

MORTGAGE OF BEEF one of the NATION'S big PROBLEMS

GOVERNMENT TRYING TO REMEDY THE LOSS OCCASIONED BY THE RAPID SETTLEMENT OF GRAZING LANDS.

BY ARTHUR CHAPMAN.

GOVERNMENT experts in the West are bending every energy to discover some means whereby the supply of beef and mutton can be made to keep pace with the increased demand for these valuable necessities, but just at present the outlook is anything but favorable for a rapid solution of the problem.

With beef at its highest point in 20 years, and with the Western range stocked to its limit, and with a steady decrease in the available supply of sheep every year, the United States Government finds itself face to face with a question that seems likely to puzzle the experts for years to come. Just at present the country is in the position of a man who is eating his stores of food, and is raising less than he consumes. Sheep have shown a steady decrease for several years, and while the supply of cattle is not actually decreasing, it is recognized that under present conditions it is almost hopeless to attempt to increase it, to keep pace with the growing demand for beef.

This summer the shortage of beef, and the consequent high price, is the result of a peculiar combination of circumstances. Not enough cattle were corn-fed in the Middle Western States. Usually the supply of corn-fed cattle is sufficient to tide the meat-eating public over the Summer, but when a sudden demand went forth for more corn-fed steers, none were to be had. In desperation, the packers have been calling upon the cattle-raisers of the Far West to supply grass-fed cattle, but this is impossible, because the grass-fed animals will not be in good condition for several weeks, as they have just begun to fatten after their hard winter on the open range. Consequently the price of beef has soared, and is likely to go still higher before the next supply of corn-fed beef from the Middle Western States relieves the tension.

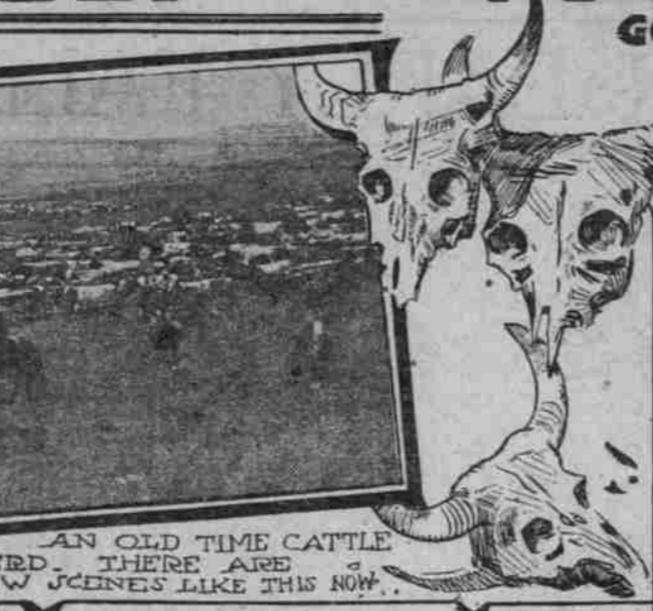
Natural conditions have combined to make America the greatest cattle country in the world. The high plains country west of the Missouri River is an ideal cattle range. In early days this plains country was covered with the succulent, curling buffalo grass, which sun dries and cures on the stalk, making the greatest natural food for cattle in the world. Great herds of cattle were enabled to live through the hardest winters, simply by pawing through the snow and eating on the buffalo grass. Then, in the Fall, after being put in fair condition on the new growth of grass, the cattle were shipped to the corn feeding centers in the Middle West, where a few weeks of corn diet put them in prime condition for the market.

If these conditions could be maintained, there would be no beef problem. It would all be delightfully simple, just as it has been in the past. But the rapid settlement of the West has changed the aspect of everything. There are few great stretches of open range left. Settlers have homesteaded most of the available land along the water courses, and have even "squatted" on the semi-arid plains, where "dry farming" is successfully practiced. The great herds have van-

ished, and the cattle baron has had his day. While there are about as many cattle as ever in the West, the holdings are for the most part split up among the small ranchers.

