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The Cattle Industry of San Juan County, Utah, 1875-1900

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THE CATTLE INDUSTRY OF SAN JUAN COUNTY, UTAH, 1875-1900

A THESIS
PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY,
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE

BY
FRANKLIN D. DAY
JULY, 1958
The challenging entry of the Mormon Pioneers into southeastern Utah through the famous "Hole-in-the-Rock," and their determination to stay and conquer in spite of the opposition from Indians, the elements, and the San Juan River is a fascinating story. These people were industrious, frugal and devoted to a cause. In spite of their early poverty they succeeded in building a strong economy based largely, from the beginning, on the cattle industry. The rise of this industry is full of colorful incidents typical of the Great Southwest.

To the best of the writer's knowledge there has been no complete study made of the cattle industry of San Juan County, Utah, covering the period from 1875 to 1900. It is merely referred to briefly as it relates to other phases of the history of the area. Being so important to the economic development of the county, a complete history could not be told without including it. For this reason this study was made.

An attempt was made to learn the background and development of the cattle industry from a number of sources. First, by interviewing some of the early white residents of
the county, both Mormon and non-Mormon. Second, the diaries and other writings of prominent early leaders. Third, research into records of the past found in libraries and historical societies. Finally, the writings of others on various phases of the subject.

There were a number of problems of interest in this study from the onset. First, the historical background of the county and its early inhabitants. Second, the period of time during which the cattle companies arrived in San Juan County, and something of the types of cattle they owned. Third, problems of production and marketing. Fourth, the life of the cattlemen and cowboys, and a consideration of some of the range conflicts they had with others who occupied the range. Finally, the reasons for the large cattle companies selling out and leaving the industry in the hands of the Mormon settlers in the county.

The writer would like to thank, for their guidance and professional advice, Dr. Richard D. Poll whose suggestions and encouragement were very helpful in the beginning of this project; Dr. LeRoy R. Hafen, an outstanding authority on Western History, who willingly accepted the assignment of guiding this project when Dr. Poll left the state; and President William E. Berrett for his time, suggestions, and inspiration.

Others who have been most helpful in the research are the staff of the San Juan County Clerk's Office; the
Library staff of Brigham Young University; the assistants of the L.D.S. Church Historian's Office; and the staff of the Utah State Historical Society.

To those who live in, and know San Juan County, and were helpful with information goes a special thanks, to Albert R. Lyman of Blanding; Charles Redd of Provo and La Sal; Cornelia Adams Perkins of Monticello; and Al Scorup of Moab.

To his wonderful wife who has been proof-reader, typist, and the main source of encouragement in addition to carrying on her regular household duties, he dedicates this work.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The San Juan County area is extremely interesting, perhaps because there is still little known about some of its isolated sections. "...the desert wilderness of the county, though not as barren and unsusceptible of reclamation is perhaps as wild in its remote corners as any part of the intermountain region."¹

From a study of the course of the famed Colorado River, Frank Waters leaves a colorful description as he viewed the San Juan County.

From the midpoint of the eastern boundary of Utah to the mid-point of the southern, the Colorado River slices through the immense Kaiparowits Plateau which comprises nearly one-third of the whole state. Some eighty years ago the Mormon Deseret News describes it as "one vast contiguity of waste and measuredly valueless, excepting for nomadic purposes, hunting grounds for Indians, and to hold the world together." No one can add to this description. The immense triangular wedge between the Colorado and San Juan is still one of the most spectacular wastelands in America.²

The same writer further describes the country as

¹San Juan County, Utah, Board of County Commissioners, Monticello, Utah, 1920, p. 25.

being "a badland of grotesquely eroded rock." One of the first to establish permanent residence in the county describes it as being "generally very rough, broken and sandy."

From the writings of those who sought to give favorable advertisement to the area we have this general description.

There are in San Juan County over one million acres of choice agricultural land which await only the plow of the farmer to become productive. The remainder of the five million acres in the county consist mainly of good grazing land, interspersed here and there by large box canyons. The general nature of the country is rolling and most of the land is covered by a more or less heavy growth of sage-brush.

The mountains in San Juan are not a part of any range of mountains, but are individual mountains that stand off by themselves. The most important are the La Sal, Elk, Navajo and the Blue mountains.

The La Sal is located in the northern part of the county and extends over into present Grand County. It has one peak reaching a height of 13,089 feet.

Situated in the center of the county is the famous Blue Mountains, sometimes called the Abajo. Joining the

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3Ibid., p. 65.
5San Juan County, Utah, Board of County Commissioners, op. cit., p. 3.
6Ibid., p. 25.
Blue Mountains, on the southwest are the flat-topped Elk Mountains. Both of these played a prominent and productive part in the rise and development of the cattle industry in the county, due to their range value.7

In the southwest corner of the county near the Arizona border and on the Navajo Indian reservation are the Navajo Mountains, reaching a height of approximately 10,416 feet.

The Colorado River with the Green River forms the entire western boundary of San Juan County. They have cut their way through great rock formations but due to the depths of the canyons and the absence of good soil in the vicinity of the river they have not been of any great value to San Juan except for scenic attraction.

South of present Moab, Utah, the Colorado River is joined by the Green River flowing in from the north and farther to the south it receives the smaller Fremont and Escalante Rivers draining the Kaiparowits Plateau.8

In southern San Juan above the Arizona line the Colorado River meets its largest tributary, the San Juan River, which has cut a course through three states. The San Juan winds from its head waters in the state of Colorado through northwestern New Mexico and into Utah. It discharges annually 2,500,000 acre-feet9 of water or over twice that of

7Ibid., p. 25. 8Waters, op. cit., p. 10. 9One acre-foot of water is equivalent to the amount that will cover one acre with water one foot deep. Ibid., p. 10.
the noted Rio Grande, yet it remains one of America's least known rivers.\textsuperscript{10}

Following is an interesting description of the San Juan River and the country it flows through:

Named after St. John the Baptist, it too cries alone in the wilderness——one of the loneliest, wildest regions in America. The Navajo Indian reservation occupies a good half of the total area of its basin, and the Southern Ute reservation a portion of the remainder. Its head waters are in the rugged San Juans of southwestern Colorado near Wolf Creek Pass. Flowing south and west it bends through New Mexico for a hundred miles, irrigating a mere 50,000 acres out of the 600,000 that could be used if the river could be utilized.\textsuperscript{11}

Due to its sandy channel and its ability to rise rapidly and change its course the San Juan River has been a constant danger and challenge to the settlers who sought to establish homes near its banks and utilize the water for irrigation. Several times they have lost nearly all they had worked for as it cut a new channel and flooded their land.\textsuperscript{12}

There are a number of small tributaries that flow into the San Juan in Utah, such as the Montezuma and Re-capture Creeks. However, none of these add greatly to the size of the river.

Where the San Juan River enters the State of Utah is, "the only place in the country where four states meet, it is

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid. \textsuperscript{11}Ibid.\textsuperscript{12}Albert R. Lyman, "The Port on the Firing Line," The Improvement Era, Salt Lake City, Vol.52, No.4, April, 1949, pp. 243-244, Vol.52, No.8, August 1949, p. 528.
known as the Four Corners, the wildest littlest known and most inaccessible region in America." 13

Perhaps the greatest concern of the occupants of San Juan County, over the years, has been the water supply. The area is an all arid upland where water is scarce and precious. The mean annual rainfall is a scant 10 inches. When it does rain it is often a deluge; a cloudburst that floods a dry creek bed within an hour, cuts washes and gullies, and then vanishes very rapidly. 14

Before the days of over grazing, hence erosion, the rainfall was sufficient to provide a plentiful supply of good quality grasses except during periods of extreme drought.

Concerning the uncertainty of an accurate early history of the county, Albert R. Lyman states: "A complete history of San Juan may never be written. There is no printed record to which we may refer for a knowledge of its remote past." 15

So far as known, the original occupants of the area of the San Juan were roving Indian tribes, the aborigines of America. Opinions are divided as to whether these included the Cliff Dwellers, a strange and interesting people the remains of whose work may be seen in recesses of the rocks in Southern Utah and other parts. Some authorities identify them with the Moquis and Hopis of Arizona, while others

13 Waters, op. cit., p. 70.
14 Ibid., p. 7.
15 Albert R. Lyman, History of San Juan Stake, Brigham Young University Library, Provo, Utah, 1946, p. 1. (Typewritten).
give them a much greater antiquity than any red race can boast. This much may be said: The Cliff Dwellers were here long before the savage tribes that were found by the Pioneers.

