of the most significant of these were the Drumm Ranch,

the Comanche Pool, the T5, Day Brothers, the 101, and the Hi Kollar Ranch.

Several "stage ranches" existed in the Cherokee Outlet during the 1880s. They served the regular stage line that was established in 1874 to connect Caldwell, Kansas with Fort Reno. Though called ranches, these were more accurately stage stations, providing passing stages with a change of horses or food and shelter for weary passengers. The first station south of Caldwell was Polecat Station. The next stop was the Pond Creek Ranch, also called Sewell's Stockade, located south of Pond Creek, about one mile northwest of the Chisholm Trail (Probably about one mile south of present Jefferson, Oklahoma). The station may have been established in the early 1870s by a man named Sewell as protection for travellers on the Chisholm Trail. Anderson Hance ran the ranch in the early 1880s. One of the major stops on the route was the Skeleton Ranch at present North Enid. It was managed at one point by O. G. Wells and at another by John H. Cochrane. The managers of the stage ranches normally ran a small herd of cattle for their own profit. The manager of the Skeleton Ranch in the 1880s, Orman G. Wells, is an example.

President Harrison's 1890 proclamation ended the era of the great ranches in the Cherokee Outlet. A few ranches survived the settlement period. The 101 Ranch in present Kay County is the most famous example. Large outfits continued to operate in the western end of the Outlet until after the turn of the century. Settlers often considered Woods, Woodward, Ellis, and Harper Counties to be too dry for successful farming.

Even if President Harrison had not closed the Outlet to cattlemen in 1890, the range cattle industry was probably doomed because of factors external to Oklahoma. Overstocking of the ranges in the northern Great Plains led to economic disaster for ranchers during the bitterly cold winters of the mid-1880s, in which many thousands of cattle died. Some lost up to 90 percent of their

herds. To avoid bankruptcy ranchers dumped their surviving cattle on the market in such quantities and of such poor quality that the price of beef fell sharply, ruining hundreds. The arrival of large numbers of settlers on the plains, as in Oklahoma, changed the fundamental nature of ranching by forcing an end to the open range and adoption of closed pastures. While settlers clearly promoted this change, modern ranching practices would probably have developed anyway. By the 1890s consumers in the East demanded higher quality beef. The type of high grade cattle that could produce quality beef required care and individual attention that could not be provided on the open range. For such cattle a closed pasture environment was important.

Post-settlement Ranches in the Cherokee Outlet

The nature of cattle ranching changed substantially after settlement, as may be seen in a comparison of the dominant characteristics of the industry before and then after settlement. Huge cattle syndicates and companies characterized the period of the 1870s and 1880s. The Comanche Pool, for example, was owned by a large group of Kansas cattlemen. The Cattle Ranch and Land Company belonged to British investors who never saw Oklahoma. Management of such ranches was usually entrusted to hired foremen. Ranches were never larger than in the 1880s. The Comanche Pool covered 4,000 square miles in Oklahoma and Kansas and ran 150,000 head. Finally, herds grazed the open range, unencumbered by boundary lines and fences. Ranges were not well defined, even by the Association. Such things as rivers, streams, and hills constituted boundary lines. Thus, a number of herds might become mixed together.

Post-settlement ranches exhibited quite different sets of characteristics. Those that survived were smaller and operated by individuals. The demise of huge herds in the blizzards of 1880s convinced those who continued in ranching that

smaller herds could be more easily controlled, fed and protected. The influx of settlers also decreased the size of pastures and these became bounded by barbed wire. The greater attention that could then be given to individual cows allowed the breeding of high grade registered cattle.

Several large ranches in the western end of the Outlet continued to operate until settlement occurred. Then, in order to maintain their hold on the land, the ranchers required their hands to stake their own claims and even furnished them with building material for cabins. This permitted the cattlemen to control enough land to run cattle until they were able to sell out (The ranch of Charles and Hayden Kilgore, in present Woodward County, existed until 1902, when, their pastures filled with settlers, they sold their water rights, moved to Gage, and opened a feed yard). Nevertheless, farming became the most important economic activity in the Outlet and farmers generally regarded cattle raising as subsidiary to agriculture. It has also been estimated that in western Oklahoma, 1600 acres are needed to support 100 cows. This required a much larger economic unit than the 160 acre homestead (In fact, 160 acres was scarcely sufficient to support a farmer and his family. Many farmers, especially during the "Dust Bowl" days of the 1930s, failed to survive and sold their small holdings to larger farms or even ranches).