With the division of the great cattle ranges has come the problem of feed for the herds. The buffalo grass must be replaced by a food containing more protein, and capable of supporting a greater number of cattle per acre. To discover some such substitute, the Department of Agriculture will send one of its experts abroad, where climatic and soil conditions are similar to those in the high plains country of the West, and much will depend upon the result of his investigations.

Not only has the Government felt called upon to solve the problem of supplying a new kind of feed so the plains will support more cattle, but the forestry department is bending its energies to utilize all the available grazing space on the forest reserves. The Nation is making steady inroads on its supply of mutton, and in a few years this constant drain is certain to send the price of this food even higher than beef is today. If Government experts find a new kind of range fodder that will support greater numbers of sheep, as well as cattle, the mutton problem will be answered, but at



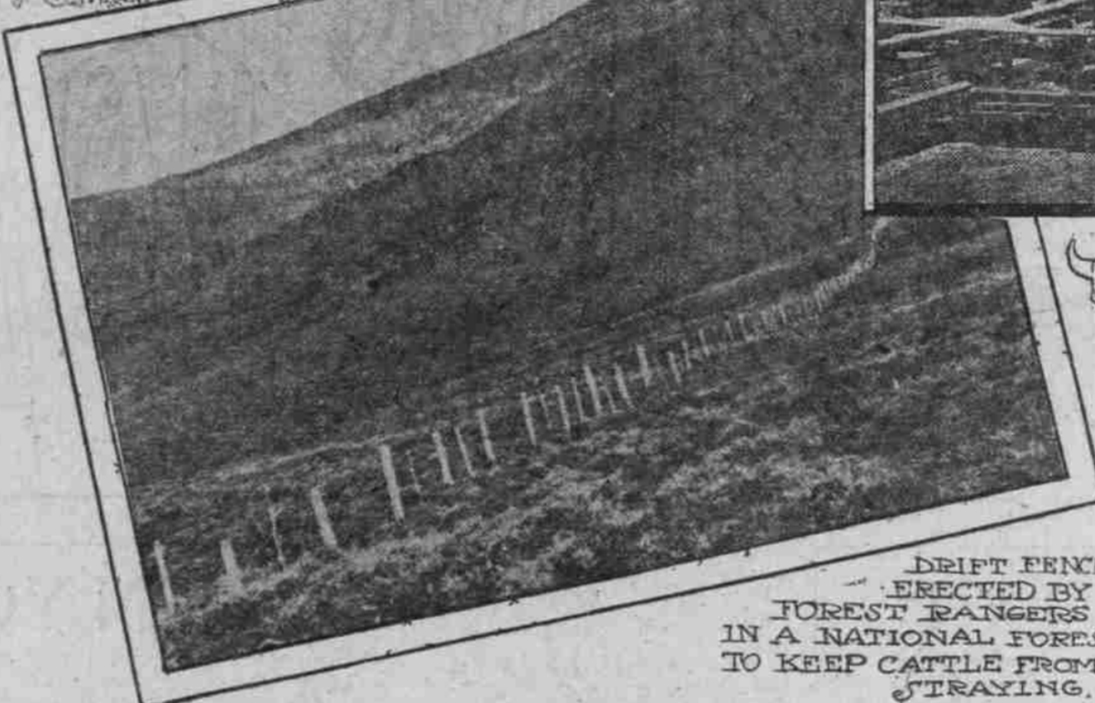
AN OLD TIME CATTLE HERD THERE ARE FEW SCENES LIKE THIS NOW.