Next on the scene were the savage warlike Indians. In the region of San Juan three tribes were represented, the Utes, Piutes and Navajoes.16

The nomadic, modern tribes of Indians appeared to have been well established when the first white men arrived. Their hostilities frequently interrupted the exploring and surveying missions of the white men before San Juan became a place of interest to settlers.17

As the white man came west the Indian resented the loss of his property from which he obtained his livelihood and thus made attempts to defend it. Eventually, however, the unity and numbers of the settlers and cattlemen proved too much for the Indians and they gradually withdrew or were assigned to certain areas which were to be their own land where they could live unmolested. The Indians were assigned to different areas, the Navajo nation was given a reservation in Northern Arizona and that part of the Utah Territory south of the San Juan River. Some of the Ute tribe was settled in Western Colorado and Eastern Utah north of the Colorado River. In the region south of the Colorado River and north of the San Juan River was the small tribe of Piutes. This was not their reservation, but they refused


17 Cornelia Adams Perkins, Marian Gardner Nielson, Lenora Butt Jones, Saga of San Juan (San Juan County Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1957), p. 22.
to obey any law, so remained in their old hunting grounds in spite of the white man's rules.18

The relationship of the three tribes seems to have been mostly of a hostile nature as they plundered the property and kidnapped the members of each other's tribes. One interesting bit of hostility between the Utes and Navajos is as follows:

One Ute tradition says that after fighting all day at Peak City, Navajos and Utes drew back when darkness arrived. The next morning the Utes crossed the San Juan River and in a surprise attack, beat the Navajos and took many of their women back to the Blue Mountains. The Navajos tell of crossing the river at Bluff and, after inciting a quarrel with the Utes, crossed back and hid so that the angry Indians, advancing in a long string, could not see their enemies. One by one, the unsuspecting Utes were picked off.19

All of the tribes were adept at stealing from each other, and were more than anxious to continue this illegal practice when the white man arrived. Many treaties were signed between the United States Government and the Indians, principally the Navajos, but these agreements meant nothing to the Indians. Finally the government sent troops under Kit Carson in 1863, to take the Navajos as prisoners and hold them at Fort Sumner, New Mexico. An old friend of the Indians for many years gives his impression of this event.

At the time the Navajo Nation was conquered along in the 60's by Kit Carson, who was then work-

19 Perkins and others, op. cit., p. 22.
ing for the U. S. Government, they numbered about 14,000 souls. They were held in subjection for some time, their property was destroyed or taken from them, their orchards were cut down, and when they were finally turned loose they were in a destitute condition. When the Navajoes (Navajos) were sent back to their reservation where water for irrigation is scarce, rainfall light, and soil for the most part not rich in plant life, they were in a sad plight. They are a naturally thrifty, hardy, and industrious people and they were not content to remain in this poverty stricken condition. From their point of view they had been placed in this robbed condition, and if robbing was the white man's game, why shouldn't the Navajoes try their hand at it?20

Gradually through a combination of fairness, friendliness and firmness the whites were able to win the confidence and trust of all three Indian nations. But it took many years and many anxious moments.

There exists some question as to when and who were the first white men in the area. It would seem from available information and maps of the early history of San Juan County that little actual detailed exploring was done. Most of those who entered the county saw only the border and few viewed much of the interior.

It is generally accepted that the first white men to have entered the Utah area was a party of Spaniards led by Captain Garcia Lopez de Cardenas in 1540. They were a part of Coronado's command who were searching for the famed Seven Cities of Cibola. Coronado had heard of a great river to the northwest and sent Cardenas with twelve men to find it.

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It is believed that the party traveled into Utah as far as the south bank of the Colorado River, but did not cross it. 21

It seems the most traveled and best known part of early San Juan was in the north over the Old Spanish Trail. Two Franciscan Friars, Fathers Escalante and Dominguez, in search of a route from Santa Fe, New Mexico to Monterey, California, traveled near the area of San Juan in 1776. However, they stayed in Colorado until considerably north of San Juan before crossing into Utah. It was left to those who followed the two Friars to find the shorter route via the La Sal Mountains and across the Colorado River near what is now the town of Moab, Utah. 22

Concerning this part of the Old Spanish Trail the following information is given.

A practicable crossing of the Colorado would be found at present Moab, Utah. Who first braved this desert stretch and pioneered to Moab the route that was to become the regular course of the Old Spanish Trail is not known. It may have been Manuel Mestas, or the Arze-Garcia party of 1913, but data have not been found to establish the matter with certainty. 23

There have been some famous individuals in Western history who have traveled over the Old Spanish Trail and may have actually been in San Juan.

In 1824, William Becknell, William Heddest, and

23 Ibid., p. 88.
Antoine Robidoux, American trappers, traveled into Western Colorado and into Utah. Also in 1824, Etienne Provost was in the area of the Colorado and Green Rivers. Some others in the area in this period were William H. Ashley, 1825, Jedediah Smith, "the greatest single explorer of the far west," men of the Rocky Mountain and American Fur companies, and many others. Detailed information is not available but it seems reasonable to believe that the exploring spirit of these men led them deep into San Juan at these early dates.

The first party to journey the entire distance over substantially the route that became the Old Spanish Trail was led by William Wolfskill and George C. Yount in the winter of 1830-31.

Captain John C. Fremont, a United States Army Officer, was over much of the Old Spanish Trail in 1844. Another, and perhaps the most famous was Kit Carson, the army scout, who spent a number of years in the area as a trapper, explorer, scout, and dispatch bearer.

In 1853 Congress appropriated $150,000 to survey several practicable railroad routes from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. A party of about three dozen men were authorized to survey the passes between the 38th and 39th parallels. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis...

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26 Ibid., p. 105.
27 Ibid., p. 109.
28 Ibid., p. 139.
29 Ibid., p. 188.
30 Ibid., p. 193.
chose Captain Gunnison of the Topographical Engineers to command this expedition. He went via Fort Bent to Sangre de Cristo Pass, San Luis Park, Saguache Pass, Cochetopa Pass, down the Gunnison to the Grand River, west into Utah. There Gunnison and seven of his party were massacred by the Indians.31

There were others prior to 1875, who led geographic and geologic expeditions into the area besides those mentioned. Captain J. N. Macomb, of the United States Army, left Abiquiu, New Mexico, in 1859, with an exploring expedition. They traveled north over part of the Old Spanish Trail, crossing the Utah-Colorado line directly east of the Blue Mountains. Continuing in a northeasterly direction, they arrived at the junction of the Grand and Green rivers where Captain Macomb records the following observation. "I cannot conceive of a more worthless and impracticable region than the one we found ourselves in."32 They then retraced their route to a point that would take them directly south toward the present town of Monticello, Utah, passing on the east side of the Blue Mountains and on to the San Juan River. They arrived at the river in the vicinity of the present town of Bluff and then followed up its course to the "four-corners" where they crossed into New Mexico.33

33Ibid.
Others who made trips into the area were J. S. Newberry, 1859, and W. H. Holmes, 1875. But up to this time no white man was desirous of establishing a permanent home in San Juan County. 34

In the middle eighteen seventies, the cattlemen from Colorado, New Mexico, and the settlements of Utah became aware of the choice San Juan ranges and made preparations to make use of the available free feed for their cattle.

34Perkins and others, op. cit., p. 21.
CHAPTER II

CATTLE COME TO SAN JUAN

In the year 1875, the San Juan section of the Territory of Utah included that large area lying east of the Colorado River, west of the State of Colorado and north of the State of Arizona. Exploring parties prior to 1860, did little, if anything, in the way of exploring this vast, inaccessible area due to the difficulty of crossing the Colorado River. The early settlers ignored this region because they had an abundance of land in more available areas which would require a great deal of work to be brought into production.

The first attempt to settle southeastern Utah was in 1855, when about 40 Mormons moved into Moab. This was known as the Elk Mountain Mission, and was established for the purpose of educating and converting the Ute Indians who lived in the region of the Elk Mountains (now the La Salle Mountains). The company started from Manti, on Monday, May 21, 1855, led by Alfred N. Billings. The Indians at first appeared

1Andrew Jensen, "The Elk Mountain Mission" (From the Official Journal of the Company by Oliver B. Huntington), The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Press, 1913), Vol. IV, p. 189.

2Ibid.
friendly but shortly proved to be very hostile. James B. Hunt was shot in the back and died a few days later. Two boys, Edward Edwards and William Behunin, were killed by Indians while out hunting. In addition three other colonists were wounded. As a result of these attacks there is recorded in the company's official journal kept by Oliver B. Huntington the following entry of September 24, 1855.

