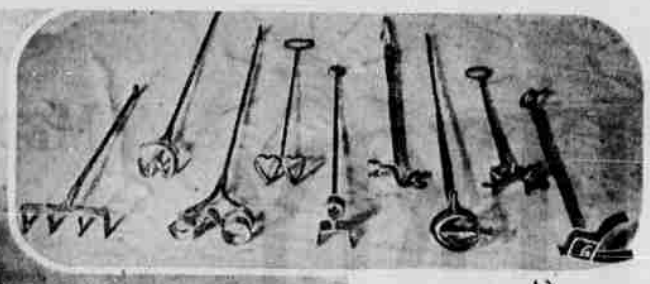

History of the old Western cattle kingdoms is written in branding irons. Left photo, a typical branding scene, was snapped by William Jeffery on the Quien Sabe ranch of Mr. and Mrs. Ramon Somavia, San Benito County, Cal. The roper on the left is the late Will Rogers, while Mrs. Lola Galli holds the other rope. Above, irons from the collection of John P. Hale. Front row, a rake, spectacles, Will Rogers' "Dog Iron," so-called because it resembles an andiron or fire-dog; bow and arrow and rocking chair. Back row, hoof prints, hearts, S-wrench (famous on the Coast through use in branding thousands of Miller and Lux cattle), the rising sun. The drawn brands above are, top, "Turkey Trot," Oliver Loring and Son, Texas; right and lower, old Mexican brands. Right is a page of registered brands from the Arizona state archives.

By Margaret Phelps

History Of Cattle Empire Told In Branding Irons, West's Coats-of-Arms

Collection of Mesa, Arizona Man Recalls Famous Cattlemen of Early Days—Will Rogers' Iron, The "Dog Iron" Still Used On Oolagah, Oaklahoma Ranch

THE branding iron—Greeks marked slaves with it; Romans marked robbers, English seared vagabonds. But in the West it's the coat of arms around which a mighty cow empire was built!

Branding irons used by famous men of the West tell the story of a teeming locality conceived and materialized upon odd symbols burned on the hide of millions of cattle.

"If branding irons could speak, there would be tales of hardship, adventure, heartbreak and success," says John P. Hale, Mesa, Arizona, collector of these unique gadgets.

Hale's collection, gathered over a number of years, is regarded as one of the most comprehensive in the country. He is connected with the Mesa Union High School. A real collector, one you like to remember because he's the man who makes stiff iron rods with twisted metal endings come alive when he talks. Looking at his collection and hearing his brisk voice, one is immediately transplanted to the days of the Old West.

"Every branding iron has an interesting history," Hale said, selecting a long handle, at one end of which was a rounded piece of iron with two small, squatty legs. "This branding iron belonged to Will Rogers. While Will was not an extensive producer of beef cattle, he contributed a colorful figure to the cattle industry. In 1890 Will designed this brand, known as the 'Dog-Iron,' because it resembles an old-fashioned andiron. The brand is still in use on the Rogers ranch in Oolagah, Oklahoma."

INCLUDED in Hale's collection are branding irons from many of the West's largest, best-known and most historic ranches.

The famous "Running W," a sprinting bit of metal attached to a long handle with a hand loop, tells the story of King Ranch, Texas, the world's largest range domain. Today this ranch embraces more than 1,250,000 acres and requires 350 cowboys to handle its 100,000 cattle.

Branding in other countries is seldom mentioned in books except with reference to the branding of man. Greeks branded their slaves with a Delta; Romans branded robbers with the letter "F" (fugitivus); galley slaves were branded "T F" (traux forces) in France until 1832; under Edward VI, the Statute of Vagabonds (1547) ordered vagabonds, gypsies and brawlers branded, the first two with a large "V" on the breast, the last, "F" for fraymaker. This was repealed in 1636. From the time of Henry VII, branding was inflicted for all offenses which received the benefit of clergy, but was abolished in 1822.

The cattle brand is the cowman's escutcheon. He places it, not only on his livestock, but also on all his accoutrements, such as his saddle, chaps, chuck wagon and in late years on his automobile and stationery.

BRANDING, in the United States, came out of the East.

At one time, a thin population in the Alleghanies permitted its cattle to run at large. At the full of each spring, all the owners held a round-up and calves were branded. The immigrants from Cumberlands County into Texas brought knowledge of this institution with them. But until after the Civil War there was little call to improve on the aimless system of the Mexican vaquero, who rode out on the range with a branding iron strapped to his saddle. Once among the cattle he proceeded to brand such as he could catch until he was tired and rode back to the ranch.

In time, cattle in the West became more valuable and cowmen became more numerous.

The need to establish ownership of herds became important. Brands were permanently established among cattlemen, later being legally registered.

"At one time," remarked Hale, "Arizona alone had 29,000 brands. This almost unbelievable number covered the insignias of many owners who ran their cattle in other states."

Western cowmen today are organized in a closely knit group known as the American National Livestock Association. In this vast "cow-circle," brands are as familiar and well established as many highly publicized industrial trade-marks.

HALE recently exhibited a number of his branding irons at a meeting of the national association in Phoenix, Arizona. Throughout the entire convention cowmen could be found huddled over Hale's collection. Voices rose and fell as young and old men talked and fondled such irons as the old Spanish iron of Stephen A. Austin, "Father of Texas," active 101 years; Double H and S Wrench, Miller-Lux, California, largest ranch of the Pacific Coast; O Running W and Pitchfork of Wyoming.

Hale smiled on being told of this incident. "I have observed," he said, "that boys coming from a cow locality are proud of their ranch brands, so proud that they often carve their family brands instead of their initials. Brands mean much to people on the range."