The way of life in the Cherokee Outlet changed dramatically for ranchers who did try to survive after the land rush of 1893. Railroads, for example, entered the Outlet as they did the rest of western Oklahoma, providing an alternative to the long cattle drives to Kansas. Towns appeared and, after a time, ranchers found themselves drawn to nearby communities and began to participate in community life. The Miller Brothers 101 Ranch, for instance, made Ponca City nationally known. As life became more settled, many ranchers either married or brought their families to Oklahoma. A wife and children could ease a cattleman's

loneliness and provide valuable economic benefits in the form of free labor. Some ranches even became a center for social life. George W. Carr in Ellis County frequently hosted dances and picnics at his home. The Miller Brothers' "White House" even became something of a tourist attraction.

Two notable exceptions to the demise of ranching in the Outlet deserve detailed attention. The 101 and Big V Ranches both prospered in the post-settlement era and gained national and, in the case of the 101, international reputations. Both were located in the extreme eastern end of the Outlet, in Kay County.

The most famous ranch in Oklahoma history was the One Hundred One (101) founded by Colonel George W. Miller in 1879. He leased 60,000 acres originally. In 1880 he adopted the "101" brand. Miller was something of a diplomat, keeping on good terms with the Federal Government, the Cherokees, and the Otoe and Ponca Indians. From the latter tribes he rented much land, at one time leasing some 250,000 acres. Miller died in 1903, at which time the ranch encompassed about 110,000 acres. His three sons assumed control of the ranch, overseen by their mother who contniued to reside with them in the beautiful ranch headquarters, a real mansion, called the "White House." Each brother specialized in a certain area of operations. Joe Miller took care of the ranch's agricultural activities. Zack Miller attended to the livestock. George L. Miller was a business wizard and under his direction the 101 became one of Oklahoma's important early businesses.

The 101 survived in part because it diversified its operations. When oil was discovered on their property the Miller Brothers created the 101 Ranch Oil Company (later known as Marland Oil and absorbed by Conoco). In the 1920s more than 150 wells operated on the ranch pumping from $20,000 to $25,000 worth of oil each day. The ranch possessed some of the finest herds of Holstein, Hereford,

and Shorthorn cattle in the country. Its apple orchard was the largest in the state (160 acres) and yielded as much as 40,000 bushels a year. The Millers produced about 100,000 bushels of wheat annually, storing it in their own grain elevators. The brothers set aside 10,000 acres simply for the production of enough corn to feed the ranch's livestock (which included sheep and hogs in addition to cattle). At its flamboyant height in the 1920s the ranch produced and processed its own agricultural products, livestock, fruit, dairy, and poultry products, and refined its own crude oil. The ranch also contained a meat packing plant, a tannery, a machine shop, an ice plant, a service station, and a power plant.

In 1905 the brothers established an annual "exhibition roundup" that became so successful that President Theodore Roosevelt personally invited them to perform in Washington in 1907. The Millers saw their chance and created one of the most popular and lucrative Wild West Shows in American history. It toured throughout the United States and Europe. This original show, noted for its gritty realism, ended in 1914 with the outbreak of World War I. A second Wild West Show, put together in the 1920s, lacked the former's realism. It was never very successful and probably only lost money.

In 1927 Joe Miller died in a tragic accident. His death was followed by drought, crop failure, a flood, and the sharp drop in oil revenues. In 1929 the family's financial expert, George, died. Then came the Depression. Zack Miller could not cope with this series of disasters and the ranch went into receivership and within a few years was liquidated.

The second major ranch in Kay County was the "Big V," founded in 1894 by William H. Vanselous. He leased or bought land from the Poncas about thirty miles south of Blackwell. In addition to running large herds of cattle, Vanselous became the most famous mule dealer in the United States. He also developed a drought-resistant variety of white corn that revolutionized the meal industry.

Vanselous' sons continued to operate the ranch after their father's death in 1930. Under their direction the ranch prospered for years. It lay along both banks of the Salt Fork River and included some of the most fertile agricultural land in Oklahoma. In 1951 the Vanselous family decided to sell the ranch at public auction and distribute the proceeds among all the Vanselous heirs. Though an effort was made to keep the ranch intact, it finally sold in seventeen separate tracts, varying in size from 40 to 1,150 acres. A. M. Hicks of Tulsa purchased the ranch headquarters and 1,129 acres for $267.50 per acre. The average price was $802.20 an acre for the 5,700 acres.