Early in the morning, the Indians came up to the Fort, said they were glad that three of the "Mormons" had been killed, acknowledging that they had killed the two boys as they were coming down the mountain. Thus three of our number fell martyrs in the cause of our God. Three of them were killed, and three severely wounded. It was now thought best for us to move right away, or we should all die, as the Indians had sent runners out into the mountains for help. Some of the brethren convened in council and prayer, to enquire of the Lord what was best to be done, to leave or stay, under the circumstances we were in. We all prayed, and afterwards spoke our feelings, and agreed to leave it to Brother Billings to say, it being his place and prerogative as president of the mission. We were all willing to stay and fight it out and die together, or leave. He adjourned to talk with Clark A. Huntington, who was engaged in talking with the Indians. Brother Billings soon returned and said that under the present existing circumstances, he deemed it wisdom to leave for the present.

The mission was then abandoned and the members returned to the settlements in central and southern Utah.

The first white settler in San Juan was Peter Shirts (Shurtz), well known among early settlers as an Indian fighter. In 1877, he built a cabin at the point where the

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3Ibid., p. 197.
4Ibid., pp. 198-199.
Montezuma Creek empties into the San Juan River.\(^5\)

In the early eighteen seventies, the family of Tom Ray left their home in Tennessee; traveled to California where they lived for three years and then moved to Utah near Mount Pleasant. In search of more profitable grazing land for their small herd of cattle they moved into the San Juan area of Utah in 1877, camping first in the Moab valley at the old Mormon Fort. Still not satisfied with the range conditions they traveled farther south and towards the La Sal Mountains where they found good grass land at Coyote, where the present La Sal post office is located. Upon exploring six miles further they found the choice range land they were looking for at Old La Sal and settled at what they called Deer Creek, about a mile southwest of where the main settlement of La Sal was made a year later.

When the Ray family arrived at Deer Creek they found two men, one who called himself "Nigger Bill" and the other a Frenchman. The two had a small herd of cattle, brought into the valley in 1876, from the Utah settlements in search of better range conditions. These first herds contributed little to the stocking of the San Juan ranges and were very small compared to the later herds owned by the large cattle companies.\(^6\)

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\(^6\) Frank Silvey, "The History and Early Settlement of Northern San Juan County," (W.P.A. Records, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, 1936), pp. 3-4. (Typewritten).
In 1878 and 1879, the Cornelius Maxwells, parents of Mrs. Tom Ray, Philander Maxwell Sr., Tom Maxwell, followed somewhat later by Billy McCarty and family settled on Coyote Creek, located about one mile northwest of what is now called the La Sal post office, where they built good, substantial cabins for protection from Indians. Philander Maxwell and Billy McCarty had at that time about two thousand head of cattle, the first large herd to locate in San Juan.

In 1879, Lester Taylor, "Buddy" Taylor, Arthur A. Taylor and John Shafer moved a herd of about 3,000 head of cattle from their homesteads in Moab Valley to the northeast side of the La Sal Mountains where they found sufficient summer range to accommodate their large herd. 7

Also in 1879, a number of settlers from Salina, Mount Pleasant, Manti, Spanish Fork and other communities in "the settlements," as they were then called, took up homesteads at La Sal. They had only small numbers of cattle individually; collectively it amounted to a herd of several hundred head. 8

During the years from 1876 to 1881, cattle were very inexpensive in the settlements of Utah while in southern and western Colorado they were worth three or four times as much. A wealthy cattleman, Joshua B. Hudson, nicknamed "Spud" because he always carried a potato in his pocket, 9 was run-

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7Ibid., p. 4.  
8Ibid., p. 6.  
9Perkins and others, op. cit., p.
ning cattle on the "Picket Wire" near Trinidad, Colorado when he decided to take advantage of this situation. As he traveled through the San Juan area in the spring of 1879, he was both amazed and pleased at the sight of the vast virgin ranges of the Blue Mountains and made the immediate decision to stock these ranges with the inexpensive cattle he could buy in the Utah settlements. Hudson purchased about two thousand head of good grade cattle for ten dollars per head and hired John E. Brown, Dudley Reece and Green Robinson to help him drive the cattle from the settlements to the Blue Mountains.

While in the settlements, Hudson became acquainted with a man named Peters, who after hearing the glowing description of the amount of feed available, drove his large herd of cattle to the Blue Mountains just a few months following the Hudson drive.

Arriving at the Blues, Hudson located his first camp, two cabins built end to end, on the Vega near a large spring of water. This camp was known as "The Double Cabins" for some time and later called "Carlisle," being owned by the Carlisle Cattle Company, and is now the present site of Monticello, Utah.¹⁰

Leaving the cowboys with his cattle in San Juan, Hudson returned to his camp on the "Picket Wire" where he

sold all of his cattle at a good price and then returned to
the Blue Mountains. Here he hired two more cowboys to look
after the cattle and in company with Brown, Reece and Robinson
again left for the settlements for more cattle. He bought
enough to make another herd as large or larger than the first
he had driven to San Juan, and loaned Reece and Robinson five
thousand dollars each to buy five hundred head of cattle of
their own. These combined herds were driven to the new range
on the Blue Mountains. Hudson made other trips to the settle-
ments, returning each time with large herds of cattle, and
by the early eighteen eighties the ranges around the Blue
Mountains were becoming well stocked. 11

Also in the late eighteen seventies a man named
Wilson brought in a number of cattle and located them on
Recapture Creek, which runs south of the Blue Mountains and
empties into the San Juan River. His cattle soon spread over
a large area and then in the early eighteen eighties, he sold
his cattle to the L.C. Cattle Company.

The main herd of the L.C. Cattle Company originated
in Texas, New Mexico and Colorado. As this herd moved into
Utah the owners added to the numbers by the purchase of
Wilson's herd and other small herds and formed what was later
known as the second largest cattle company in the San Juan
region in the eighteen eighties.

The L.C. Company was originally owned by I. W. Lacy

11 Silvey, op. cit., pp. 7-8.
(Lacey), who was killed in a cowboy brawl at Fort Lewis, Colorado in 1880. From that time on Mrs. Lacy, with the help of her brothers, took over the reins of leadership and guided the company through several successful years.\(^{12}\)

Another successful cattleman, Charley (Race Horse) Johnson from McPhee, Colorado, was also in search of new range land where feed was plentiful. He found the range he desired in the Blue Mountains and sent about twelve hundred head over from Colorado in the care of his foreman Al Nunn.\(^{13}\)

In 1883, the Kansas and New Mexico Land and Cattle Company, an English syndicate from Kansas, bought out Hudson and Peters along with a number of smaller interests. This was the start of the largest herd of cattle of its time in eastern Utah and western Colorado.\(^{14}\) The company was owned by an Englishman, Harold Carlisle\(^{15}\) and was managed by his brother Ted Carlisle. The popular hip-side and shoulder brand used by the Carlisle Cattle Company was well known and respected throughout the Blue Mountains area.

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\(^{12}\) Mrs. Dan Perkins, personal interview, Monticello, Utah, July 1954.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.

\(^{14}\) Silvey, op. cit., p. 41.

\(^{15}\) Frank Silvey refers to Harold Carlisle as "lord Harold Carlisle a titled Englishman." Also in a paper, in the Brigham Young University Library, entitled "A Brief History of San Juan County" by Walter W. Hiller, the following is taken: "Harold Carlisle, owner of the Hip-Side and Shoulder Cattle Company was an Englishman entitled to a lordship. For this reason he was never naturalized."
Some of the smaller cattlemen who had sold their cattle to the Carlisle Company took the money and returned to the settlements in Utah to buy more cattle which they drove to San Juan where the summer ranges were rapidly approaching an overstocked condition.

Charles H. Ogden and Jim Blood, representing Pittsburg capital, arrived in San Juan during the summer of 1885, where after some delay and considerable bargaining they bought the cattle and ranch interests of a number of smaller cattlemen in the La Sal region. Ogden was manager and Blood was range foreman of this new company known as the Pittsburg Cattle Company which used as their brand two circles on each rib. Two years later this brand was changed to the cross "H" which is still being run by the La Sal Live Stock Company.\(^1\)

During the late fall of 1885, a number of men with small herds of cattle moved into the area of Indian Creek, which runs north from the Blue Mountains and enters the Colorado River just north of where the Green River makes its entrance. D. M. Cooper and Mel Turner were the first to settle at Indian Creek followed by V. P. Martin, Brewster, Davis, Wilson, Harry Green, Lee Kirk, Henry Goodman and others. In 1887, John E. Brown settled in the same area, planted a fine orchard, built good cabins and corrals and fenced his crops. The second year he had considerable hay ground and soon after had big hay stacks for the winter.

