RESOURCE PROTECTION PLANNING PROJECT

RANCHING IN CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

REGION SIX

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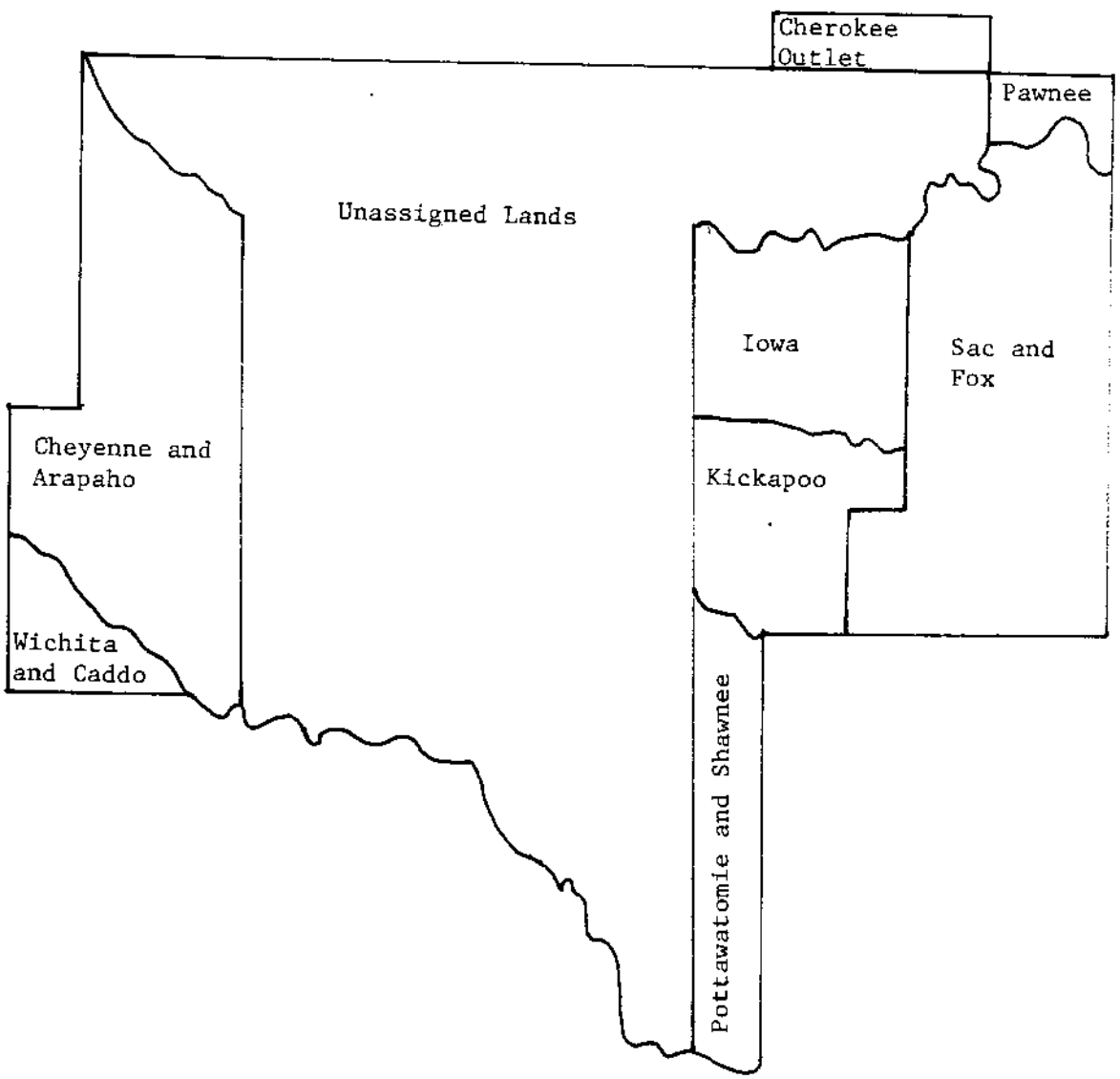
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RANCHING IN CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

Cattle ranching has been a significant factor in the historical development of the present state of Oklahoma. In central Oklahoma the cattle industry enjoyed a brief period of dominance in the late nineteenth century but farming replaced ranching as the region's primary economic enterprise after white settlement began in 1889. Not until the 1930s, when the Great Depression drove many farmers into bankruptcy did agriculturists turn to raising beef cattle on a major scale. However, the early importance of ranching cannot be ignored. This paper's goal is to provide the historical context for the identification, evaluation, and preservation of ranch sites in central Oklahoma.

A ranch is a rural, agricultural enterprise that derives its primary income from the production of beef cattle for market. A farming operation is based on the cultivation of the soil and the production of crops for consumption. Many modern ranches have diversified into crop production (usually cash crops such as cotton or wheat) but still depend primarily on their cattle for economic survival. A variety of buildings have always been found on ranches. The ranch house was the rancher's home and headquarters. Because he, and possibly his family, resided in it, the ranch house usually received the most care in construction and maintenance and is probably the most likely to have survived, in some form, to the present. Pioneer ranch houses were often built of sod, stone, or logs, depending on the available materials. Successful ranches in the twentieth century produced ranch houses of sawed lumber or brick; on very successful ranches these may be palatial in size. Nineteenth-century ranches in central Oklahoma also had cattle pens and horse corrals but, for reasons discussed below, very little else in the way of improvements. Modern ranches have barns, almost always wooden, that provide shelter for sick animals and winter feed. Some ranches also have stables for horses, but since the advent of the pickup truck these are not as essential as in the past.