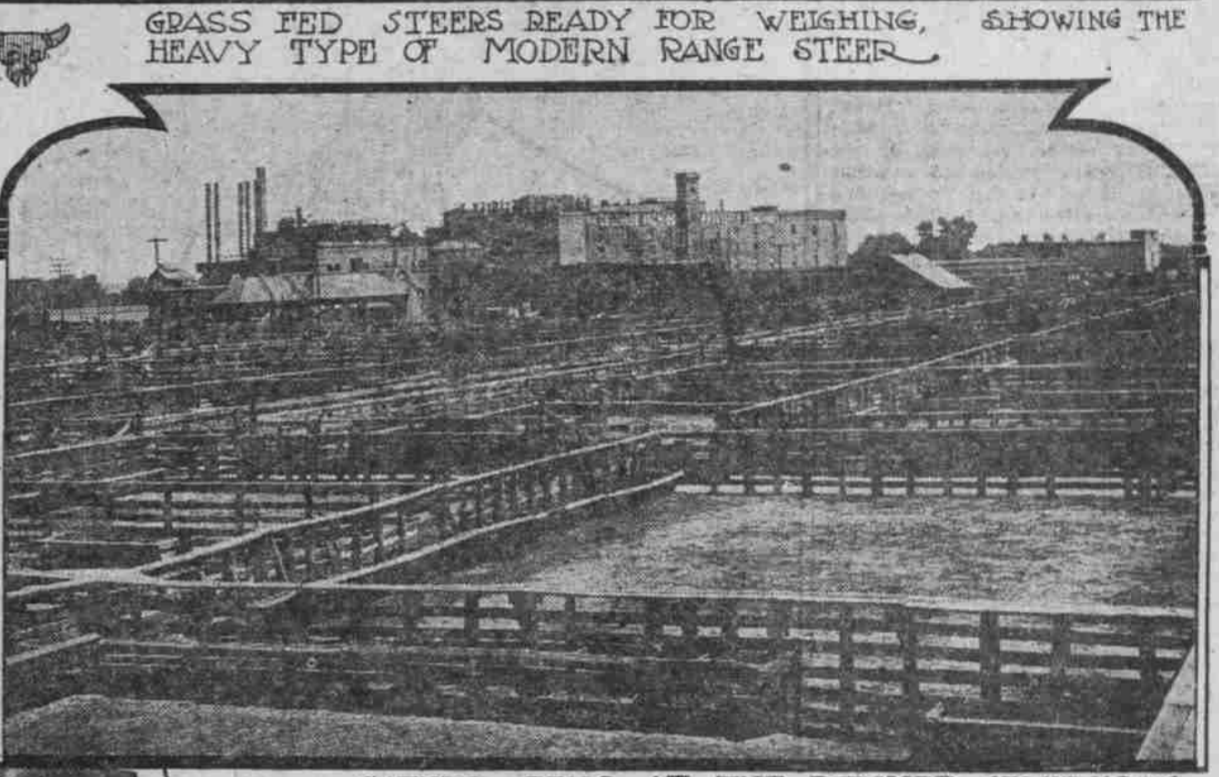
GRASS FED STEERS READY FOR WEIGHING, SHOWING THE HEAVY TYPE OF MODERN RANGE STEER.



CATTLE ON A FOREST RESERVE



DRIFT FENCE ERECTED BY FOREST RANGERS IN A NATIONAL FOREST TO KEEP CATTLE FROM STRAYING.



CATTLE PENS AT THE DENVER STOCKYARDS, AN INDICATION OF THE PRESENT BEEF SHORTAGE

the more than pays for the cost of putting up hay. The cowboy who works for a great cattle outfit today cannot help with the haying when the Spring roundup is over. The oldtime cowboy scorned such employment, and there is a story current in the West about an employer who handed one of his cowpunchers a pitchfork and told him to get busy putting in alfalfa. "The cowboy looked the pitchfork over very carefully and then handed it back, saying: 'Mister, that is too complicated a piece of machinery for me to run.'"

The cow outfits that lease portions of the forest reserves must obey the strictest rules about overstocking the range. It is recognized that overstocking the range has caused much hardship and loss in the cattle business, and the Government does not propose to follow in the footsteps of the cattlemen who tried to run too many cattle on a limited area. At the same time the Government does not intend to assist those who enjoy leasing privileges. On some reserves drift fences have been put up by forest rangers, to keep the livestock from wandering off the grazing ground. Essentially places for winter shelter will be erected, and the forest reserves will be the greatest source of the Nation's beef supply.