\(^{16}\)Silvey, op. cit., p. 42.
months. A few years later, (1895) Dave Goulelock settled in the same area where he developed a very good ranch.\textsuperscript{17}

It was difficult for the small cattlemen to operate successfully in competition with the large companies. The expense was almost as great to care for a hundred head of cattle on the range as it was to care for a thousand head. So many men were required to care for a herd, but this number did not increase proportionately with an increase of cattle, except at roundup time. The small owners without enough cattle to maintain a rider tried to protect their few from Indians and rustlers by keeping them in corrals and feeding them part of the time while the large companies took advantage of the free feed on the open range.

The above mentioned condition was largely responsible for the combining of a number of small herds in order to operate more efficiently and profitably. Thus, Goulelock, Cooper and Martin fused their interests and formed the Indian Creek Cattle Company which was later sold to the Scorup-Sommerville Cattle Company, the owners at the present time, (1954).\textsuperscript{18}

The last of the large cattle companies arrived in San Juan in the fall of 1888. Two thousand Texas Longhorns, under the foremanship of John Crosby, were driven in from Texas and turned into the Comb Wash Range which runs south

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 43
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.
of the Elk Mountains down to the San Juan River. They were hardy and prolific but of inferior quality and were held in contempt by the other cattle companies and by the settlers. Albert R. Lyman of Blanding, Utah, formerly of Bluff, Utah, gives a very picturesque description of the arrival of these cattle in San Juan, and the reason why they were not entirely welcome.

Their great bawling herd, a mile long, came straggling down the river through Bluff -- yellow cattle, white, black, brindle; all of them starving and hollow from the long trail; all of them coyote-like in form, little better in size. And horns! such a river of horns as you might see in a nightmare---horns reaching out and up, out and up again in fantastic corkscrews. The children of Bluff laughed at it, but their parents looked on with alarm. The snaky little bulls, narrow and sunburned, could compete successfully for existence with goats on a rock. They were to father the incorrigible "pinion-busters" for which the San Juan rough country would sometime be notorious.

This indestructible Texas stock would crowd the Bluff cattle against the rims, starve them to death, and predominate over them by their native toughness.19

This company took the name of The Elk Mountain Cattle Company after the nearby Elk Mountains. Their brand consisted of the letters E L K M spread out the full length of the left side of the animal. To identify the animal from the right side the right ear was cut off close to the head. This company remained in business in San Juan only four or five years before selling out to the local settlers.

Eight years prior to the arrival of the Elk Mountain Cattle Company, a group of settlers with a small number of cattle arrived at Bluff on the San Juan River with the intent of making a permanent home. Cattle, however, was not to be their sole purpose in coming to San Juan nor their only means of livelihood.

This group was the Mormons who had been called by their leaders to travel from their homes in southwestern Utah to San Juan to make friends with the Indian tribes who were harrassing, plundering and threatening war with the Church's southern settlements.

When the Church leaders decided to plant a colony of Mormons in the center of danger, Silas S. Smith of Paragonah was called to lead a small exploring party to search for the most suitable site to be settled. This exploring company left Cedar City, Utah, in April of 1879, composed of twenty-six men, two women and eight children. Besides their horses and mules they had twenty-five head of cattle. After crossing the Colorado River at Lees Ferry they followed a trail to the Hopi Indian Village of Moencopi in Arizona where the women and children were left behind while the scouts traveled one hundred and seventy-five miles north to the San Juan River. A camp was established on the north side of the river because the south side was the Navajo Indian reservation, and then five men were sent back to Arizona for the women, children, wagons and cattle.
Approximately ten miles west from where Recapture Creek enters the San Juan River two cabins were built for the two families to live in while the exploring company continued their journey north, northwest, southwest, and south back to Cedar City, completing a great circle over nine hundred miles in circumference.

Sixty families had been selected to be prepared to go to San Juan as soon as the scouts returned to Cedar City. This was considered a hazardous assignment, both as to travel and establishing a colony among the Indians, but it was all a part of the colonizing program of the Church and was accepted by the members as a part of their duty and obligation.  

Kumen Jones, one of the scouts accompanying Silas S. Smith on the original exploring expedition states:

When it was decided to send people to settle the San Juan, Silas S. Smith asked the authorities to have some men from Escalante investigate a possible shorter route to San Juan through that area. After viewing the (Hole in the Rock) they said a good road was available, which proved later to be erroneous.  

In view of the thoroughness in which the Church made plans for other settlements plus the fact that Kumen Jones was with both the exploring party and the colonists, it

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would seem his above statement would be correct, although there seems to be no corresponding account left by anyone else. At the same time it seems incredible that any serious minded, honest individual could view the Hole-in-the-Rock and make a report that a good road was available. At any rate in order to avoid the long circuitous route traveled by the exploring party a "short cut" was decided upon as the route for the major migration.

Traveling east to Escalante they then went southeast through the desert to the Colorado River. In the desert they found almost insurmountable obstacles as described by Dr. David E. Miller.

As a result, upwards of 250 men, women and children soon found themselves in the desert southeast of Escalante, faced with an almost impenetrable maze of straight walled canyons, deep desert sands, barren slick rock buttes, practically no forage for their more than 1,200 head of livestock; virtually no timber for fuel or construction, and a very scanty supply of water for man or beast.

The most formidable barrier was the Colorado River gorge that had to be crossed.22

The company left Cedar City in November of 1879, estimating it would take them from three to six weeks to reach their destination. It was April of the following year before they reached Bluff on the San Juan River.23

The building of a wagon road through the Hole-in-the-rock from the plateau down to the Colorado River some 2,000


feet below is one of the marvels of pioneer road building.\textsuperscript{24}

The cattle the Mormons took with them were to supply their meat and to be the foundation stock for a herd in San Juan, but as a result of the above conditions they were forced to use more of their cattle for food than was originally planned. Lack of feed and water, Indians and rustlers also did their part to deplete this original herd of cattle.

They were not quick to give up, however, and managed to supplement their herd by bringing in more cattle from the settlements in southwestern Utah and purchasing cattle from the large cattle companies.

It would seem from an overall study of the San Juan area that the main reason for the majority of cattle being brought in was to utilize the amount of free feed on the open ranges. These ranges were at their best from the late eighteen seventies to the early eighteen nineties when feed was of good quality, good quantity and a large area of land to range the cattle over was available.

From Percy Stanley Fritz we learn:

The dry grass was highly nutritive and the cattle not only subsisted, but thrived on it during the winter.

The Western grasses had become adapted to the dry climate and were not destroyed by the frost as were the more moist grasses of the east. They remained erect, while they gradually withered and turned yellow, becoming hay cured on the ground by the dry climate.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24}Miller, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. 2, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{25}Fritz, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 269.
A second reason for the movement of cattle into San Juan from neighboring states was to avoid the taxes placed on livestock in those states. Before San Juan became a county the only law in the area was that of the open range. The nearby states had their local governments and laws, and had placed an assessment on livestock to help finance them. It was an easy thing and a saving proposition for the cattle-men to cross their state boundary into San Juan and be free of these taxes. When San Juan became a county with its own government and taxes on cattle, it proved difficult to convince the large cattle companies that they should pay these taxes. With the new county authorities following a firm policy the taxes were finally paid.

The final reason for the movement of cattle into the area was that which brought the Mormon settlers; the assignment to settle among and make friends with the Indians. They brought cattle with them as a means of livelihood, and found San Juan to be good cattle country. It was their cattle business that made it possible for them to establish permanent communities and to become, in some cases, financial leaders in the State.
CHAPTER III

BREEDS, QUALITY AND NUMBERS OF CATTLE

When the San Juan ranges were first viewed by the cattlemen, feed conditions were almost too good to be real. Thousands of acres of thick, tall, and good quality grasses were available for grazing with the only competition being some ponies and goats belonging to the Indians. This grassland was open range and free to anyone who had cattle to take advantage of the feed. "The term (Open Range) applies to the days of the vast vacant public lands in the Western Country where land was literally open and cattle could roam or be driven from south to north, place to place, grazing as they went."¹

Among the first cattle brought into the area was a small herd of about 60 head of fine Durham milch cows owned by the Tom Ray family. The milk from the cows was made into butter; packed in whiskey barrels and hauled to Durango, Colorado, a distance of some 135 miles. Here the butter was sold for 50 cents per pound and the money used to purchase all types of food supplies to last the family from eight

¹Fritz, op. cit., p. 271
months to a year. 2

The Durham breed was of greater value to the small ranch owner than to the large open range cattle companies because they were a dual purpose type animal. Being generally good milch cows both as to quantity and quality, and also large with good meat quality which made them of value for beef. As a result the small rancher did not have to keep both milch and beef breeds but had the two needs satisfied in the Durham cattle.