REGION SIX: 1865-1890



THE CHISOLM TRAIL

The history of ranching in central Oklahoma begins with establishment of the Chisholm Trail because the famous cattle "highway" first brought ranchers into the region. Even before the Civil War (1861-1865) Texas cattlemen trailed their herds across what is now eastern Oklahoma via the Shawnee Trail in order to supply wagon trains bound for California with cattle or the Kansas City stockyards with beef. But these herds were relatively small, perhaps only a few hundred head. After the Civil War, eastern cities, undergoing a population boom caused by industrialization, required large quantities of meat to feed their hungry masses. At the same time hundreds of thousands of cattle grazed on the lush pastures of southern Texas, an area untouched by the war. Two developments were necessary for the owners of these cattle to meet the East's needs. First, living cattle had to be transported from the plains region in which they lived to the slaughter houses of St. Louis or Chicago. The railroads solved this problem by pushing into southern Kansas in the mid-1860s. Secondly, the beef had to be shipped unspoiled to eastern markets; the invention of the refrigerated railroad car made this possible. Thus the beef could easily reach potential customers, but the cattleman still had to reach the Kansas railheads. The solution was to simply walk, or trail, the cows to Kansas. (The high shipping rates the railroads charged to haul cattle made trailing more profitable than simply loading the animals in Texas and this continued to be the case until the 1890s.) In 1866 Texans drove about 200,000 head of cattle to Baxter Springs, Kansas, or Sedalia, Missouri, over the Shawnee Trail, but for a variety of reasons they made little money. Most Texas cattle carried ticks infected with a deadly disease known as "Texas Fever." The hardy longhorn cattle of Texas were immune, but the disease devastated herds in the Indian Territory, Kansas, and Missouri. Kansas placed a quarantine on such cattle and armed gangs in Missouri threatened drovers with violence. In addition, the

Shawnee Trail crossed terrain that was too hilly and wooded; whole herds occasionally became hopelessly lost.

A Springfield, Illinois, cattle dealer named Joseph G. McCoy brilliantly solved these problems. He foresaw that supplying the hungry East with low-priced cattle would involve millions of dollars and he knew he might have a share of that wealth if he could only locate a railhead not under quarantine for Texas Fever and closer than Missouri. Because the Kansas quarantine only applied to the eastern portion of that state, McCoy chose the small village of Abilene in central Kansas as the best location for a railhead. He then convinced the Kansas Pacific railroad to subsidize his plans and build the appropriate rails and sidings for cattle cars. McCoy himself purchased land adjacent to the rail terminus and constructed cattle pens and corrals. By the summer of 1867 he was ready, and advertisements began appearing in Texas papers about the new market in Abilene, safe from quarantine laws and angry vigilantes. By 1868 Abilene was a booming cow town and by the early 1870s a million head of cattle had passed through. The fattest animals were generally shipped to the Chicago packing houses for slaughter. Others were shipped, or more likely driven, to ranges as far north as Montana for fattening. As the years passed cowmen discovered that the low altitude and warm climate of south Texas made an excellent breeding ground for their stock, while the bracing climate of the Great Plains was the best feeding ground. Whatever their ultimate destination, the cattle had to cross the present state of Oklahoma. The route they took to reach Abilene and other rail towns was the Chisholm Trail.

The Chisholm Trail derived its name from the half-Scot, half-Cherokee who blazed it--Jesse Chisholm. Chisholm was a trader with stores in present-day Wichita, Kansas, and the Council Grove area of present-day Oklahoma City. Cattlemen used the route he marked out in trailing their herds and eventually the entire path from the Red River Station in the south to Caldwell, Kansas in the

north became known as the Chisholm Trail. Six million head of cattle probably crossed the trail between 1866 and 1889. The Chisholm Trail entered central Oklahoma at the Bond Crossing near the ghost town of Silver City. It had been a single path through southern Oklahoma, but at this point it split into two different routes. The western portion proceeded northwest and passed through the western edge of El Reno and crossed the North Canadian two and one half miles west of the city. At that point it merged with the Arkansas City, Kansas--Ft. Sill stage line and both headed slightly northeast, passing through Caddo Springs, Okarche, Kingfisher, and crossed over the Cimarron River about one mile south of Dover, there rejoining the eastern route. This latter had gone through Yukon after fording the South Canadian, and north of Yukon it crossed the North Canadian. It then went a mile west of Piedmont, turned slightly northwest and forded the Cimarron two and one-half miles east of Dover. Three miles further north the two routes merged and the trail then almost exactly followed the path of present highway 81 through Hennessey and thence out of the central Oklahoma region. Like all cattle trails, the Chisholm was not a narrow pathway, but was very broad, as much as twelve miles wide in some places.

Drives began in Texas, wherever a rancher's home range was located. In terms of equipment each drive required a chuck wagon, a cook, a wrangler, enough cowboys to control the herd, and sufficient horses for each cowboy to change mounts several times a day. The cattle involved were longhorns. The name derived from the huge set of horns each steer bore; a spread of six feet was not unusual. These Texas longhorns were very strong and hardy, able to walk long distances with minimal food and water. Their horns provided excellent defense against predators and they were immune to the tick fever they carried with them. Finally, given sufficient food, these cattle actually gained weight on the trail and so arrived at market heavier than when they left Texas.

Contrary to popular belief, the average cattle drive was not particularly exciting. For the first few days after leaving the home ranch, cattlemen drove their herds very hard in order to wear them down and accustom them to life on the trail. By the time they reached the Indian Territory the strongest steers had assumed leadership positions at the front of the herd while the other cattle took their places elsewhere in the column. Each day a particular cow walked in the same place in the herd. The slowest or weakest fell immediately to the rear where many remained for the entire journey. These were the "drags," and their protection was essential for the drive to succeed. The cowboys surrounded the herd. The drover always assigned the least experienced hands to the drag because seasoned cowboys refused to endure the constant dust kicked up by the herd as it traveled. At the side of the herd were the flankers and swing men who ensured that the cattle remained together and prevented strays from wandering away. Close to the front were the pointers, who held responsibility for directing the cattle onto the proper course. The trail boss was the ultimate authority on the trail. He chose the crew and the cowboys obeyed his will. He also chose the course taken by the herd and was responsible for seeing that the cattle were well fed and watered throughout the drive. The trail boss might be the rancher who owned the cattle, the ranch's foreman, or a professional drover hired to deliver the cattle to market safely.

A day on the trail began at 3:30 or 4:00 in the morning. The trail boss ate breakfast first so that he could ride ahead and locate enough water to sustain the herd and a good place for the next night. The pointers ate next, then roused the cattle and allowed the animals to spread out and graze. When all the men were in position, the herd moved slowly forward and the animals grazed as they walked. By mid-morning the cattle were satisfied and plodded steadily onward without complaint. About noon they reached the chuck wagon, waiting at a prearranged

point. The hands ate quickly, in two shifts, and the herd continued forward until the approach of nightfall. Each man changed mounts at least once a day, twice if necessary. The wrangler cared for the horses and made certain they were available when needed. At night he placed them in a temporary rope corral, after providing each cowboy with a night horse. Generally, the herd was asleep by 9:00 each night. A day's drive averaged about ten miles and was usually dull and uneventful. No one wanted excitement on a drive because that usually meant a stampede that could scatter cattle over dozens of square miles and it would require days to round them up. Stampedes normally occurred at night; sleeping cattle could easily panic when startled awake by a sudden loud noise. Thus night herding was essential and the men stood watch on the herd in two-hour shifts. (Each man received only about four hours of sleep a night.) Night herding was a weary chore and was usually boring. Boredom, however, was much preferred to an electrical storm; nothing frightened cattle more than thunder and lightning.