Ranching was the major economic activity in Oklahoma for a remarkably brief period; 1875-1895 are the accepted dates. During the 1890s settlers poured into Oklahoma and homesteaded on the range. The railroads and the oilmen soon followed the farmers and the nature of economic activity changed. It must have seemed to many ranchers that more powerful economic interests had pushed them aside. Diversification into agriculture did save some ranches. Such outfits as the Crouch Ranch or the Big V began to cultivate a wide variety of crops such as wheat, corn, or alfalfa. As noted above, the 101 Ranch produced and processed its own agricultural products, livestock, fruit, dairy, and poultry products, and refined its own crude oil. Oklahoma again became a cattle producing state only after agricultural mechanization became common during the 1930s and 1940s. The replacement of horses and mules with machines made more feed available and provided the farmer/rancher with extra time he could profitably devote to livestock. Finally, under the New Deal, the Federal Government began to provide agriculturalists with capital for development, much of which they invested in land and cattle.

Conclusion

Preparation of this study has revealed significant data gaps. For example, it is very difficult to determine precise ranch boundaries, especially for those ranches existing prior to white settlement that allowed their cattle to run on the open range. The lease map included in this paper is probably the best source for the location of early Outlet ranches, but it does not include ranches that may have existed before or after 1883 or ranches that ran cattle illegally on Indian leases. Determination of the boundaries of post-settlement ranches is possible but requires time-consuming research in county court houses and abstract offices (If the ranch still exists, however, the present owner may provide the information). While many books have been published during the last 50 years on ranching in the United States and Oklahoma, few contain specific information on individual ranches. A valuable source in some cases may be county histories, most of which provide biographical information on leading citizens, such as ranchers and their families. Unfortunately even these contain little material on the operation of their ranches (e.g. the number of cattle, physical size, location, etc.).

Research to fill these gaps should be promoted. This will undoubtedly require extensive field work in court houses and oral interviews with knowledgeable local individuals. The University of Oklahoma's Western History Collection and the Oklahoma Historical Society provide access to archival material (such as newspaper files or the Indian Pioneer Papers). Information on Oklahoma's ranches does exist but must be located, organized, and fully analyzed to be useful.

The significant impact of the ranching industry in the historical development of the state requires that this be done. The first whites to find economic prosperity in present Oklahoma were the ranchers of the 1870s and 1880s. Their activities attracted popular attention to Oklahoma and the boomers

began to demand the opening of the rich land to white settlement. If the ranchers had not entered Oklahoma when they did, it is possible that the white settlement and later statehood of Oklahoma would have taken place at different times and in different manners. To the popular mind, also, Oklahoma still has the image of a "cow country," to borrow Edward Everett Dale's phrase. This image is reflected, for example, in the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "Oklahoma," the source of the state song. Finally, the enduring wealth, social prestige, and political influence of the Oklahoma rancher (exercised through agencies such as the Cattlemen's Association) affects the development of the modern state. Clearly, one of the keys to understanding our state is an appreciation of the significance of ranching in its history.

Few physical resources remain from the Cherokee Outlet's open range ranches. The reasons are not difficult to imagine. Ranching has not been significant in much of the Outlet since 1893 and through the years time has taken its toll on resources that survived the 1893 run. More importantly are the type of resources left by the ranchers. Though some men ranched in the area for twenty years or more before settlement (e.g. Major Andrew Drumm), ranching there always had an uncertain future because of government hostility and intertribal conflicts among the Indians. Because of this uncertainty, ranchers were unwilling to put down permanent roots, to expend valuable capital resources on permanent dwellings when their lease might be revoked by tribe or government with little notice. Thus dugouts, soddies, or crude wooden shacks were more likely to characterize ranch buildings than anything else, and these were not built to stand more than a few years. For example, George W. Miller was ranching on what became to the 101 Ranch by 1880, but it was not until after settlement that he built his first permanent, frame home and moved his family into the Outlet.

Resources left by pre-settlement ranches tended to be destroyed by either the homesteaders or, more likely by time and the elements.