When the rapidly changing conditions in the West have been met by the Government and by individual cattle-raisers, it is believed that the era of high prices of beef will vanish. Just at present the aim is to keep the supply of beef equal to the demand, and to keep the price of the tremendous growth of the Nation and the expanding foreign market. The small rancher, with the herd of less than 100 cattle, will winter feed his stock with alfalfa. He will constantly improve his stock until one average steer will outweigh two of the old "long horns." His hay-fed cattle will require little corn feeding to be put in prime condition for market. Every foot of open range, on the forest reserves or on public lands, will be utilized under lease. Shepherds and cattlemen will come to an understanding, and there will be no more disastrous wars between those rival interests. The range will be apportioned between each side, and not an acre of it will be overstocked. Under such conditions the supply will always prove adequate to the demand, even when the population of this country is quadrupled, and America will never have to become a non-meat eating Nation, like many foreign countries.

Denver, Colo., July 15.

LAST OF KIT CARSON'S TRAPPERS

OLD MAN WIGGINS RELATES THRILLING ADVENTURES IN THE OLD FUR TRADING AND INDIAN FIGHTING DAYS

"**Y**ES, I'm the last of the trappers. All the rest of them have gone—Chamberlain, Jim Beckwourth, Tobin, Baker, and the greatest of them all—Kit Carson."

Regret saddened the features of Oliver P. Wiggins, the last of the great pioneers, as he spoke of his beloved chieftain, Kit Carson, under whom he became a full-fledged trapper shortly after his arrival in the Rocky Mountain country in 1828, and with whom he spent many adventurous years in the Far West.

Mr. Wiggins lives in Denver, and but for a sudden attack of blindness which came on him a few months ago, would give little indication of the life of hardship he has lived the greater part of his 85 years. His memory is clear, especially regarding dates and occurrences of long ago, and he talks fluently and interestingly of Jim Bridger, Kit Carson, Jim Beckwourth, Jim Baker and other great pathfinders and trappers with whom his lot was cast when the Rocky Mountain country was an unmappped wilderness. Kit Carson, with whom he trapped and hunted and fought Indians for many years is Mr. Wiggins' idol, and a copy of an oil painting of Carson is his most prized possession.

"I came West, that is, to the Rocky Mountain country, in 1828," said Mr. Wiggins. "I was born in 1823, near Buffalo, and always loved outdoor life. I hunted and trapped with the Tonawanda Indians, and could saddle a canoe with the best of them, and was a dead shot with the rifle as soon as I could put a weapon to my shoulder. My father went to the Hudson Bay country as a trapper when I was 12, and that settled it with me—nothing but the wild life of the frontier would do. So I ran away from home next year and made my way to Fort Dearborn, on the site of Chicago. Here I paddled the canoe for the commandant for three months while he shot ducks. Finally I got a chance to get through to St. Louis. My uncle ran a ferry at St. Louis and I worked awhile for him. This ferry property eventually became worth many millions, but I was not looking out for business oppor-

tunities. I wanted to get to that magic land, the mountains and plains of the Far West.

"St. Louis was the great fur trading center in those days. Pretty soon I heard that a party of trappers was about ready to start. The trapping parties would go by boat to Independence and then over the Santa Fe trail for the West. I told my uncle I wanted to go home, but he suspected that I intended to go with the trappers, and would not give me any money. Incidentally he put a big Irishman to guard me. The Irishman slept on the outside of the bed and I slept against the wall. But on the night the trapping party was to start my guard was drunk and went to sleep early. I crept away from him and dashed aboard the boat just as the trappers were putting out.