The key to a drive's success was the trail boss. He had to be a good judge of cattle and men and understand the behavior of both. Above all, he had to know the land to be crossed, including particularly the Indian Territory. Despite the romantic legends surrounding them, the cowboys were much less essential. In fact, the drives were really training programs for new, inexperienced cowboys. Range veterans were usually needed on the home ranch, so the "greenies" made the long trek north in the dust and dirt, amid the stink of the cattle.

The herds that crossed Indian Territory before the Civil War were small; the Chisholm Trail enabled drovers to move large herds with relative security, though it took time for trail bosses to become proficient at caring for large numbers of cattle. The first drive on the trail required the services of 54 cowhands to handle 2,400 steers. As experience brought expertise, cattlemen found that they could easily move 2,500 head with ten cowboys. (The average-

sized herd was 1,500; 2,500 was about the maximum safe number.) As the railroads moved south and west in Kansas, first Newton, then Wichita, Ellsworth, and finally Dodge City became the drives' terminal point. Farmers gradually settled around each of these towns in turn, forcing cattlemen to move further west. By 1875 the fields and buckshot of Kansas farmers had all but closed the Chisholm Trail north of present Oklahoma. These homesteaders remained fearful of Texas Fever and the Kansas legislature slowly pushed the quarantine line further west. Finally, only Dodge City remained exempt. Many drovers abandoned the Chisholm in favor of the Western Cattle Trail, blazed in 1874 on a more direct route for Dodge City through western Oklahoma. Other drovers continued traveling the Chisholm Trail, but took the Dodge City cut-off north of Dover that followed the Cimarron River northwest into Kansas. By the mid-1880s the Chisholm Trail was clearly doomed. Settlement was thick even around Dodge City and armed men demanded payment for the drovers' use of water holes in Kansas. Kansas farmers and ranchers, and even ranchers in Oklahoma's Cherokee Strip, protested the passage over their land of cattle still infected with Texas Fever. By 1886 all states surrounding Texas and Indian Territory had passed strict laws prohibiting the entry of south Texas cattle. When white settlement commenced in 1889, the cattle trails in Oklahoma were already empty.

CENTRAL OKLAHOMA RANCHES BEFORE 1889

It was the Chisholm Trail, and the booming cattle industry in general, that produced the first true ranches in central Okahoma. In the 1870s and 1880s cattlemen often realized profits of 25 to 35 percent each year with the result that ranchers across the Great Plains greatly expanded the size of their herds. As northern ranges filled with cattle in the late 1870s, the Indian Territory remained largely empty, protected from white penetration, or at least permanent occupancy, by federal law. Gradually this changed. The military allowed beef

contractors to pasture their herds near the Indian agencies for eventual issue to the tribes. Thus herds gradually accumulated in the vicinity of Darlington in western Canadian county. Ranchers in Kansas and Texas allowed their cattle to drift across the border in the Territory. More importantly for central Oklahoma, drovers passing through the area recognized that its gently rolling plains and lush, nutritious grasses were ideal for grazing cattle on a permanent basis. Thus they adopted the practice of moving the herds off the trail and into the interior for weeks or months at a time. On Indian lands, as will be seen, ranchers often negotiated leases with the tribes. On the Unassigned Lands they simply "squatted."

All these cowmen practiced open range ranching, which simply meant that they allowed their cattle to graze freely on the open plains, unrestricted by fences. This style of ranching was characteristic not only of Oklahoma, but of the entire Great Plains region in the late nineteenth century. At that time the Plains region was empty of settlers, as was Oklahoma. Just as importantly the Plains was empty of buffalo and Indians. The great herds of bison that once wandered over Oklahoma and surrounding states had fallen to the greed of white hunters; the Indians of the Plains had depended on the buffalo for their livelihood and the removal of those beasts forced even the proudest warriors onto reservations in southwestern Oklahoma. Thus no obstacle stood to bar the spread of the cattle kingdom from Texas to Canada. A thin strand of metal containing sharp spikes, barbed wire, destroyed this "empire of beef." Barbed wire fences were inexpensive and very simple to construct. They protected the farmer's cultivated field and enabled ranchers to confine their cattle within secure pastures. This latter ended the longhorn's usefulness because within the confines of a securely fenced pasture ranchers could devote the care and attention required for the breeding of high-grade registered cattle.

In establishing an open-range ranch in central Oklahoma a cattleman first located a flowing stream that would provide animals and men with an ample supply of water. The Cimarron, North Canadian, and South Canadian rivers were the most popular locations. The rancher could then graze his animals on both sides of the stream for ten or fifteen miles in any direction. The basic purpose of these ranches was to fatten the cattle, and only incidentally to increase the size of the herd. Breeding was the primary responsibility of the home ranch, usually located in Texas. As barbed wire was never used on these ranches, there was nothing preventing the cattle from wandering far from the home range. A longhorn's ability to walk many miles in search of food or water was a positive factor on the trail; on the ranch it created very real problems of control. Thus "line riders" constantly patrolled the fringes of the chosen range of each ranch, establishing the extent of each rancher's domain and protecting the cattle from straying or falling victim to Indians, rustlers, wild animals (cougars caused much havoc on the North Canadian), and disease.