Individual Ranches

The following is a list of the significant ranches in that part of Oklahoma that was the Cherokee Outlet, and contains basic data on each ranch. The amount of information available varies from ranch to ranch, but included herein are such essential facts as location, dates, size, founder, existing resources, and a very brief history of each. In preparing this list, the writers followed Walter Prescott Webb's definition of a ranch with the qualification that the outfit run at least one hundred head of cattle or, if the size of the herd is not known, its range be large enough to support that number (i.e. a minimum of 1600 acres). A number of criteria were used in selecting ranches for inclusion: physical size, number of cattle, net income, prominence outside local area, owner (importance of him/her), number of years in operation (or still operating), and cultural/economic/political contributions of the individual ranch or rancher to the state or nation (Note: The legal description refers to the location of the headquarters).

PRE-SETTLEMENT RANCHES

Chain C. Ranch

Location: Harper County (northeast of present Rosston).
Legal Description: None Available

Dates: 1892-?

Size: Unknown

Founder: C. T. Herring of the Cimarron and Crooked Creek Cattle Company

Existing resources: Unknown

History: During the run, Herring claimed land with a good water supply and then offered to buy other claims for $1000 if well-watered and $500 if not. In this way he put together the Chain C. Ranch.

Comanche Pool

Location: Woods County (vicinity of Waynoka)
Legal Description: None Available

Size: Covered most of Woods County; 150,000 head of cattle.

Founder: Comanche Cattle Pool (large group of Kansas cattlemen).

Existing resources: Unknown

History: At its peak the Pool ran about 150,000 head but the deadly blizzards of 1885 and 1886-1887 decimated the herd. The demise of the huge Comanche Pool thereafter convinced those who continued in ranching that smaller herds could be more easily controlled, fed, and protected. After 1887, individuals, rather than large companies, tended to characterize the cattle industry.

Eddleman Ranch

Location: Woodward County
Legal Description: None Available

Dates: 1880s and 1890s

Size: Forty sections

Founder: Eddleman Brothers (Ira and Frank)

Existing Resources: Unknown

History: This was the largest ranch in Woodward County. Its headquarters stood in the northwest corner of its range, on the east side of Clear Creek.

Half-Diamond R Ranch

Location: Garfield County (ten or twelve miles northwest of Enid).
Legal Description: None Available

Dates: 1880s

Size: 100,000 acres

Founder: Cragin Cattle Company of Boston

Existing Resources: Unknown

History: The ranch extended from the Chisholm Trail on the east to the Salt Fork River on the north. It then stretched nearly to the western county line and thence to about North Enid.

JH Circle Ranch

Location: Garfield County (vicinity of the south end of Enid's 16th Street on the north side of old Boggy Creek).
Legal Description: Sec. 15 (SW-1/4, SW-1/4), T22N, R6W.

Dates: 1889-1893

Size: 60,000 aacres

Founder: Winsor Brothers

Existing resources: Site only

History: The ranch headquarters consisted of a half-dugout and a log house.

Kilgore Ranch

Location: Woodward County
Legal Description: None Available

Dates: ca. 1890-1902

Size: Ten sections

Founder: Charles and Hayden Kilgore

Existing resources: Unknown

History: The ranch existed until 1902 when, their pastures filled with settlers, the Kilgores sold their water rights, moved to Gage, and opened a feed yard.

101 Ranch

Location: Kay County (vicninity of Ponca City)
Legal Description: Sec. 25 (SE-1/4, SE-1/4, SE-1/4), T25N, R1E.

Dates: 1879-1931

Size: 110,000 acres

Founder: Colonel George W. Miller

Existing resources: Two-story general store/office, foundations of ranch house (the "White House"), various siloes and other buildings.
Condition of resources: Varies. General store in excellent condition. White House in ruins. Other buildings are deteriorated.

History: The 101 Ranch (named for its brand) was one of the most famous in the United States in the early Twentieth Century. George Miller died in 1903 and the ranch went to his three sons: Joe (who supervised the ranch's agricultural activities), Zack (who attended to the livestock), and George L. Miller (who directed the financial and business operations). The ranch diversified into farming, oil production and a host of other activities. It became famous for its Wild West Show which toured throughout the United States and Europe. But the show drained money from the ranch, which went bankrupt and closed during the Depression. This site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Pond Creek Ranch

Location: Grant County (vicinity of Jefferson)
Legal description: Sec. 24 (SW-1/4, SE-1/4, SE-1/4), T28N, R6W

Dates: ca. 1870-1893

Size: Unknown

Founder: Sewell

Existing Resources: Site only

History: The Pond Creek Ranch, also known as Sewell's Stockade after its founder, was originally established to protect travellers on the Chisholm Trail. It was later a station on the stage line from Caldwell, Kansas to Fort Reno.