"After leaving Independence with the wagon train I was assigned to work herding cattle for the wagon boss. I kept hearing stories about Kit Carson and determined to join him. Carson's headquarters were at Taos, New Mexico, and when we reached the branch trail to Taos I hinted that I wanted my money. But the wagon boss said I would be paid when we reached Santa Fe, the western terminus of the trail. So I lit out across the prairie without waiting for my pay, and showed up in Taos in a few days and asked Kit Carson for a job. I was put at work herding cattle, but pretty soon Carson saw I was an expert with the rifle, and could do good work trapping, so he took a personal interest in me and began to teach me trapping lore. At 17 years I was a full-fledged trapper, and went out annually with Carson's trapping parties.

How Carson's Outfit Worked.

"There were 48 trappers making up the Carson outfit. About half went out under Kit and half under a trapper named Chamberlain. Usually I went with Chamberlain's party. Beaver formed the main part of our catch. Each trapper had 30 No. 1 double spring traps. These traps would hold anything, even to a bear. We would plant the traps along the edge of a stream, about four inches under the water. The little beaver would swim over the trap and the big ones would

get caught. As soon as the trap closed on a beaver the animal would dive into deep water and drown, owing to the weight of the trap. Every man in the outfit was a skilled trapper. He had to be to work with Carson. We gave Carson 10 per cent of our proceeds and he attended to marketing the fur for us, getting much more than we could have done individually. He was an absolute-

ly square man, the soul of honor, and the trapper who got in with the Carson outfit thought his fortune was made. As a matter of fact we trappers made little, however. About \$300 a season was our average, though one season in Montana I made \$1000.

"We had a regular course of procedure, which we followed for years. First, in the Fall of the year, we would hire out



KIT CARSON FROM HIS MOST AUTHENTIC PORTRAIT IN POSSESSION OF OLIVER P. WIGGINS

to the soldiers at the various forts in the West, killing game. We would supply the forts with game until the latter part of January, when we would gather at Taos and start out on our trapping campaign. We would trap until the first of May. Then we would take a month to get home, when we would get our furs and accoutrements ready and travel overland to St. Joe, where we would dispose

of our pelts to old man Roubidoux, who owned the only house on the site of St. Joe. He would take the pelts to St. Louis, where he would dispose of them to the agents of the Montreal fur houses, who were buying for the London market. The trapper averaged about \$5 apiece for beaver skins.

"After selling our beaver skins, we would guard wagon trains on the Santa Fe trail and, as that historical highway was almost constantly infested with Indians, we had much fighting to do. Some of the most desperate Indian conflicts in Western history were fought on the Santa Fe trail, and we men of Carson's command were mixed in many of them. On one occasion, when we were at Taos, just after our trapping campaign, we prepared to go to St. Joe, we got word that a wagon train was being besieged by Kiowa Indians, not a great distance from Taos. There were about 20 Indians, but the men in charge of the train had put up a good fight and after getting their wagons parked and cattle corralled, had stood off the Indians all day. A night a man got through and came to us with word of the siege of the train. We were in the saddle at once and, headed by Carson, were soon on the scene of the fight. There were 46 of us, both trapping parties being represented in full strength. We were armed with a new gun—an eight-shot affair, which was about the first repeating weapon to be used on the frontier. In addition we had new model Colt's revolvers. So we felt capable of caring for all the Indians in the Southwest of that time, and the white men had fired a volley and then charge so quickly that reloading was impossible. The Indians who were besieging the wagon train were surprised when we came up, and we waited until they had come close to us, and then we opened up on them with the new weapons. There never was such a surprised lot of Indians in the world. We had orders to get the horses first. As fast as a horse would fall the rider would hop behind another mounted Indian. But the horses began falling so fast that pretty soon many of the Indians were afoot. The others tried to get away, two or three to a horse, but of course we overtook them easily. We had used up about all our rifle ammunition on the horses, and we cut loose on the Indians with the heavy revolvers. Nor over so that band of Indians got away. We pursued the stragglers four or five miles and there were dead Indians all the way. We found the wagon train in pretty bad shape. A few hours more and the brave men would have been overcome, but with our help, they were sent on their way rejoicing.

"The Kiowas made a lot of trouble

OLIVER P. WIGGINS, LAST OF THE GREAT TRAPPERS AS HE APPEARS TO DAY.