At best, the housing on these early ranches was primitive. These ranches were essentially transient in nature, even though they might occupy the same pasture for years at a time. The Halsell Ranch in Logan County grazed its herds along the Cimarron for almost nine years. However, ranches in the Unassigned Lands existed without government sanction and the ranchers held no legal title to the land. Even on Indian land where it was possible to negotiate a lease from cooperative tribesmen, government hostility and Indian unpredictability allowed few ranchers to feel secure on their ranges. Under such conditions ranchers were unwilling to expend the time and money on constructing permanent ranch buildings. The most popular building type was the dugout, often constructed on the river bank. It often had a roof covered with logs and overlaid with prairie sod; or it might have two rooms and a chimney, covered on the outside with logs,

lumber, or adobe. The particular dugout depended heavily on available materials. The original Halsell headquarters on the Cimarron was built within two small sand hills sixteen feet apart. The cowboys excavated a room in each hill, set the doors facing each other, and placed a wooden roof over the space between. The interior of each room was sixteen by twenty feet and covered with split cedar logs. The men slept in the rooms and ate their meals in the breezeway.

The cowboys were the ranch employees who performed the daily tasks connected with the care of cattle. They were men with little or no formal education, but were fiercely proud of their way of life and considered themselves much superior to other men, particularly farmers. Most cowboys were young, in their teens and twenties. Indeed, cattlemen themselves were often not much older; Ralph Collins, owner of the Red Fork Ranch, was only 23 when he purchased the ranch and stage station in 1881.

Ranches in central Oklahoma were owned either by individuals, partnerships, or companies. The first two types seem to have been most common, although the arrival of large amounts of Eastern and British capital in the cattle industry in the 1880s increased the popularity of corporate-owned ranches. Most cowboys preferred cattlemen willing to work alongside them on the range. The ranch hands always resented unseen companies that tended to look upon employees as little more than servants. For the former type of employer the cowboy would gladly die, but for the latter he felt no affection or respect.

Roundups provided the most excitement for central Oklahoma ranches. Open range roundups required considerable cooperation among ranches in an area because even with the best line riders cattle tended to wander far and mix with nearby herds. Each spring all the ranchers and their hands in an area met on a prearranged date and site, along with their horses and chuck wagons. The entire group then moved across the range gathering cattle. Each day circle riders rode

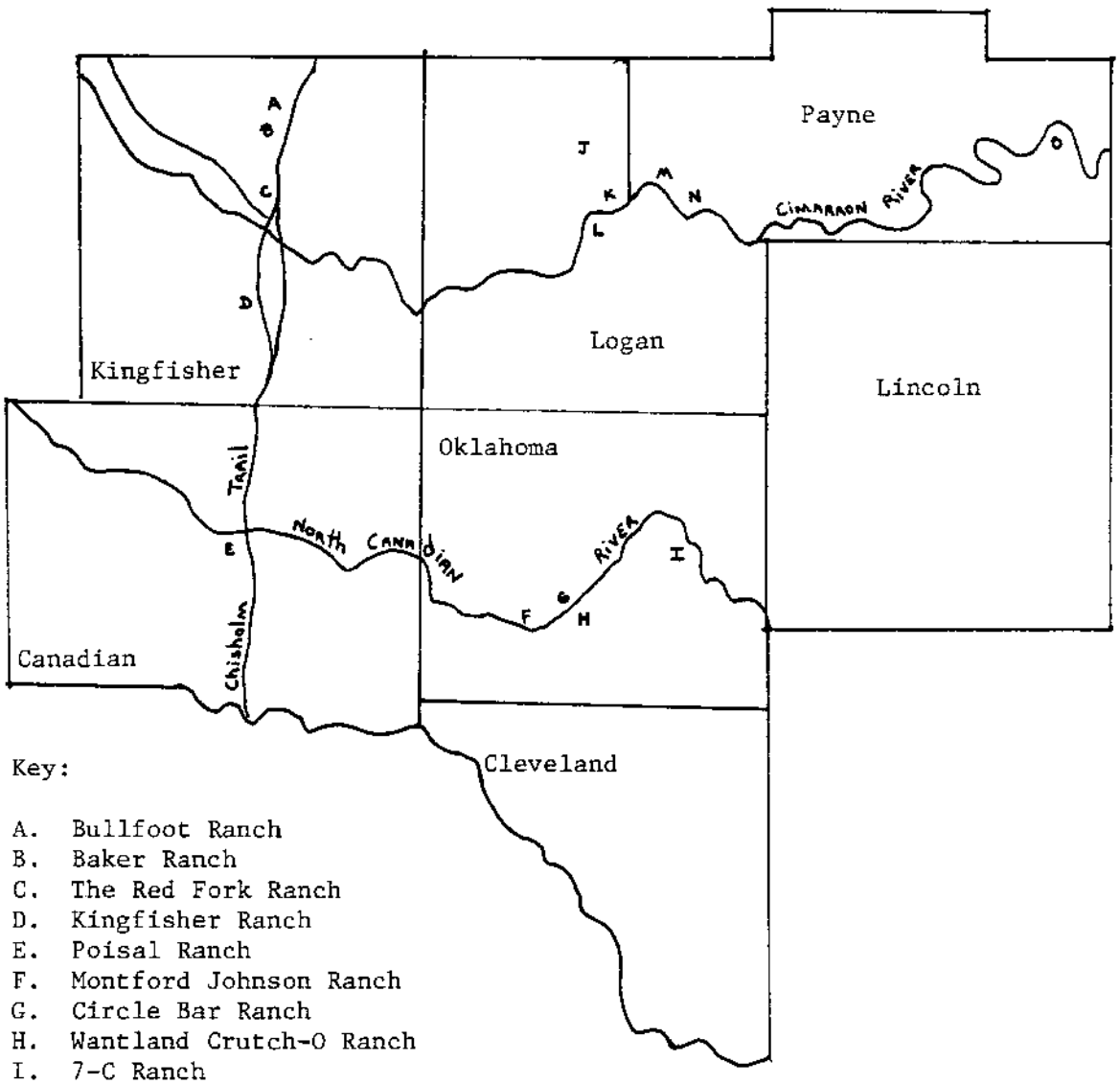
out and swept all the cattle in an area toward a set point. Once there, the cowboys separated, or cut, the cattle from the big herd according to brands. Each ranch had its own established brand, a symbol of ownership burned into the hide of the cow. The rancher on whose range the roundup happened to be that day cut his animals first, followed by the others. Then began the branding of calves born during the preceeding winter. Ropers threw loops over each calf, pulled it down and dragged it toward the fire. Flankers then held the animal down while one cowboy branded the calf with the owner's brand and another cut the earmark. Bull calves were also castrated at this time, although about one out of ten bulls were left whole for stud. A calf always received its mother's brand. When the branding ended, the herd from the local range remained behind while the other herds continued on with the roundup. Every three or four days riders appeared to escort these cattle back to their home ranges. This process often took many weeks. The purpose of the spring roundup was to brand calves and reconstruct the herds after the long winter. Roundups were also held during the fall when new calves received their brands and the fattest steers were removed for the drive to market. Such roundups are no longer necessary on modern ranches where barbed wire fences prevent cattle from straying onto other ranges and into other herds.