Skeleton Ranch

Location: Garfield County (vicinity of North Enid)
Legal Description: Sec. 33 (NE-1/4, SE-1/4, NW-1/4) T23N, R6W

Dates: Uncertain; probably ca. 1874-1893

Size: Unknown

Founder: Unknown

Existing resources: Site only

History: The Skeleton Ranch was a stage ranch, one of the stops on the stage line between Caldwell, Kansas and Fort Reno. It was managed at one point by O. G. Wells and at another by Anderson Hance.

T5 Ranch

Location: Southwestern Alfalfa County
Legal Description: Sec. 8 (SE-1/4, SE-1/4, SE-1/4, SE-1/4), T24N, R12W

Dates: ca. 1880-1893

Size: Range covered southwestern Alfalfa County, southern Woods County, and western Major County.

Founder: Texas Land and Cattle Company

Existing resources: Site only. When the house of homesteader W. B. McAdoo was demolished in the spring of 1983, the cedar post foundations of the old T5 ranch house were uncovered.

Tuttle Ranch

Location: Garfield County (west of Enid)
Legal description: Sec. 34 (SE-1/4, NE-1/4), T23N, R7W

Dates: 1883-1893

Size: Unknown

Founder: Sol Tuttle

Eixsting resources: Site only

History: The Tuttle ranch lay on Turkey Creek near the old Lakewood Park site, northwest of Enid. Tuttle's brand was the memorable "mule shoe up, mule shoe down."

Two-Bar Ranch

Location: Garfield County (south of Enid)
Legal Description: Sec. 10 (NW-1/4, NE-1/4), T21N, R6W

Dates: 1883-1893

Size: Unknown

Founder: Hewins and Titus

Existing resources: Site only

History: The Two-Bar Ranch lay on Skeleton Creek east of present Waukomis. Almost 14,000 head died on this ranch alone during the bitter winter of 1884-1885.

U Ranch

Location: Central Alfalfa County (vicinity of Driftwood)
Legal Description: Sec. 6 (SE-1/4, SW-1/4), T27N, R10W.

Size: 150,000 acres (most of Alfalfa County)

Founder: Major Andrew Drumm

Existing resources: Site only (marked by privately erected monument).

History: Drumm was part owner of the Comanche Pool and he served as director of the Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association. His own ranch was positioned between the forks of the Medicine and Salt Fork Rivers and so it was very well watered. Drumm's ranch was probably the first ranch in the Cherokee Outlet. Because the ranch was centrally located, it became the gathering place for the great spring roundups on the Outlet.

POST-SETTLEMENT RANCHES

Big V Ranch

Location: Kay County (southwest of Ponca City)
Legal description: Sec. 27 (NE-1/4, SE-1/4, NE-1/4), T25N, R1E.

Dates: 1894-1951

Size: 10,000 acres

Founder: William H. Vanselous

Existing resources: Large, two-story white frame house.
Condition of resources: Excellent

History: In addition to running large herds of cattle, Vanselous became one of the most famous mule dealers in America. He also developed a drought-resistant variety of white corn that revolutionized the meal industry. The ranch lay along both banks of the Salt Fork River and included some of the most fertile agricultural land in Oklahoma. Vanselous' sons, Kay and Oklahoma, continued to operate the ranch after their father's death in 1930. In 1951 the Vanselous family decided to sell the ranch at public auction.

Davison Ranch

Location: Ellis County (southeast of Arnett)
Legal description: Sec. 30, T18N, R22W.

Dates: 1910-1923

Size: 100,000 acres; 5,000 head of cattle

Founder: George Elbert Davison

Existing resources: Small bunkhouse in good condition; ruins of ranch house.

History: Though short-lived, this ranch was the largest in Oklahoma in 1920. Davison recognized that southern Ellis County was suited to cattle grazing rather than agriculture. As the homestead farms in the area began to fail, Davison purchased one after the other, finally acquiring over 400 such farms. The sharp depression following World War I forced Davison to sell his cattle and land. He continued to manage a part of his former ranch.