The name Durham, after a county of that name in England, was used for this breed in its early history and is still used in some sections. However, the most common name now used for the Durham breed is Shorthorn, probably derived from their characteristic of short horns. There are two very definite types in the Shorthorn breed; the large beef type and the more angular milching type. 3

The first cattle to be put on the ranges of San Juan were a mixture of both the beef and dairy breeds in various degrees. Even the strains that were fairly pure resembled very little those same breeds of today. The beef types most commonly represented were a mixture, in varying degrees, of the Shorthorn (Durham), Hereford, and Texas Longhorn; with these were a number of smaller dairy type animals. The

2 Frank Silvey, "History of San Juan" (W.P.A. Records, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah) No date or page number. (Typewritten).

little information available refers to the early type cattle as a variety of breeds mixed together. May the fore-going serve as a summary of the breeds of cattle purchased from the Utah settlements and trailed into the San Juan region.

The cattle brought into San Juan from New Mexico and Texas were generally of a different type than the cattle from other areas. A rather descriptive account of New Mexico and Texas cattle is given in the following account from the book The Greater Southwest.

During the period of the great drives to market there were four general kinds of cattle in the Southwest. First, there were the "wild cattle" of western Texas and New Mexico, which were brown in color, with a light stripe down their back; long, slim, blue horns; and large and mealy noses. Second, there were the Texan-Mexican animals, of every color, with patches of white; horns enormously long and thin with a half twist back; heads course but thin; tall gaunt bodies and narrow hips. Third, the Mexican, or "Spanish" cattle were smaller than the kind last named, with shorter horns, and not so wild. They were often black and white, and sometimes their colors were brindle, brown, buckskin, and calico. Then, fourth, there were the "Chino" or "curly-haired Texans," which were large, well formed, and round; legs rather long; body heavy; and color a brownish buffalo. The horns were of medium size, and shaped as those of Missouri cattle.4

It would seem to me from a study of Texas cattle trailed into the San Juan area that the second and third types mentioned above were the ones most commonly represented. The bodily description and horns fit the second type, while the markings and size appear more like the third

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type. Possibly a mixture of the two would be most accurate.

In spite of what has been said against the Texas Longhorns, my opinion is that they had a very important place in the early Southwest cattle industry, and their influence for good extended up into San Juan. It is true that they did not carry the weight, nor were they as smooth in appearance as other breeds of cattle, but as trail cattle they had no equal. The Longhorns had superior hoofs which enabled them to graze in areas inaccessible to other cattle, and to walk great distances without becoming lame. Also, they were more adept in shifting about and caring for themselves under all conditions than was any other breed.

When cattle were on the open ranges or being trailed to market the fear of a stampede was always present. The Longhorns would stampede as readily as other breeds, but there was never the loss in both life and weight as was suffered by the others. They stayed together better in a stampede yet would never trample other animals if they could prevent it. A cowboy on the ground in a stampede was more safe with Texas Longhorns than with any other type of cattle.

The Longhorn could be handled on the trail for less expense. They would naturally space themselves and pace themselves and thus could go farther in a day. They required less water and could endure more deprivations; nevertheless held their weight better than other cattle in trailing. The Longhorn was also preferred by the cowboys because they did
not require as much skill and patience to handle on the trail. Inasmuch as the cattle in early San Juan had to be trailed a considerable distance to market, or to the railroad, these qualities of the Longhorn were a factor to be considered.

Concerning the Longhorn, one writer summarizes their values as follows:

From my observation they have at least double the endurance, and their period of life and usefulness is also about double that of others. They never shed their teeth from age, as most other breeds do, and all ranchmen would do well to retain their blood in the improved herds as far as practicable.

The first large herd of all Texas Longhorns, numbering something less than 3,000 head, were trailed into San Juan in 1888, by the Elk Mountain Cattle Company with John Crosby as foreman. There were other Longhorn cattle in the area before this date, but in smaller numbers and some the descendants of a cross with Longhorns and other cattle.

As the ranges became overstocked and shipping centers moved further west, it became apparent that smaller herds of improved stock would be more profitable to the cattle companies. At first Durham (Shorthorn) bulls were run with the Longhorn cows. "Animals of the Shorthorn breed average the largest of any breed, and the cows are usually better

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6 Ibid.
milkers than those of the other beef breeds." After a brief experiment with the Shorthorn, the white face Hereford became the favorite because they were more hardy and had a natural rustling ability that the Shorthorn did not have. By crossing the Hereford bull with the Texas cow the increase was very much superior to the straight Texas Longhorn, and a second cross with the half breeds still further improved the stock. The Durham (Shorthorn), Longhorn, Hereford and other varieties were crossed and re-crossed in a multiplicity of ways to improve the stock and develop the most profitable type, with the Hereford becoming the most widely accepted breed.

Beginning about 1885, most of the stock moving from the San Juan ranges to market showed the white faced characteristics of the Hereford breed. Since that time pure-bred Hereford bulls have been more widely used for the improvement of range cattle in that area than any other breed. However, the Herefords of the late eighteen hundreds little resembled the improved Herefords of today, excepting for the white face.

The vast San Juan ranges, with a plentiful supply of choice feed were not to remain such for many years. Like

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7Peters and Deyoe, op. cit., p. 57.


everything else that goes uncontrolled or without supervision these ranges were used selfishly with the present only in mind, the future would have to take care of itself. The first herds put on the ranges were comparatively small, but totaled together amounted to a considerable number of cattle. These with the larger herds numbering several thousand head did not take many years to deplete the once choice ranges, and leave them in an almost irreparable condition.

When the Mormon settlers arrived in San Juan in April of 1880, they brought with them what was left of one thousand head of cattle they had started with from Southwestern Utah. This herd was to have been the foundation stock for a fine herd in their new home. Due to considerable loss and the need to use some of the animals for meat, they arrived with less than they had hoped.

The Mormons were not the first to trail cattle into the area. Aside from the several herds which numbered from one thousand to three or four thousand each; there were present the large herds. The following gives some idea as to numbers of cattle owned by single companies when the Mormons arrived.

Thousands of cattle were grazing the immense acreage of blue grass north, east and south of Blue Mountains before the Mormon pioneers came to Bluff in 1880. South Montezuma Creek was the dividing line between two of the largest cattle companies, one branding with L.C., and the other with a bar on the hip, side and shoulder. R. P. Holt, foreman of the L.C. Company, turned 17,000 head into
South Montezuma the first year. W. E. Gordon, foreman of the Carlisle Cattle Company, with the hip, side and shoulder brand, sold 30,000 head when the company closed out at the turn of the century. 10

When the L. C. Company went out of business in the middle eighteen nineties, besides selling a number of cattle to the local settlers, drove 22,000 head to Dolores, Colorado to sell. This report also stated that the Carlisle Company drove their 30,000 head to Albuquerque, New Mexico for market. 11

In 1885, Frank Silvey was working for the Carlisle Cattle Company and leaves us this interesting report with regards to numbers of cattle.

We started to drift cattle out to Dry Valley about May 1st, and the final drive, ending near the foot of Peter's Hill. At this round-up it was estimated we had near 10,000 head of cattle on the bunch ground, and during this drift in Dry Valley we branded many calves and 250 head of stray mavericks, and that year the calf tally was 5,300 head. The calf tally was this year perhaps greater on account of Indian troubles more or less in the two previous years. 12

One other large company that should not be overlooked is the Pittsburg Cattle Company, owned by Pennsylvania capital, which ran about ten thousand head of cattle on the west side of the La Sal Mountains.

By the end of 1886, according to a report by F. A.

10Kate B. Carter (ed.), Heart Throbs of the West (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1951), Vol. 12, p. 341.


12Silvey, "History of San Juan," op. cit., no page.
Hammond, the Mormons had been able to increase their range stock to about 2,000 head. This was the beginning of a movement by the Church individually and collectively to obtain through purchase thousands of head of cattle from their non-Mormon owners.

To summarize: Without listing each company and owner separately and their total number of cattle, which would be impossible due to an absence of information, this will serve to indicate the importance of this region as cattle country. The first cattle were of grade quality, but due to overstocking and marketing conditions it was necessary for future success that the quantity be decreased and the quality increased. After some experimenting with different breeds and crosses it became generally recognized that the Hereford breed best fit the need of range conditions, and so was widely used in herd improvement.