THE UNASSIGNED LANDS

Before white settlement commenced in 1889, the central Oklahoma region lay within five separate administrative units: the Cheyenne and Arapaho reservation (comprising western Kingfisher and western Canadian counties); the Sac and Fox reservation (southeastern Payne and eastern Lincoln counties); the Iowa reservation (northwestern Lincoln and far eastern Logan counties); the Kickapoo reservation (southwestern Lincoln and extreme northeastern Oklahoma counties); and the so-called Unassigned Lands (eastern Kingfisher, eastern

KNOWN RANCH SITES

REGION SIX: 1865-1890



Key:

A. Bullfoot Ranch
B. Baker Ranch
C. The Red Fork Ranch
D. Kingfisher Ranch
E. Poisal Ranch
F. Montford Johnson Ranch
G. Circle Bar Ranch
H. Wantland Crutch-O Ranch
I. 7-C Ranch
J. Mulhall Ranch
K. Halsell Ranch
L. Halsell Ranch (Camp Russell)
M. Halsell Ranch
N. Halsell Ranch
O. Turkey Track Ranch

Note: Present-day county units are provided for reference purposes only and do not represent designations between 1865-1890.

Canadian, southwestern Payne, and most of Logan, Oklahoma, and Cleveland counties. Each area has its own unique history and involvement with the ranching industry.

The largest of these areas was the 3,000 square miles known as the Unassigned Lands (or the Oklahoma country, or the Oklahoma district). It derived this name from the fact that after the establishment of the last Indian reservation in the early 1880s it was the only portion of the Indian Territory not assigned to an Indian tribe. (Before the Civil War all of western Oklahoma had belonged to the Five Civilized Tribes, but because those tribes had been more supportive of the Confederacy than the Union, the Reconstruction Treaties of 1866 forced the tribes to return the western half of their lands to the United States for the final settlement of other Indian groups, particularly the Plains Indians.) White settlement in the Unassigned Lands was forbidden by the federal government, a fact that land hungry ranchers freely ignored. The military made a number of attempts to remove them, but these were only half-hearted and for the most part the cattlemen endured little official interference.

One of the largest and most permanent ranches was the Halsell Ranch in present Logan County. Its cattle ran on the 10,000-acre "Cowboy Flats," an area bounded on the southeast by a line running from Langston to north of Guthrie, and on all other sides by the large bend in the Cimarron River between Langston and Guthrie. The ranch belonged to the Halsell family who had ranched for years in the vicinity of Wichita Falls, Texas. Oscar D. Halsell brought the first cattle to the area in 1880 and established the first headquarters seven miles north of present Guthrie, on the north side of the Cimarron. He was soon joined by his brother, Harry H. Halsell. Oscar branded HH and Harry branded $\frac{HH}{H}$. In 1882 their uncle, Glenn Halsell, brought 10,000 head to the Cowboy Flats. Another uncle, Billy Halsell, also ranched in the area. The family ran cattle on both sides of the

river, as far as 15 miles north and 10 miles south of it. They shifted the headquarters site on several occasions, though only once was it south of the Cimarron (on the site of the later Camp Russell). The ranch probably ran between 10,000 and 15,000 head each year. The United States Army established Camp Russell in 1883 in order to keep the Cimarron region free of the boomers. The presence of the soldiers apparently made the cowboys so nervous that the Halsells selected a headquarters site as far removed from the military camp as possible. This was about two miles north of Coyle on the north bank of the Cimarron in present Payne County. There Bill Doolin, a ranch hand and later famous outlaw, constructed a dugout from two sand hills. This burned in 1885 and Doolin, who apparently served as ranch carpenter, built a log house that served as ranch headquarters until settlement. This was also in Payne County, on the north side of the Cimarron at the big bend of the river in Clarkson township. In the winter of 1888-1889 the army removed all Halsell cattle from the region in preparation for the land opening. This ended the family's operations in central Oklahoma.

Oklahoma County was the home for two major and more or less permanent ranches: the 7-C Ranch and the Montford Johnson Ranch. The 7-C was owned by the colorful William H. McClure. The ranch house lay about a mile south of the North Canadian River, just west of the eastern boundary of the Unassigned Lands. McClure's cattle grazed on both sides of the river in Kickapoo and Pottawatomie lands as well as in the Oklahoma district. His ranch house became a gathering place for settlers making the run. The 7-C became notorious because so many of these settlers became sooners, hoping to claim land around Oklahoma Station (now Oklahoma City) only twelve miles away. (McClure also made the run. While not a sooner, he had his own unique method of securing his desired claim. As he had lived in the region for years he knew the land between his ranch and Oklahoma Station very well. With the help of his cowboys he set up a relay

sytem whereby every few miles he found a fresh horse waiting for him. Changing mounts allowed him to reach his claim south of the station in less than an hour and considerably before the other homesteaders. The land office evidently took a dim view of this tactic and denied his claim two years later.)

Montford Johnson was probably the wealthiest and most famous of ranchers in the Chickasaw Nation. His ranch in Oklahoma County was in the Council Grove area of Oklahoma City (roughly the southwest quarter of present Council Grove township), though his cattle ranged over much of the western portion of the county. Johnson was born in Old Boggy Depot, Choctaw Nation, in 1834, the son of an immigrant Englishman and a Chickasaw woman. He operated several sizable ranches in the Chickasaw Nation and in 1890 founded the first bank in Minco, where he also ranched. In the spring of 1868 Johnson established a ranch in the Chickasaw Nation in the vicinity of present Washington, McClain County. He quickly expanded his operations and began running cattle north of the river on the free range in the Unassigned Lands. Jesse Chisholm, for whom the trail was named, had operated a trading post in Council Grove before and after the Civil War. Chisholm's son, William, sold Johnson a large number of logs his father had cut preparatory to constructing a new store. Jesse's death ended these plans. Johnson brought these logs to the east side of Council Grove and in 1873 built a ranch house as headquarters for the new ranch. This house was located near the northwest corner at the intersection of North MacArthur Boulevard and Northwest Tenth Street in Oklahoma City. This was probably the first permanent home erected within the present boundaries of the city. The ranch remained in Johnson's control until about 1886 when the army, clearing the route of the railroad, forced the removal of his cattle.