T-Bar Ranch

Location: Ellis County (vicinity of Camargo)
Legal Description: Sec. 13 (NW-1/4, NE-1/4), T18N, R21W

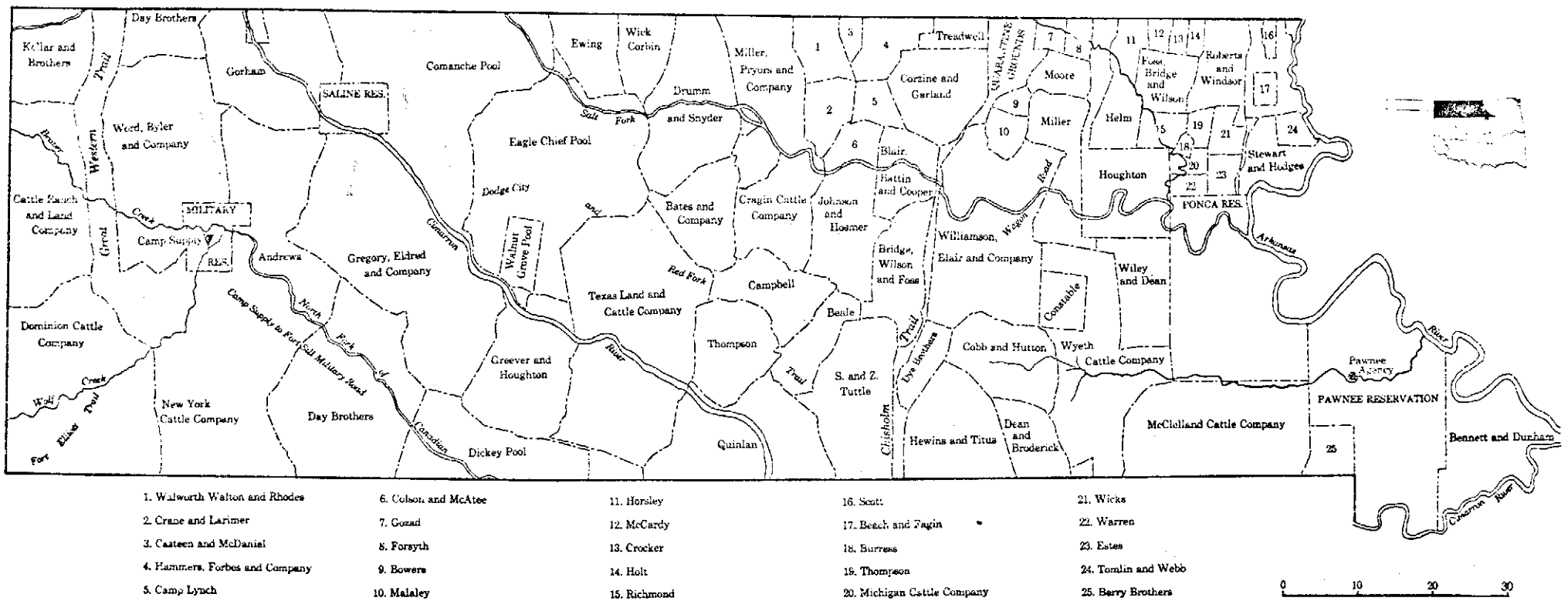
Dates: 1894-ca. 1930

Size: 39 sections

Founder: George W. Carr

Existing resources: Large two-story log house
Condition of resource: Good.