In the period of time under consideration with plenty of free feed there was practically no expense in raising cattle. The Cattlemen made a profit despite heavy losses due to rustling, death and poor quality stock. But with the overstocking of winter ranges it became necessary for cattlemen to corral their stock and feed them hay during the winter. With this condition they could no longer maintain such large herds due to cost of feeding and fencing.

13 Deseret News, (Salt Lake City), December 29, 1886, Vol. 35, p. 798.
This resulted in smaller herds, improved quality and better care to prevent loss. This was accomplished by permitting only registered bulls on summer ranges, and by constantly weeding out and selling inferior cows. The range stock of today is evidence of the value of improved, scientific breeding methods.¹⁴

CHAPTER IV

PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

In the southwestern corner of Utah, as in other parts of the State, water has always been at a premium. There has never been enough, consistently, to aid in the development of this area to its potential. Even in the region of the San Juan River available water for irrigation was a problem. Kumen Jones, one of the original members of the Mormon Colony that journeyed into San Juan states:

As we journeyed on, it soon became apparent that water was going to be the source of our greatest anxiety. Wherever a damp place was found, shovels, picks, and spades were soon brought out and digging for water commenced. As a rule, plenty of water was soon secured.¹

In the Irrigation Census of 1890, the following account is given:

The San Juan river crosses the southern part of the County, flowing into the Colorado River; which forms the western boundary of the county. There is usually an ample supply of water in the river, but the bottom lands being narrow and the channel shifting in every flood the expense of bringing water upon the land is generally too great for the area to be cultivated. On account of the difficulty and expense of bringing the water from the river by canal, it is a question among the farmers as to whether it would not be

¹Jones, "The San Juan Mission to the Indians" op.cit. p. 9.
advisable to attempt to raise the water by machinery rather than try to build new dams each year in the unstable sandy channel. Along the tributaries of the San Juan and in the higher valleys some water is available to bring a small amount of land under irrigation.2

The shortage of irrigation water has unquestionably been one of the principal factors in deterring the progress of settlement in San Juan County. The nearby Colorado River offered no solution to the water problem due to its distance from the farming areas and its inaccessibility as it winds its way at the bottom of great canyons.

Water was also a problem to the cattlemen whose large herds roamed the ranges, even when the range land bordered the Colorado River.

Coming to the Colorado River, one can look down over tremendous cliffs and see the river gliding along through pleasant valleys thousands of feet below, and with no visible means of descending the perpendicular height. Running toward the river are ravines from all directions. A few lead by gradual ascent to the river, others lead on to a point where there is a sudden break, forming a precipice hundreds of feet deep, down which it is absolutely impossible to descend without certain loss of life. Frequently large herds are driven in that country to winter, and the cattle becoming thirsty, will stand on one of these tremendous cliffs, looking at the coveted waters, thousands of feet below, until they drop dead, or drop over the cliff in their endeavor to get down, and are mashed to a pulp on the rocks beneath, or in the waters.3

2"Historical Sketch of San Juan County" (W.P.A. Records, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah) (No date, No page. Typewritten).  
In the selection of suitable rangeland the most important consideration was given to the available water supply. If there was some feed, but no water the range was of little value; on the other hand if there was water in the canyons or in springs there would most likely be some available feed.¹

The ranges needed water to produce good feed, and the cattle required a lot of water for drinking purposes. Except in an extreme drought, when several years consecutively passed with little or no rain or snow, small streams of water could be found in some of the canyons, but these were not dependable and had to be checked constantly to determine whether or not they were still a source of water for the cattle.²

There are a few instances in San Juan where wells were dug and small hand pumps installed to pump the water into troughs provided for the watering of cattle. This was more often the case in ranch headquarters than on the open range. Wells never proved too practical where large herds were involved because it required a great deal of time to pump enough water for large numbers of cattle and there was always the problem of pumping the wells dry.³

The ever present water problem was a constant source

²Statement by Al Scorup, personal interview, August, 1954.
³Ibid.
of friction between the cattle companies and the settlers. Both lived in constant fear that by some means or another the other would be able to obtain a monopoly on the limited supply of water and force them from the cattle business. As the settlers began to fence the land the cattlemen saw the possibility of the water holes also being fenced, resulting in threats, warnings and in a few cases shooting. Even though the settlers continued to build fences it was not the fencing of the water that defeated the cattlemen, but an extended period of drought during the middle eighteen nineties which dealt them a real blow.\footnote{Statement by Mrs. Dan Perkins, personal interview, July, 1954.}

When the San Juan country was first invaded by the cattlemen it was the plentiful supply of good feed that made it so desirable. The western grasses were tall and nourishing, not only being good for summer feed when green, but in the dry climate they held their nutritive value and proved to be good winter feed when dried.\footnote{Fritz, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 269.}

The cattlemen were interested in and had need for both a summer and a winter range. The summer range was made up mostly of low mountains, often entered by difficult hidden trails known well by the Indians, but known only to white men as they stumbled onto them by accident. These summer ranges were very limited and could not feed the number of cattle that could be supported on the winter
ranges, hence the summer ranges were the first to be overstocked, resulting in the beginning of the restriction of the cattle industry in San Juan County. Cattlemen failed to realize the feed on the ranges could not last forever in an overstocked condition, or if they realized it they failed to take any corrective measures. The winter ranges soon followed the same course of the summer ranges. "Soil Conservationists say that much of the erosion in San Juan County to date is a result of the overstocked ranges in the late eighties and nineties."

The Deseret News printed a letter in 1886, from F. A. Hammond describing the value of the livestock ranges before they became overstocked.

"A Vast and Rich District, With Very Few People

"Bluff, San Juan Co., Utah
"Dec. 8th, 1886

"We have now about 2,000 head of horned stock on the range, having summer herded them on the Elk Mountains, the first stock ever ranged there, on account of the Indians, who have always objected till last spring, when we succeeded in making a treaty with them that permitted us to take our stock there. It is a magnificent summer range, and our winter range is adjoining on the south extending to the San Juan River, a distance of some 60 miles, where snow rarely ever falls. From this range we are enabled to send beef in the spring and early summer to the market of Durango, Colorado, where it brings a very fair price. We are now negotiating for 6,000 head of Sheep to place on our range. We begin to learn that there is more profit in raising sheep than cattle, where you have a suitable range, and we

surely have that here, and a good market for wool and mutton at Durango, as we can send our mutton there in the spring when it is in demand.

"F. A. Hammond" 10

Another item to consider in appraising good range land, but not so important as water and feed, is the amount of timber or other types of shelter available. 11 In this respect San Juan again would be considered good range land as in the main there were trees of various types and sizes that could provide suitable shelter from the wind and the cold. Also the topography of the area is uneven enough that the animals could find some protection in canyons, behind cliffs and rocks or in the valleys. The available shelter was very important to the survival of stock, particularly the calves, and also contributed greatly to the ability of the cattle to hold their weight during the cold weather.

The most common time for the marketing of cattle was in the early fall at the fall round-up. Due to an absence of railroad facilities in San Juan, the cattle had to be driven to market and delivered to buyers in southwestern Colorado. 12

The town of Dolores in Colorado had a large stockyard where many of the San Juan cattle were trailed. During

10 "Journal History of the Church," (L.D.S. Church Historians Office, Salt Lake City, December 8, 1886) p.4.
11 MeCoy, op. cit., p. 376.
12 Letter from Albert R. Lyman, Blanding, Utah, June 21, 1957.
the fall marketing season there would be about 1,000 head of cattle to the herd, and there would be a herd on the road all of the time. From Dolores the cattle were loaded on railroad cars and shipped to Kansas City.\textsuperscript{13}

Cattle were also delivered to Durango, Mancos, and Montrose, all in Colorado. It took about three weeks to trail the cattle from round-up grounds in San Juan to Montrose. From Montrose they were usually shipped by rail to Omaha.\textsuperscript{14}

Under the date of September 1884, Platt D. Lyman records in his diary. "Sold our (Lyman) cattle to Collan and Smith of San Miquel, Colorado."\textsuperscript{15}

In July 1893, he writes: "We have spent between two and three months gathering and driving steers which we have sold to B. F. Saunders and have delivered in Montrose and vicinity in Colorado."\textsuperscript{16}

Shipping by rail in 1889, cost, on an average, $15.00 per car. The cars were from 28 to 30 feet in length and held between twenty-two and twenty-five animals to the car depending on the length of the car. There were approximately 20,000 to 23,000 pounds of cattle on the hoof in

\textsuperscript{13}Statement by Al Scoorup, personal interview, August, 1954.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15}Platt D. Lyman, Personal Diary (Typedwritten copy), (L.D.S. Church Historians Office, Salt Lake City), p. 79.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 99.
each car and the amount paid depended on the length of the car and the number of animals in each car.\textsuperscript{17}

The task of moving the cattle to the stockyards or railroad centers required the patience, endurance and skill of the finest cowboys. The most desirable condition was to get the cattle to a selling location with as little loss of life and weight as possible. This meant the cattle were not to be moved at an excessive speed; were to be allowed sufficient rest; and were to have plenty of water and adequate grazing along the way. Meeting these conditions was a challenge to those responsible for delivering the cattle at the proper place.