Less significant ranches included that belonging to Robert Lake. His ranch house apparently sat near what is now downtown Oklahoma City, on the north

bank of the North Canadian River. The Wantland Crutch-O Ranch existed in the 1880s; its headquarters was on Crutcho Creek in south central Oklahoma County, probably just south of Crutcho township.

The only legal ranches in the Unassigned Lands were the four stage ranches, located in what is now Kingfisher County. Their primary function was as stage stations where passengers traveling the stage between Caldwell, Kansas, and Forts Reno and Sill stopped, changed horses, ate and rested. But the station manager's major source of income was the herd of cattle he ran on the surrounding grassland. Such a herd was often quite large. The northernmost of these was the Bullfoot Ranch, located just south of present Hennessey. The ranch buildings still stood at the time of the run. This was an important watering spot on the Chisholm Trail, which passed immediately to the east, as well as a stage station. Its peculiar name derived from a large depression in the ground that had the appearance of a bull's foot. About four miles south and slightly west of Hennessey was Baker's Ranch, apparently abandoned after the 1874 Indian wars. Evidently the Bullfoot Ranch replaced it as the stage stop in the area. In 1890 the site was designated "Baker City" but the town quickly failed.

One of the most famous presettlement ranches in Oklahoma was the Red Fork Ranch, located at present Dover. Its name derived from the fact that it lay on the north bank of the Red Fork of the Arkansas, the nineteenth-century name for the Cimarron River. It was founded by a man named Reynolds in 1876, after the last Indian war and the establishment of Fort Reno. Reynolds built a one-room log ranch house, used in the 1880s as a cookhouse and storehouse, and put up the first corrals and pens. He was also responsible for naming the ranch. Dan Jones bought the ranch in 1878 or 1879, then sold it to one Hood, who sold it in turn to Fred and Ralph Collins of Iowa. They were cousins and related to Brinton Darlington who established the Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency near Fort Reno in

the late 1860s. They formed the Williams Cattle Company, owned the ranch from 1881 until 1885 and added new buildings and equipment, particularly a two-story ranch house and the largest cattle pens on the Chisholm Trail. In 1885 Ralph Collins (Fred had died) sold out to John G. Chapin, who operated the ranch until settlement. In 1888 Chapin received a license allowing him to trade with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians, further strengthening the ranch's influence. The decision to open the Unassigned Lands to settlement doomed this ranch as it did all the others.

Finally, the Kingfisher ranch had its headquarters on the north bank of Kingfisher Creek in the present city of Kingfisher, just west of the modern post office. The ranch was established by King David Fisher, a Nebraska cattleman. At the time of the 1889 run the land office was located at or near the old stage station.

THE CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO RESERVATION

In the late 1860s what are now western Kingfisher and western Canadian counties became part of the Cheyenne and Arapaho reservation, a vast tract of land stretching to the Texas state line. Both tribes belonged to the Algonquian linguistic group and at the time of first white contact were settled agriculturalists, the Cheyenne in Minnesota and the Arapaho in the Lake Superior region. The Cheyenne later moved into North Dakota and were pushed by the Sioux into the Black Hills of South Dakota. The Arapaho also left their home for the Great Plains. Both tribes adapted to their new environment by becoming nomadic buffalo hunters; they also became close allies. Early in the nineteenth century the Sioux forced the Cheyenne into the Platte River region; in about 1830 a tribal faction chose to settle permanently on the Arkansas River in southern Colorado. They became the Southern Cheyenne and it was this branch of the tribe

that finally settled in Okahoma; the rest returned to the Dakotas. At about the same time the Arapaho tribe also divided, one group settling near the Southern Cheyenne (and eventually in Oklahoma) and the other group finding a home in Wyoming.

In 1861 the Cheyenne and Arapaho signed the Treaty of Fort Wise ceding all claims to land on the Great Plains with the exception of Colorado. At the Medicine Lodge Council in Kansas in 1867 the two tribes agreed to accept a new reservation in Oklahoma. The 1868 Indian uprising, in which the Cheyenne participated, delayed the move and created confusion as to the reservation's exact location, but in 1870 Agent Brinton Darlington established the Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency on the north side of present Canadian County. The hamlet that developed there became known as Darlington. Although the government treated the two tribes as a single entity, each retained its own tribal organization; the Cheyenne remained troublesome and bitterly refused to adopt the white man's ways, while the Arapaho were quiet, peaceful, and cooperative.

Oklahoma historian Muriel H. Wright once compared the Cheyenne and Arapaho reservation to a concentration camp because the Indians received very poor food on an infrequent basis. The Indian Office often withheld food rations as punishment for real or imagined wrongdoing by the tribes. The goal of the reservation was the indoctrination of the Indians with white religion, manners, and mores leading to their eventual assimilation into white American society. The agency placed particular emphasis on instructing the tribesmen in white agricultural techniques and lifestyles. Of course, it was impossible for the Indians to immediately abandon their nomadic cultural and economic orientation and become farmers. Agent John D. Miles, one of the best and most successful of all Indian agents, recognized this fact. In 1879 he argued that in the face of frequent drought and continual Indian resistance, the emphasis on farming should be shifted to stock raising, particularly cattle. The Indian office continued to insist on

farming as the only suitable occupation, but Miles nonetheless encouraged his charges to develop their own herds. The Arapaho showed more interest than the Cheyenne, and several Arapaho chiefs, including Powder Face, Left Hand, Yellow Bear, and Curley, possessed herds in the 1880s that numbered up to 3,000 head. Yet the Cheyenne and Arapaho were always unable to feed themselves.

