

Lake County Ranchers Move Range Cattle

Annual Cattle Drive Marks End Of Era

By BILL DECKER

Gradually the practice of driving cattle to a market or shipping point is dying out. Stockyards which were built well outside of towns have become surrounded by homes and industrial developments as population has increased making it next to impossible to drive herds to them. The people of Lakeview have long been accustomed to seeing serpentine strings of steers come down the roads and trails from the open range toward the stockyards in the fall. This year may be the last time they will witness such drives.

The ranchers from Big Valley and other sections will no longer have to herd their cattle into town because a new set of corrals and scales are under construction about 30 miles from Lakeview and when they are completed the cattle from that area will be weighed, held and trucked from there. Since this may be the last of the big fall drives in that part of the country, perhaps the passing of an era in our development, we feel that it is only fitting to record this traditional aspect of the cattle industry.

MARKETING

Cattle are sold in any of several different ways. A buyer representing one of the major packing plants or feedyards, or a small operator in search of stock, may spend a great deal of time touring a region inspecting cattle. He may want the stock delivered immediately or he may make a bid on them for shipment at some future date. Stock may be contracted for in June for October delivery with both the rancher and buyer gambling on the fall market price.

Some time ago Vern Howard of Klamath Falls was commissioned by a packing plant to contract for feeder cattle in Lake County. He drove out there and examined thousands of head of stock, making bids and contracting for delivery about the middle of September. He reported the numbers and classes of cattle which he had succeeded in buying to the company in San Francisco and was informed as to their further needs.

The packers in the mean time, were in contact with their other buyers in different parts of the country and kept track of the cattle being contracted in their name. Some would go to their several feedlots to be finished, others were slated for immediate slaughter.

DRIVE

Out in Big Valley the six cattlemen who had sold feeders to Howard got together when the time came to make delivery and decided to move their stock in one bunch over the trail to the railroad in Lakeview. The cattle were brought in from their various ranges and Howard went out to see them weighed separately according to their class and price. Once this was accomplished they were banded together and started down the trail toward town.

Six brands were in the herd. Some of the irons have a prominent place in Lake County's early history. Several of them were recorded well before the turn of the century and cattle bearing those brands traveled over parts of this same trail under the guidance of the fathers and grandfathers of some of the men who were directing this herd.

Harry Shadler was there with some steers and spayed heifers bearing his Bar H S brand, Mike Sullivan turned his cattle into the bunch adding his reversed E N iron, Charlie Crump added his C C bar brand, Jimmy Dyke drove up some steers marked quarter circle JR on the right hip, Terry Cahill brought in his reversed E C cattle and the herd was completed with Earl Wakefield's cross-breeds which bore his W brand.

Before light the cattle were bunched and started west. As the herd took shape the cowmen rode

back against the outer edges of the bawling, restless cattle stringing them out. If the herd spread too much the men would wheel their horses and ride back into the faces of the outsiders turning them in. One man took the point riding ahead and giving the cattle something to follow, while others flanked along either side. In the drag, knowing that a hard job can be made out of an easy one, Sullivan and Cahill gave the stragglers plenty of room and did not crowd them up.

Shaping a trail herd is an art and these men, including Ernie Messner, one time straw boss for the big MC ranch who is now riding for the Cahill brothers, know every aspect of their work thoroughly. They know that some cattle are bent on leading and if given sufficient room will establish themselves up front. They know that others are bound to hide in the anonymity of the herd just as some will lag behind. As the bunch settled down the men located themselves apparently without direction at various places and assumed responsibility for that section. If you asked them how to drive cattle they would probably shrug, the things they know and their techniques are almost automatic.

The cattle settled down and strung out pulling a long column of dust behind them, the bawling grew less and the cowponies took up an easy swinging walk. All day long the cattle wound their way across the valleys and down the roads. That afternoon they were turned into a fenced field at Camas only to be stirred to their feet in the pre-dawn darkness Saturday morning and set out again.

"If a man stayed with this work," Mike Sullivan muttered back in the drag, "He might someday get to know what the hind end of a cow looks like even if he doesn't learn anything else."

Hunched over his saddle horn in the cold morning air Charlie Crump, who would never put up with any other way of life, told Harry Sadler, "This job is losing its glamour."