The routine of work incident to the cattle drives also developed some interesting customs. For a herd of 2,000 or 2,500 cattle a rancher or buyer generally employed a drove "boss" and ten or twelve cowboys. The herd would then be started on its long march to a market. At the head of the herd, and riding on each side were the "pointers" who directed the course of the cattle. Riding farther back down the line, where the herd was wider, came a cowboy on each side, who rode "at flank;" and bringing up the rear where the herd had widened out because of the slower-moving animals came the "drag." Bringing up the drag came the "green-horn" or "tenderfeet" cowboys, who in the course of time advanced in their profession in proportion to their right to ride the "flank" or "point" positions. With the end of the days drive the cattle were "bedded-down," and in relays the cowboys kept guard during the night, slowly riding about the sleeping cattle, and singing in a low voice to soothe the tired animals. When dawn approached, the cattle were allowed to graze before the march of the new day was begun.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17}Statement by Al Scoop, personal interview, August, 1954.

\textsuperscript{18}Richardson and Rister, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 342.
The price of cattle fluctuated over a wide scale in a rather short period of time. In 1879, Joshua B. Hudson brought a herd of cattle into San Juan for which he had paid $10.00 per head. Four years later he sold his cattle to the Carlisle Cattle Company for $35.00 per head for yearlings.19 During this period calves were selling for $11.00 per head at the railroad in Dolores and steers were selling for $19.00 per head at Montrose.20

Albert R. Lyman gives a little insight into the fluctuation of prices:

In about 1886, when steers were selling at $75.00 a head, my father bought a herd from a Mr. Webber in Millard County, and I rode after them for about ten years while the price went down to discouraging depths. I keep as a souvenir a receipt copy that my father gave at the selling of three steers; a little over thirty dollars.21

In 1889, the retail butchers of Kansas City, where some of the San Juan beef was sold,22 made a breakdown of the cost to the retailers of a beef carcass and then the proceeds from the carcass. The following statement from the butchers indicates the number of cuts, the number of pounds of each cut obtained from the carcass, and the price per pound. The demand, supply and prices in the larger centers of population would certainly be some of the factors to determine the price the cattlemen received for their

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19Silvey, "History of San Juan County," op. cit., p. 7.
21Letter from Albert R. Lyman, op. cit.
animals in San Juan

"Kansas City, Mo., Feb. 11, 1889

"Dear Sir:

"As butchers of Kansas City, in the retail business we desire to submit the following statement of the profits in our business:

Cost of a 525 pound carcass, beef, at 3 3/4 cents 19.68
Cost of handling same, 14 per cent 2.75
Waste, which is a total loss in cutting, one-tenth 1.96
Total cost to retailer (proprietors time excepted) $24.39

Proceeds of 525 pound carcass:
90 pounds loin, at 12 1/2 cents $11.25
80 " round (52 pounds, at 8 1/2 cents 4.20
20 " at 2 cents .56
26 " rump, at 5 cents 1.30
40 " rib, at 8 cents 3.20
90 " chuck, at 5 cents 4.50
80 " plate, at 2 1/2 cents 2.00
60 " foreshoulder & shank, at 3 1/2 cents 2.10
36 " neck, at 2 cents .72
20 " tallow, at 1 1/2 cents .30
$30.13

Leaving a profit to the retail butcher upon which to live of $5.74."

For the purpose of comparison and contrast Frank Farrer, Zone Meat Merchandiser for Safeway Stores Inc., prepared a statement of the breakdown of a beef carcass at the

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present time (1958) by price, cuts, etc. From Mr. Farrer's letter we read:

...I would like to point out a few interesting comparisons found in the retailing of meat today as was done in 1889.

You will note that the cutting chart that we use has more than twice as many different cuts of meat realized from a beef. This has been brought about by customer demands for a larger variety and a more varied selection especially in self-service.

With cost of beef at $3.75 per pound then as compared to 47 cents per pound today, this represents a little more than 10½ times greater.

Also they figured the profit a little differently than we do today in that they added the cost of doing business, labor costs, and their cutting loss to the cost of the beef, whereas we figure our profit on a beef first then subtract all of our costs of doing business. The difference determines our profit.

Although there is a big difference in the dollar and cent value for the profit between the two comparisons it is noted that percentage wise they were making more money on their investment than we are now making. Their figures show a 34.6% profit before cost of operation was deducted, and we show an anticipated 27.3% profit on our investment before the cost of operation is deducted. I would like to explain this anticipated percentage profit: When any retailer sets a retail price this is the price he hopes to get not necessarily the price he actually realizes. When an expensive cut such as T-bone steaks fail to sell at the proposed price, it is reworked into some less expensive commodity such as ground beef and is finally sold in that manner. A recent study made in Los Angeles by a group of eight chain stores shows that this will reduce the anticipated gross profit by approximately 3% or in this instance it would by $11.46. Then from the dollar profit which in our instance is $104.28 if we subtract this $11.46 we will have $92.82 realized profit. Then from this profit our cost of operation is deducted, labor cost taking approximately 50% of this profit. Overhead, advertising, wrapping expense, utilities, rent, depreciation, and other expenses also come out of this profit.24

"Safeway Cost For a 590 Pound Beef at .47¢ Per Pound - $277.30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Retail Beef Cuts&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;Wt. Per 590 Lb. Dressed Steer&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;Safeway's Salt Lake Price Per Lb. April 22, 1958</th>
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<tr>
<td>Boneless Round Steaks</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>$1.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sirloin, Pinbone Steaks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Porterhouse, T-bone, Club Steaks</td>
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<td>Rib Roast</td>
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<td>Lean Prediced Stew Beef</td>
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<td>Bones</td>
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<td>Cutting Loss &amp; Dehydration</td>
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"Total.................$381.58."
CHAPTER V

THE LIFE OF THE COWBOY

The cattle industry on the open ranges has frequently been portrayed as an adventurous and glamorous life; to the men involved it was a life of hard work.

To make certain that the cattle had access to good feed and water, and were protected from the elements and wild animals was the responsibility of the cowboy. To see that the cowboy's needs were satisfied was the responsibility of the cattle owner. Much has been written to both glamorize the life of the cowboys, and to illustrate the hardships they were required to endure. It would appear that their life in San Juan was in many ways similar to that of any other like section of cattle country. The cowboys fought the elements, rustlers, Indians and wild animals in the interest of the cattle they were hired to care for.

Cowboys were generally of three types. First, the good hearted, hard working, dependable fellows who looked at their work as a means of sustaining life; second, the adventure seekers who seldom stayed very long in one place, and were not too efficient; finally, there were the fugitives from justice who took a job at some isolated cow-camp in
order to hide from the law until they were forgotten. These were usually pretty good cowmen, but could never be trusted, and often left without word of their leaving, and at times when they were badly needed. All three types were represented in San Juan, and left their individual characteristics in the memories of the settlers of that area.

Most of the cowboys were from outside the Utah Territory. One group, from the Eastern States, had been reared in good Christian homes, were fairly well educated and proved to be a force for good in the area.¹

The majority of the cowboys were from Texas, New Mexico and Colorado with a few local men riding with the large cattle companies. In the spring of 1885, Frank Silvey, a local settler got a job as a cowboy with the Carlisle Cattle Company. The foreman, Mack Goode and most of his crew were from Texas. This good, efficient group of cowboys included such names as Tom Trout, Harry Green, Frank Allen, Tom Roach, Jim McTurner, Hickory Dennis, Jim Moore, Latigo Gordon and Bob Kelly.²

In the beginning of the cattle industry in San Juan nearly all of the owners of the large companies lived outside of the State of Utah. They were men or groups of men with considerable money to invest, so turned their attention and capital to the future they saw in the cattle industry in

¹Jones, "San Juan Mission to the Indians," op. cit., p. 36.
²Silvey, "History of San Juan," op. cit., p. 41.
the West. In the main those who invested their money in the cattle in San Juan never saw the ranges; their lives were far removed from the life the cowboy knew. The work on the ranges was left in the hands of hired managers or foremen.3

The cowboys who did the actual work knew all of the problems, hardships, thrills and romance of the range. Dr. LeRoy R. Hafen gives an excellent and colorful account of the life of cowboys in general, which would also be true of those in San Juan.