United States treaty obligations included supplying a regular beef ration to the Cheyenne and Arapaho, but corruption and lack of money ensured that such meat was of a poor quality and infrequently delivered. In 1882 Miles convinced tribal chiefs to request that the Indian Office allow white ranchers to pasture their herds in return for rent in the form of money or cattle. This was a common practice on the Kiowa-Comanche reservation to the south and the Cherokees leased their entire Outlet to white cattlemen. Miles hoped that income from leases on his reservation would end tribal hunger. Despite government disapproval, Miles negotiated leases with several Kansas ranchers and by the spring of 1883 over 50,000 head grazed openly on reservation lands. The Secretary of the Interior finally gave his reluctant consent to the arrangement and in early 1885 there were 220,000 head of cattle in the agency. Many among the Cheyenne objected to this arrangement and refused to accept their share of the rent money. Renegade bands of Cheyenne warriors attacked cattle and ranchers. As conflict within the tribes and with the ranchers intensified, President Grover Cleveland decided to end the bloodshed by closing the reservation to white ranchers. Many cowmen moved their herds into the Unassigned Lands. In 1890 the leaders of the Cheyenne and Arapaho consented to the sale of their reservation land to the United States for $1,500,000. Each tribal member received a 160-acre allotment and the surplus, 3,500,562 acres, was opened to white settlement by a land run on April 19, 1892. The Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal agency is presently located at Concho, northwest of El Reno.

THE SAC AND FOX RESERVATION

Eastern Lincoln and southeastern Payne counties comprised the Sac and Fox reservation in the late nineteenth century. These Indians, of Algonquian linguistic stock, were long affiliated and treated by the United States government as a single group. Both originated in the Great Lakes region. The French and Chippewa pushed them south in the early eighteenth century, at which time the tribes concluded a formal alliance, each retaining its own language and customs. During the next century the tribes scattered in separate bands along and west of the Mississippi River. One large band settled in Missouri. Another waged and lost the famous Black Hawk War (1831-1832) in Illinois. The tribes then moved gradually westward until in a series of treaties between 1842 and 1861 the Sac and Fox surrendered to the United States all claim to lands in Iowa and Nebraska, retaining only two small reservations in Kansas. In 1867 the Sac and Fox sold these and removed to a new 479,667-acre reservation in the Indian Territory west of the Creek Nation. The agency headquarters was located five miles south of present-day Stroud in Lincoln County.

In their new home the Sac and Fox retained their traditional lifestyle, residing in bark houses or winter lodges rather than in frame or log buildings as the agency preferred. Economically, they practiced small-scale agriculture mixed with stock raising. In 1886 the tribes owned 3,990 head of cattle in a growing herd. Yet the large annual annuities paid them by the government kept the Sac and Fox in a state of dependency. The tribes also leased land to white cattlemen, largely because of the efforts of Eddy B. Townsend, a rather unethical Indian service inspector who hoped to profit personally from the leases. The largest ranch on the Sac and Fox reservation was white owned. This was the Turkey Track Ranch, established in the 1880s by James Jerome, Arthur Hill, and Leslie Combs. Its 60,000 head ranged over much of what is now eastern Lincoln County

and southeastern Payne County. The headquarters was located about two miles south of the Cimarron River on Euchee Creek. The ranch passed out of existence when the reservation was opened to white settlement in 1891. The two most successful Sac and Fox ranchers were probably John Whistler and Moses Keokuk; the ranches of each measured 18 square miles.

In 1890, under powerful pressure from the government, the Sac and Fox ceded their lands to the government. Each tribal member received a 160-acre allotment. The surplus of 385,000 acres was opened for white settlement by run on September 22, 1891.

THE KICKAPOO RESERVATION

The Kickapoo reservation comprised extreme northeastern Oklahoma County and southwestern Lincoln County. It was the home of the Kickapoo Indians, members of the Algonquian linguistic group and closely associated with the Sac and Fox. They originated in southern Wisconsin and in the mid-eighteenth century moved to Illinois. In 1819 they ceded their Illinois claims to the United States and accepted a reservation in Missouri. A large faction opposed the 1819 treaty and fled south, eventually settling in Mexico. They became known as the "Mexican Kickapoos." The Missouri Kickapoos moved to a reservation in Kansas in 1832; this was opened to white settlement in 1862, each Indian receiving an allotment. Following the Civil War the Mexican Kickapoos launched a series of raids to steal cattle and horses in southwest Texas. In order to stop the raids, the United States government attempted to convince the Kickapoos to return home. They agreed in 1873, though not until ten years later did they receive a 100,000-acre reservation in the Indian Territory.

On the reservation the Kickapoos retained their traditional way of life. They lived primitively and raised just enough food crops to survive, much to their

agents' distress. By 1890 the tribe had only 300 acres in cultivation. In accordance with tribal custom, the women performed all agricultural labor, including care of the small herd of cattle, and also some hogs and chickens. The men hunted and gambled. They also stole cattle from neighboring reservations which they sold at trading posts for whiskey or bullets. The Kickapoos bitterly opposed allotment, but through a combination of threats and deceit they finally agreed. The United States paid them $64,650 for 206,000 acres or about 30 cents an acre (other tribes received $1.50 an acre). Each tribal member was allotted eighty acres. The Kickapoo reservation was opened to white settlement in the final Oklahoma land run on May 23, 1895.

THE IOWA RESERVATION

The Iowa reservation lay in eastern Logan and northwestern Lincoln counties. The Iowa (pronounced "Ioway") Indians belonged to the Siouan linguistic stock and were settled agriculturalists when first encountered by Europeans in Minnesota in 1701. Shortly afterward they moved to Illinois and still later, Missouri. After ceding their Missouri land to the United States, the Iowa received a reservation in Kansas in 1836. There they remained for forty years. By 1876 tribal members lived for the most part in comfortable frame houses and owned successful farms. Yet allotment of tribal land in 1876 met with stiff resistance and a large faction of the tribe migrated to the Indian Territory. There in 1883 the government allowed them a reservation of 225,000 acres. In 1890 this land, too, was allotted in severalty to tribal members (109 persons received 80 acres each).

The only cattle ranch of any importance on Iowa lands was the IOA Ranch, founded in 1884 by Eddy B. Townsend, a disreputable member of the Indian service, and his partner, Clarkson C. Pickett. The Interior Department refused to approve the lease Townsend negotiated with tribal leaders, although the ranch

operated within the reservation until 1889 when the IOA was months behind in rent payment. The ranch ran between three and four thousand head of cattle that ranged over most of the reservation. White settlement destroyed the ranch.