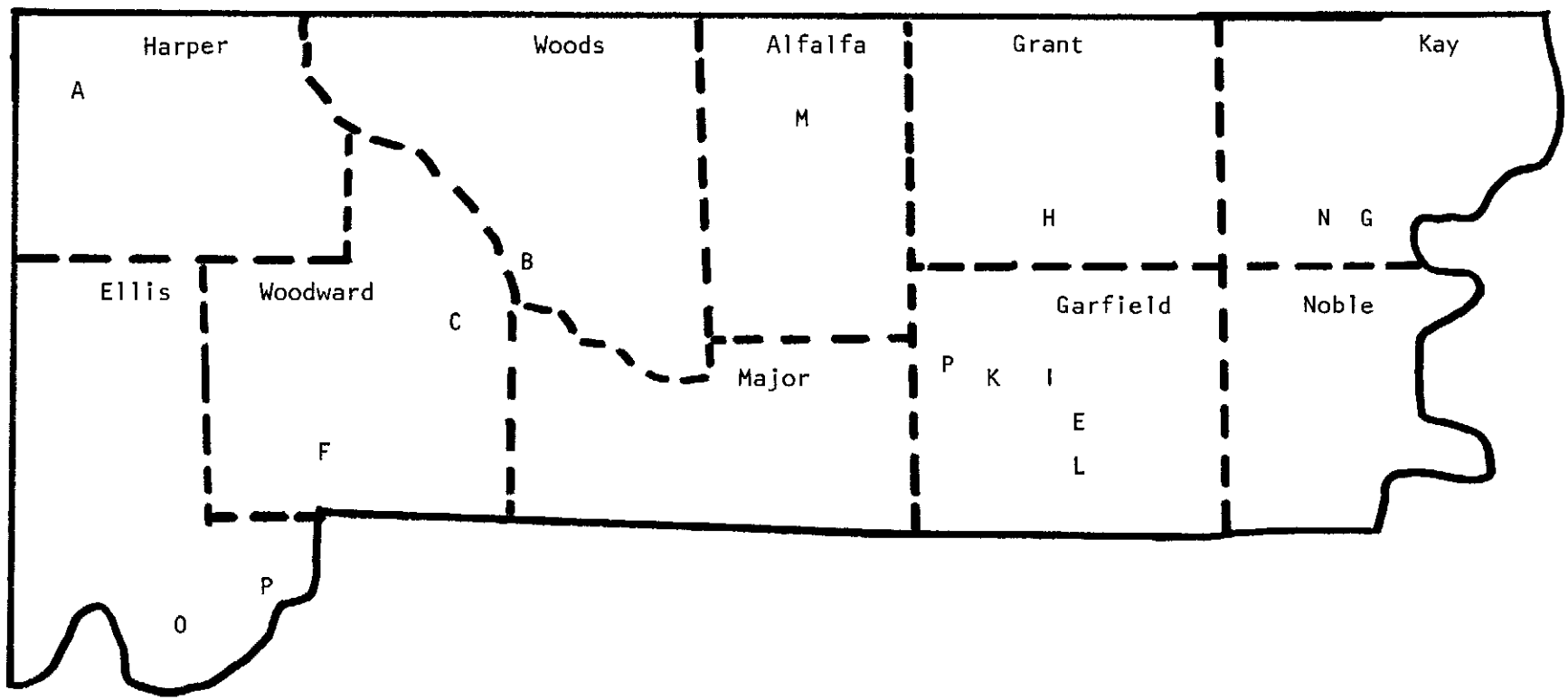
History: Shortly after the run Carr filed on land on the north bank of the South Canadian River. Carr introduced the first quarter horses into western Oklahoma. His home was the social center of the area.



1. Walworth Walton and Rhodes
2. Crane and Larimer
3. Casteen and McDaniel
4. Hammers, Forbes and Company
5. Camp Lynch
6. Colson and McAtee
7. Gozad
8. Forsyth
9. Bowers
10. Malaley
11. Horsley
12. McCardy
13. Crocker
14. Holt
15. Richmond
16. Scott
17. Beach and Fagin
18. Burress
19. Thompson
20. Michigan Cattle Company
21. Wicks
22. Warren
23. Estes
24. Tomlin and Webb
25. Berry Brothers