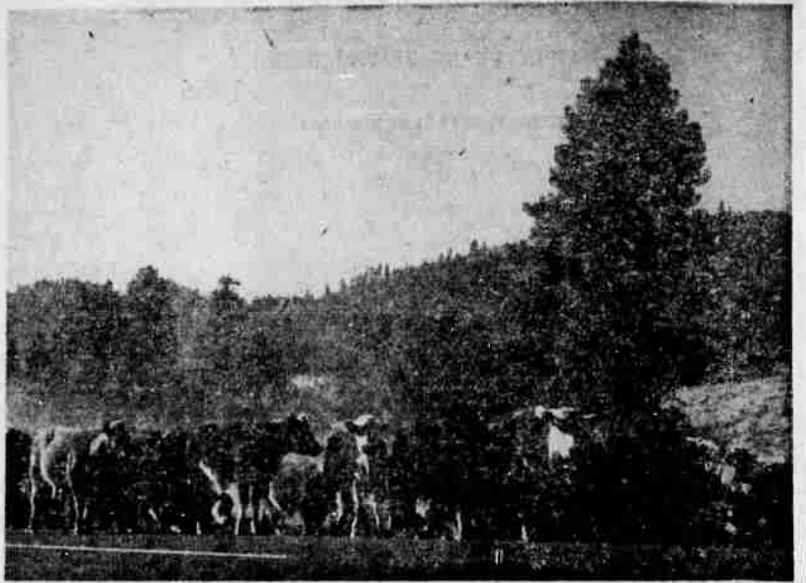
Before noon the herd was over the pass from Warner Canyon and on the last leg toward town. The men were caked with dust and some of the cattle dragged along tender-footedly. With their goal at hand the men's spirits rose and a good deal of kidding started up.

"What are you going to do with all the money you're getting?" Wakefield asked Dyke.

"Buy three or four Cadillacs," was the answer.

Down the road they went and soon made the last turn toward the stockyards only a short mile away. As they crossed the highway one heifer decided she could not possibly traverse the white line. She spooked and bolted through a fence. Try as they would the men could not convince her that she could cross the line. Earl Wakefield grinned as she made another break back toward the desert and spurred his horse after her. He gave the pony no signal, he did not need to because the horse knew that Earl was taking down his rope. As he flipped a loop out and shook away the kinks the cowpony, with two long days behind him, stretched out his stride and brought Earl up to the heifer in roping position. Two turns of the loop and then it sailed out to settle around the runaway's neck. The horse squatted as Earl took his dailies and the chase came to an abrupt end. In a few moments the rebellious yearling was busy getting lost in the middle of the herd and shortly afterwards they were counted into the gate at the yards just south of town.

True to their word the Southern Pacific had a nearly mile long string of stock cars lined up at the loading chutes and the Lake County Brand Inspector, Lee Hunsaker, studied them as they crowded



ON THE TRAIL TO TOWN these cattle in the vanguard of the herd hesitate before crossing the highway. Traffic, fences and other modern hazards have added so much to the difficulties of driving cattle to shipping points that the practice is gradually being given up. The yearlings shown above had a hard time walking on the smooth surfaced pavement. At one point in the drive when another highway had to be crossed a heifer became convinced that she could not cross the white line in the center of the road. It took a rista to convince her that she could.

Jargon Of The Range Is Always Colorful

Every highly specialized occupation has its own vocabulary and jargon. The men who have to cope with the idiosyncrasies of livestock have a language of their own and while it is often profane, it is always colorful.

Speaking of a bucking horse a cowhand might say either that "when he comes unwound and throws a wall-eyed fit he can really turn it on," or "he can't pitch hard enough to scatter salt." When a man gets bucked off he may be said to have been "tossed so high he spread out like a frog the full length of the bridle reins," and "he has been crippling around ever since."

An absent member of the crew may be referred to being "a long time gone," and a particularly distasteful chore "lasts 13 months out of every year." After a trip to town a hand may declare himself "as broke as the Ten Commandments because he 'was so healthy he couldn't stand it so he filled up and tipped over.'"

One old cowboy, when asked if he wanted to go bear hunting, avowed that he hadn't ever lost any. His pal said he must "have a lot of rabbit in him."

A hand may be referred to as "a hell-roaring, hard-riding, dou-

ed up the ramp into the cars. As the last door was fastened Mike Sullivan was heard saying, "Well, that's the last time we'll get to drive them in. Next year we'll stay home and chop firewood while the trucks do the job."

"Quit complaining," Terry Cahill said, "Let's go to town."

even getting his sleeves wet.

When a cold wind starts up, a cowboy will remind his audience that "between here and the north pole there's nothing but a three wire fence and it won't turn much wind."

A good cutting horse may be said to be able to "separate snakes" but a poor one "couldn't turn chickens away from a trough."

THE COVER

The cover picture for this week's Herald and News Magazine Section of Klamath Basin Living was taken in Warner Canyon just east of Lakeview by Bill Decker using an Ansco Regent set at f 8 and one 100th of a second using a K2 yellow filter and Panatomic x film. The cattle are a herd made up of six different brands.

FOR DEPENDABLE SERVICE

Call

GRAHAM BROS.

PH. TU 4-5541

Experts in

Excavating

Road Building

Ditching



Business Forms

DESIGNED ESPECIALLY TO SUIT YOUR NEEDS!

* SNAP-OUT FORMS * FOLDERS * LETTER HEADS * STATEMENTS

Quality Printing

Since 1933

GUIDE PRINTING CO.

1205 Klamath Avenue

Phone TU 4-5373

GENUINE

Star Brand Work

SHOES

Exclusively Yours At

Van Orman's

527 Main