WHITE SETTLEMENT AND ITS AFTERMATH

All the ranches described above were open range ranches; they could not operate in thickly settled areas. Yet even before the runs of the 1880s and 1890s the range cattle industry in Oklahoma and on the rest of the Great Plains was in serious trouble. The year 1885 was the high water mark of the industry; but that year the northern ranges, already overstocked, received tens of thousands of additional cattle from the Cheyenne and Arapaho reservation closed by President Cleveland. When the winter of 1885-1886 struck, it became clear that too many cattle competed for a very limited amount of winter feed. Many ranches, including some in Oklahoma, lost up to 85 percent of their stock. The following summer's drought meant that even less grass would be available the next winter, and that winter (1886-1887) was bitterly cold, one of the worst on record. Every rancher lost at least half his herd, some as much as 90 percent. To pay off debts, cattlemen quickly sold off most of the survivors, even if they were sickly and half starved. Poor quality meat flooded the market and beef prices fell sharply. The cattle industry never recovered. Of equal importance in the collapse of the range cattle industry were the increasingly sophisticated tastes of Eastern consumers. They now wanted quality in their beef, not quantity. The longhorns supplied the latter, but their meat was tough and stringy. High grade registered cattle produced the most appetizing meat, but required much care and attention. This was possible only in the closed environment of a fenced pasture, not on the open range. Thus when white settlement came to Oklahoma, it destroyed an already dying industry.

The most immediate threats to central Okahoma ranchers in the 1880s came from two sources: the boomers and the railroads. By that decade most of the land on the plains suitable for farming had been settled. Land hungry settlers turned their attention to the rich lands of Oklahoma, occupied only by herds of cattle and a few Indians. The boomers first appeared in 1879 when Elias C. Boudinot, a mixed-blood Cherokee and railroad attorney, published an article showing that the Oklahoma district lay within the public domain and so was available for settlement. More articles followed by various writers. All described the cattlemen as greedy and unscrupulous capitalists who bribed government officials and corrupted the Indian tribes. Captain David L. Payne, the acknowledged leader of the boomer movement, claimed that the United States government was biased against farmers because they extended preferential treatment to the cattle industry in allowing ranchers into what was supposed to be the domain of the Indians. Such ideas fanned the anger and greed of potential settlers in the South and Midwest. Payne and his associates then adopted a plan of action to match their talk: instead of demanding the opening of Oklahoma in print, they tried to force the opening by entering the Unassigned Lands and establishing settlements. The most famous boomer "raid" occurred in the spring of 1880 when Payne settled a colony on the North Canadian River in present Oklahoma City. The final raid was led by W. L. Couch, who settled near the site of present-day Stillwater. On these and other occasions the army forced the boomers out, but the raids and their removals brought national attention to the boomer cause and intensified interest in Oklahoma. Politicians with eyes on the rural vote supported the boomer cause and lobbied in Congress for the removal of the ranchers instead of the boomers.

In 1884 the Congress voted to allow the Santa Fe Railroad to survey a route through central Oklahoma. This was the first positive step toward settlement.

Construction commenced two years later. But tracks passing through empty lands brought the railroad no money, whereas settlement would bring tens of thousands of potential customers into the Unassigned Lands. Thus the railroads joined the boomers in demanding the opening. The cattlemen resisted but were too few in number to overcome an army of farmers and businessmen. Finally, on March 3, 1889, Congress approved the Springer Amendment allowing white settlement in the Unassigned Lands. Any person, male or female, over the age of 21 could claim a 160-acre homestead if he or she were the first to drive a stake into a particular quarter section. President Benjamin Harrison set noon, April 22, 1889, as the time at which settlers could enter the area.

Settlement was disastrous to central Oklahoma ranchers. Army units forced the removal of all cattle and within months settlers covered their former ranges. Oklahoma historian Edward Everett Dale once noted that the famous runs in the state did not deprive the Indians of any land because they were too few in number ever to occupy the region. It was the cattlemen who lost the land, even though they held no legal title to it. Some tried to adapt to the new conditions and a surprising number of cowboys made the run. Many of these failed to "prove up" their claims and receive legal title. They drifted instead into a life of crime. Outlaws such as Bill Doolin, Bill Dalton, Bitter Creek Newcomb, Charlie Pierce, Tulsa Jack, Red Buck, Little Dick West, and more all worked as cowboys on central Oklahoma ranches. Perhaps they turned to crime as a reaction against the new order of things and sought revenge against the homesteading establishment. Virtually all met violent deaths in the 1890s. A very few ranchers managed to claim and hold their homesteads and even fewer established successful ranching operations, most notably Zack Mulhall in northern Logan County. For the most part, as Dale observerd, "the coming of agricultural settlement marked the passing of the ranch cattle industry in Oklahoma."

RANCHING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

After 1889 wheat, corn, cotton, dairy products, and poultry replaced beef as central Oklahoma's primary agricultural commodities. Census reports from 1890 until 1930 indicate that many thousands of cattle existed in the area but these were divided among thousands of farms (almost 8,000 in 1890) and many of these were dairy cows, providing farms with milk products for the family and a source of income from sales. Though ranching was no longer a major industry in central Oklahoma, the cattle industry found a friendly reception in Oklahoma City. In 1908 Nelson Morris and Company opened the first packing plant in Oklahoma City, and more quickly followed after the construction in 1909 of the Oklahoma National Stockyards. Oklahoma City's excellent rail connections and its central geographic location between the southwest and the midwest made it one of the nation's biggest cattle marketing centers, ranking behind only Fort Worth and Omaha. But not until mechanization in agriculture became common did the true cattle ranch reappear in central Oklahoma: the feed once devoted to horses and mules could be more profitably devoted to cattle. The Great Depression then drove many marginal farms into bankruptcy, allowing more successful farms and ranches to increase their holdings. Finally, as a result of New Deal reforms in the mid-1930s the federal government began supplying much needed capital for development (e.g. in the purchase of land and stock). By 1970 the Oklahoma Crop and Livestock Reporting Service estimated that 160,000 beef cows grazed the pastures of the central Oklahoma counties.

The type of ranching practiced today is much different than in the nineteenth century. The pickup truck has long since replaced the horse as the cowboy's primary means of transportation. Fenced pastures allow the production of purebred stock and make roundups unnecessary. Ranches are frequently diversified into the production of farm crops in order to increase income.

Veterinary medicine has eliminated many once deadly diseases, such as Texas Fever. Cattle drives to the nearest railhead no longer occur. Trucking the animals to Oklahoma City is much easier and less expensive; it also insures minimum weight loss.

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