When asked which he considered the most interesting iron in his collection from point of story, Hale said, "It would be difficult to select just one branding iron to qualify for that particular place. Every branding iron has its particular point of interest. This one, for instance, is the iron of Samuel Maverick, the man from whose name the term 'maverick' somehow originated. The brand is now owned by Rep. Maury Maverick of Texas. To the collector this branding iron is unique because of its wooden handle."

The numerous stories told in the flickering light of camp fires of the origin of the term "maverick" have developed into a folk-tale — a legend with many variations.

It is said a popular explanation spread from Kansas — a man named Maverick, according to the story, moved into Texas shortly after the province became a republic. He was astonished to find everyone's stock branded, which had not been the custom in his state. Maverick was a "chicken-hearted old rooster" and thought branding cruel, so he chose to let his cattle run unmarked. They would be known as Maverick's, because cattle belonging to anyone else would bear a brand. His neighbors soon furnished brands for these loose cattle, and in a few years Maverick was a cowman without cattle.

BUT authorities say the facts are these: M. A. Maverick, a citizen of San Antonio, left a herd out on the range for another man to tend. But no round-up was held, no branding irons heated. Maverick's cattle became scattered over the vast range of South Texas. When the cowboys of that section discovered an unbranded cow, they knew they had probably found a "Maverick" and usually settled the question of ownership by burning their own brands on the animal. Ever since that time the term "maverick" has been applied on the range to an unmarked calf or cow.

"But," opined Hale, "good cowboys don't brand stray cattle any more. It's modernly unlawful."

Every cow carries its own life history in signs burned deep into its hide with irons such as are found in Hale's collection.

"If a cow passes its days uneventfully on the range of one outfit, it goes under the block or dies in happy old age, bearing only one brand," Hale explained. "In early cattle days much bartering was done among cattlemen. Cows, sold from one ranch to another were seared with many brands."

COWBOYS described these many-times-branded beasts in a jargon as incisive as the brands themselves. Story has it that one cow in particular, the last one at a round-up held on the "Lightning Rod Ranch near Cayo," was read off by "Old Nigger Add" as:

"SHE'S GOT O BLOCK an' LIGHTNING ROD,
NINETY FORTY SIX an' A BAR ELEVEN,
T TERRAPIN an' NINETY-SEVEN,
RAFTER CROSS an' de DOUBLE PROD

HALF CIRCLE A an' DIAMOND C,
FOUR CROSS L an' THREE P Z,
B, W, I, X V V,
BAR N CROSS an' A L C."

Five Brothers Serve In Navy Aboard Same Ship

Proud Mother to Give Sixth Boy to "Uncle Sam's" Navy Next Year

By Herbert Stallings

CANADA may have the Dionne quintuplets, but the United States Navy has the five Cowdrey brothers. Unique in the annals of naval history, at any time in any country, the five brothers, Paul, Burnem, Harry, Charlie and Manley, are all serving their country aboard the same ship, the U. S. S. Pennsylvania. Giving them the "edge" on Canada's famous five, a sixth brother, Orville, now a junior in high school, plans to join his brothers upon graduation, which will make them the Navy's "sextette."

Sons of an Illinois coal miner, C. C. Cowdrey of Virden, Illinois, the five youths now in the service are all high school graduates. The brothers average 180 pounds in weight, each is over six feet tall, and all have perfect records for conduct and ability. They are reported by their superior officers as "exceptional young men whom the Navy is pleased to have within its ranks."

STATIONED at San Pedro aboard the fleet flagship, which carries Admiral Joseph Mason Reeves, the brothers are referred to as the "Cowdrey unit" and the admiral and Captain Russell Willson, commander of the Pennsylvania, are hardly less proud of the boys than are their parents. Mrs. Cowdrey has been congratulated by Secretary of the Navy Claude A. Swanson, for giving five sons to the service. Commenting upon their Navy training, the boys' mother said:

"There are many things our Navy gives young men that are fine and worth while. I know that the discipline is good for strengthening their character, and the specializing in certain lines will not only better prepare them to serve their country, but will be splendid for them should they ever decide to re-enter civilian life again. I am very proud to give my five sons to the service, and shall be even more proud next year when my sixth son joins his brothers."

From top to bottom are Charlie, Burnem, Harry, Paul and Manley Cowdrey, five brothers serving aboard the U. S. S. Pennsylvania. At right is Capt. Russell Willson, their commanding officer.

It all started when Burnem, the second oldest boy, now 23, decided to see the world and serve his country at the same time. He enlisted at Springfield, Illinois, in April, 1932. His letters about life in the service caused Paul, the fourth brother, now 20, to enlist in February, 1934. The following month saw Harry, the third brother, now 21, off for the training station at San Diego. In December, 1934, Charlie, the oldest, now 25, succumbed to the call of the sea. When Manley had finished high school and had reached the required age, he followed in his brothers' footsteps. He is now 18. He enlisted in May, 1935, and joined his brothers on the Pennsylvania on August 23 at San Diego. Burnem is a fireman second class, Paul and Harry are firemen third class, Charlie is a seaman second class, and Manley is an apprentice seaman.

ALL the boys intend to make the Navy their career. They are happy to be stationed aboard the flagship of the fleet and are proud of their distinction.

Orville, the youngest brother, still in high school in Virden, Illinois, is looking forward with great anticipation to joining his brothers in 1937. He hopes to be stationed aboard the same ship with them, and it's a "cinch" the Navy won't pass up the chance of having six brothers in the service aboard one ship, which is a record in any country or any language, so young Orville's chances are excellent.

Canada may be proud of her "quints," but the United States needn't "give up the ship" as long as the Cowdrey brothers are on deck.