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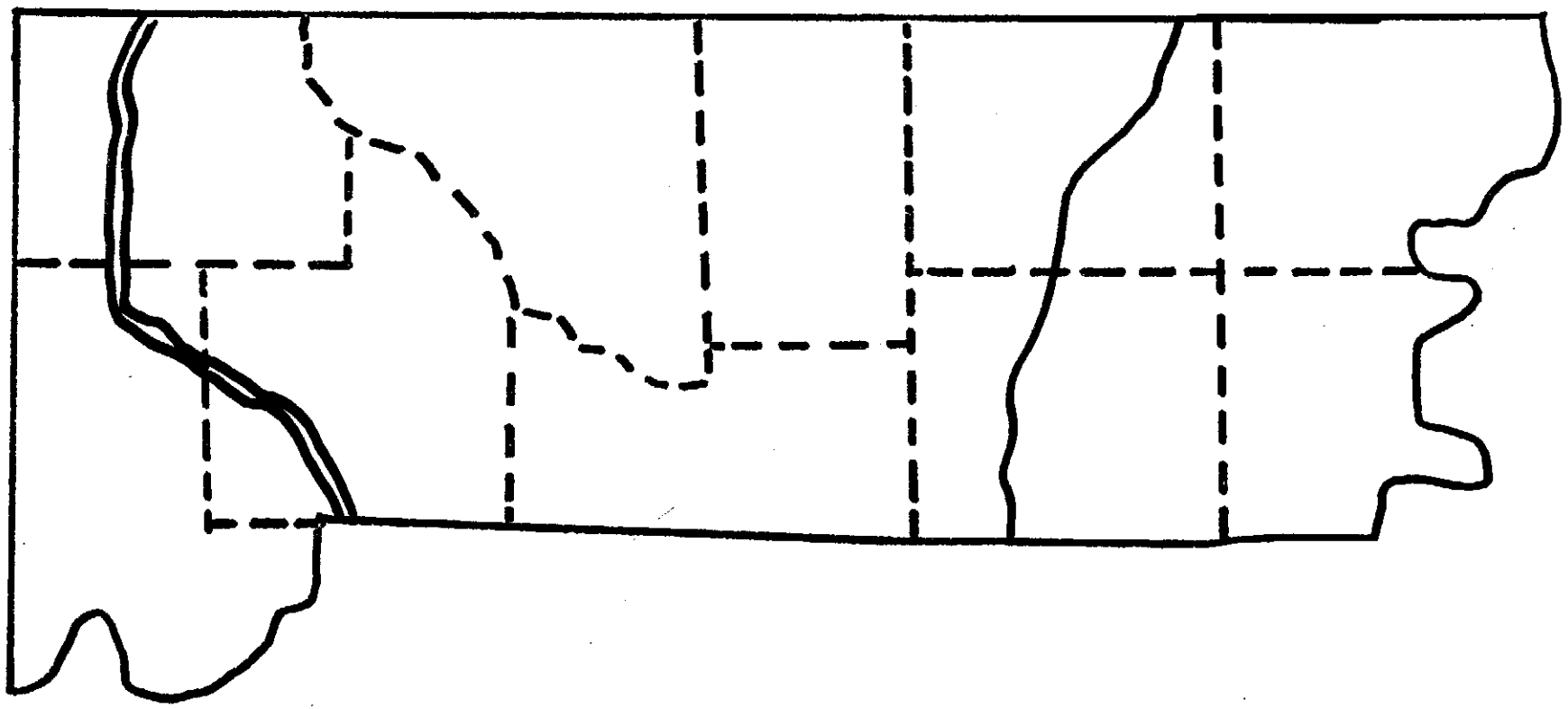
Pre-settlement Ranches:

A. Chain C
B. Comanche Pool
C. Eddleman
D. Half-Diamond-R
E. JH Circle
F. Kilgore
G.
H. Pond Creek
I. Skeleton
J. T-5
K. Tuttle
L. 2-Bar
M. "U" (Drumm)

Post-settlement Ranches:

N. Big V
O. Davison
P. T-Bar

CATTLE TRAILS



Great Western Trail

Chisholm Trail

Big V Ranch House
Ponca City, Oklahoma
1903



George Carr Ranch House
Camargo, Oklahoma
1894 - 1895



National Register Nominations and Criteria

National Register of Historic Places Nominations have been prepared in 1984 by the Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, History Department, Oklahoma State University for the following ranch headquarter properties:

1. Big V Ranch House (vicinity of Ponca City, Oklahoma)
2. Carr Ranch House (vicinity of Camargo, Oklahoma)

The following ranch property is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

1. 101 Ranch (vicinity of Ponca City, Oklahoma)

The following criteria for determining the eligibility of properties for the National Register of Historic Places have been taken from How to Complete National Register Forms (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 6, the "Criteria for Evaluation."

Criteria for Evaluation:

The following criteria are designed to guide the states, Federal agencies, and the Secretary of the Interior in evaluating potential entries (other than areas of the National Park System and National Historic Landmarks) for the National Register.

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns or our history; or

B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction; or

D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

A. a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or

B. a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or

C. a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his productive life; or

D. a cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or

E. a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or

F. a property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historial significance; or

G. a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

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