

Marketing Problems Under Careful Study

Any manufacturer, agriculturalist, or producer of any kind will agree that one of the most important factors in his business is the marketing of his product. Finding a market and getting the goods delivered to that market are important factors which may determine profit or loss. Cattlemen are no different from anyone else in this respect and, in many ways, their problems along this line are more complex than those of other producers.

In Southern Oregon livestock is produced for the most part, on open range far from terminal markets and shipping points. Finding buyers and then moving the cattle to those buyers is an important element in the pattern of the cow business. All through the history of the cattle industry marketing and shipping have been major problems for the stockmen. Today this is still true to a lesser extent.

PROGRESS

Improved means of communication and transportation have eased the situation somewhat. Trucks can now reach most of the ranches and railroads have branched into every section of the country. Telephones have brought the ranchers, feeders and packers within speaking distance of each other and deals are made with greater ease than ever before.

All this is a far cry from the days of the great trail drives which took place when the Texans came home from the Civil War and found their cattle running in a semi-wild state. To reach eastern markets these cattle had to be driven hundreds of miles to a rail head.

An enterprising young man

NAILING

The application of hardwood flooring is a carpentering specialty. It calls for special nails. For a fine squeak-free floor, which the owner will be forever proud of, it is well worth while to insist that the floor layer get and use the right kind of nails, and plenty of them. The average floor-layer finds the screw-type nails more satisfactory, because they eliminate splitting.

named McCoy recognized the desperate need for a central receiving point for these cattle and in 1866 he began trying to influence the railroads to run a line to some convenient mid-western point. The tycoons of the rail industry laughed at his idea and refused to put in with him. Finally McCoy got one farsighted man to listen to him and a track was run to the tiny settlement of Abilene, Kansas. This particular railroad served Chicago as well as eastern points and this is why that city became the slaughter center of the country long before more likely locations such as Kansas City or St. Louis, which were served by rival lines, came into prominence as such.

McCoy built the stockyards at Abilene and while he waited for the tracks to be laid he sent riders to the south to spread the word that cattle could be shipped from there. Texans gathered their herds and started north, not really knowing whether the story they had heard was true or just a far fetched dream. The difficulties they encountered along the way were manifold. Swollen rivers, Indians and stampedes were constant sources of troubles.

In a short time several trails were worn into the face of the prairie, some over two miles wide at certain points. McCoy's riders met these herds and guided them to the new stockyards. Eastern buyers came out on the first trains and it seemed that the cattle could not come fast enough to suit the demand. The most famous of the trails was named after the man who is supposed to have pioneered it, Jesse Chisolm, and it is estimated that in the late 60s and early 70s over 3,000,000 head of Texas longhorns traveled up that trail to Abilene.

McCoy's success prompted other railroads to establish similar shipping points and as the tracks stretched ever farther out across the country the cow business spread into the west and northwest.

OREGON

A peculiar situation developed in Oregon during the late 70s when the cattle population had increased tremendously and no market could be found for them. The ranchers were forced to drive these cattle



CATTLE TRUCKS such as the one pictured above do most of the short hauling and some of the long transport jobs for cattlemen today. While shipping by truck may be more expensive than sending cattle to market on trains it is a much more convenient and often faster method. A truck can pick up the rancher's stock at the home corrals, whereas cattle have to be driven or hauled to the railroads. Trucks have made trail driving almost a thing of the past because it is easier on the cattle to truck them than it is to drive them.

eastward, back over the same Bozeman trail which the first settlers had taken coming to Oregon in the 1840's. These cattle eventually reached the railroad in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Many things combined to end the lush days when the supply could not keep up with the market for beef. Gradually buyers began demanding more quality and finish. Instead of being sold by the head the steers were sold by

the pound. For the first time weighing conditions and dressing percentage were taken into consideration. The market reached a saturation point and some shipments of beef failed to bring enough to pay their freight bill.

McCoy, who lived to see his dream a reality, died broke as a result of market speculations and gradually the cow business settled down from the bonanza era to its present status which demands tech-

nical skill in breeding, feeding and marketing. Today's cattle are the product of careful selection and they are bred to produce the maximum amount of beef per head. Each steer or heifer represents generations of gradual improvement and the final step in production is just as important as the first: if the beefs are not intelligently sold and shipped their quality will be of no avail to the rancher.

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BEFORE DAWN the boys rode out to shake the cattle up from their bedgrounds and point them for town. A great deal has been written regarding the passing of the cowboy by people who may have seen the west through a pullman window, but the fact is that men are still making their living doing saddle work and will continue to as long as beef is eaten. The only practical method of running a cow herd on a large scale is on open range and men will always be needed who know the ways of range cattle.