The life of a cowboy was strenuous. Often in the saddle from daylight 'till dark for months at a time, drinking filthy water from shallow water holes, breathing the thick dust from the great herds they followed, straining patience with foot-sore laggards or curbing the will of bull-headed steers, he was so tired when night came that he forgot the bumps under his blankets and the hardness of his bed.

But there was the brighter side -- the thrill of new adventure, the consciousness of power over the herd, the response of his horse to the move of the reign or the touch of the spur, the exhibition of skill in roping and throwing a steer, plenty of hard work and a good appetite, the fellowship of jolly cowboys around the campfire with their songs and pranks and stories, and at close of day tranquil sleep beneath the stars.

At times the cowboy was the tired laborer, serf of his lord; again he was the mounted knight riding his steed in a blaze of glory.4

Each cowboy usually owned from six to eight or even ten horses which were all put to use in his work. Certain

3Statement by Albert R. Lyman, personal interview, Blanding, Utah, August, 1954.

qualities were required of a good horse and because they did not all have these qualities in equal proportion, the cowboys were forever searching for new mounts. The winter months were spent in improving their string of mounts by buying or trading, and by breaking untrained or unbroken horses for the work ahead.  

In addition to their personal duties it was necessary that the cowboys make frequent inspections of the cattle on the winter ranges. The necessity of these became more frequent in the late eighties and nineties because the ranges were being overstocked and sufficient feed was never a sure thing. Also in the nineties, San Juan was experiencing an extended drought, making enough water for the cattle on the winter ranges a constant problem.

Along with, and in addition to the above mentioned problems the cattle were always in danger of being stolen. The main threat was the Piute Indians who were either looking for food, liked the looks of the white man's cattle, or were looking for some way to teach the white man a lesson for moving in on the property of the Indian. It appears that the cattlemen expected some loss from stealing by the Indians, and with frequent inspections of the cattle, the cowboys could follow and recover some of the cattle driven off in large numbers.

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5 Statement by Albert R. Lyman, personal interview, August, 1954.  
6 Ibid.
With the coming of spring the work of the cowboy increased, and continued at a rapid pace throughout the summer and autumn months. The spring round-up was the first operation to claim their interests and time. This started the latter part of April or first of May and continued until the cattle were rounded up, calves branded, strays picked up by their rightful owners, and the cattle turned onto the summer range.

During the winter months the cattle were free to wander over the vast ranges; often traveling many miles from their home grounds and mixing in with cattle of other companies. Some of the cattle became very disagreeable and difficult to handle, others would find available grazing and places to hide in valleys and thickets making it necessary for the cowboys to ride through every valley, canyon and wooded section to route out the cattle and start them for the central round-up grounds.

Each company had its own specified area as the focal point of the round-up. The Carlisle Cattle Company selected the foot of Peter's Hill, which lay just a few miles in a northeasterly direction from the Blue Mountains. The L.C. round-up grounds were at the site of the present town of Blanding, Utah.

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7 Silvey, "History of San Juan," op. cit.
8 Statement by Al Scorup, personal interview, Provo, Utah, August, 1954.
When the cattle had been herded to the central round-up grounds, the work proceeded of branding calves belonging to cows having the company's brand, or older stock that was unbranded. Each Cattle Company had its own marking or brand, separate and differing from the brand of any other company. This enabled the men or the company to identify the cattle. Cattle carrying the brands of other companies were separated to be returned to the proper owners. Also the animals were examined and treated for any illness before being turned onto the summer ranges.

The fall round-up differed from the spring round-up in that in addition to roping and branding any animals that might have been missed earlier or that were born during the summer, those suitable for beef were cut out in preparation for the drive to market. However, both round-ups demanded the same type of ability, hard work and endurance on the part of the cowboy and his faithful ponies.

Life was interesting to the cowboy and more of a variety existed than one not familiar with this type of life might imagine. During the round-ups they were on their horses as much as twenty hours at a time. There was the constant danger of being charged by a wild, ill-tempered steer that had managed to avoid being caught in the round-up for a number of years until he would rather fight for his

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9 Fossett, op. cit., p. 178.

10 Statement by Al Scorup, personal interview, August, 1954.
freedom than to lose it to a man and horse.\textsuperscript{11}

At night the cowboy would make his bed where the day's work ended; conditions were not always ideal but he was always tired enough to sleep. He would often be awakened during the night by restless or stampeding cattle caused by wild animals or electrical storms. Then he may get a full night's sleep only to awake with a deadly rattlesnake lying close enough to enjoy the warmth of the cowboy's body.\textsuperscript{12}

The cowboy's life may at anytime depend on the care he gave to his equipment and horses.

The cowboy dress and equipment were borrowed largely from Old Spain and in many cases retain their Spanish names. The sombrero, bandanna, chaps, boots, spurs, quirt and lasso, though picturesque, were admirably adapted to their use. Utility and protection were primary considerations, but color and ornament were not ignored. Excellent equipment, especially a high classed saddle, was the cowboy's pride, while a highly trained bronco, or cow pony, that responded to his every move and signal was a constant joy. The agile cowboy, the wiry bronco and the wild steer were complements to each other.\textsuperscript{13}

In addition to their work the cowboys enjoyed various types of entertainment, one type being horse racing, usually accompanied with betting of either money or cattle; wild game was plentiful to satisfy the desire for the sport of hunting, and as the settlements began to grow there were dances which the cowboys might attend.

\textsuperscript{11} Statement by Albert R. Lyman, personal interview, August, 1954.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Hafen, Colorado - The Story of a Western Commonwealth, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 216-217.
After one of our Stake Quarterly Conferences which was held in Bluff about 1890, arrangements were made for a rousing dance and social to "wind up" the Conference. Committees were appointed to look after the different features of the occasion. The Committee on invitations, in order to magnify their calling, sent invitations to the cow camps for all to come in and join in the merry making.

It so happened at that particular time there were quite an extra number of visitors at the cow camps, and, surprisingly enough, the boys all decided to come in and have themselves a time. They kept coming in in such unlooked for numbers, that the Authorities became alarmed and decided the invitations Committee had exceeded their authority. It was finally decided that the cowmen should be notified of the error and not be allowed to take part in all the functions of the party.

The boys did not take kindly to this arrangement and the more reckless of them went for their guns determined to have their say as to how the party was to be managed. It looked for a time as if nothing could avert serious trouble. Quite a number of us secured our weapons and prepared for the worst. There were two factors which contributed to the control of the angry cowboys - the absence of liquor and the sense of chivalry possessed by a good percent of the otherwise rough cowboy element.

We modified our program and the older cowboys did some persuading, finally bringing about a compromise. Quite a number of the visiting cowmen came in and took part in the dancing and games, but more of them remained outside berating those of their party who had showed the white feather and gone in after being snubbed. The hostile ones, however, carried the trouble no further than shooting off their mouths, until the party was out, when they mounted their ponies and rode out of town at full speed, yelling and shooting their guns.

A short time after this event occurred, two of us from Bluff were riding with the Texas Outfit in the Comb Wash when the full force was taking part in the spring round up. One day the Conference party and other troubles between the older men of Bluff and the Cowmen came up for general discussion. As it went on the conversation became more heated. They didn't seem to have anything against the two of us in particular, yet the greater part of the demonstration was apparently for our benefit. It seemed that Bishop Jens Nielson, Thales H. Haskel and "Father" John Allan were the arch offenders.
but the Mormons in general were a pretty bad lot. After giving them time to work off much of the hate in their systems, I spoke up and asked them when they were going to allow us a turn to say a few words. This took them by surprise and they became as quiet as mice as they turned toward me. I felt the psychological moment had arrived to read them the "riot act" so I took advantage of the situation and did just that. I immediately had the great majority of them at a disadvantage because they knew they had gone too far in their tirade against the Mormons in general and the three named in particular. The cowboys had always been treated more than fair, with the exception of the Conference party and we had given them the benefit of the doubt there and apologized for the apparent misunderstanding.

Among other things, I spoke of their shooting their guns and yelling like Comanches when the only possible affect it could have was to frighten the women and children. I told them that no one with any manhood about them would do that cowardly and contemptible thing. While I was easing my mind of these statements, there was not a sound from the round-up bunch.

That afternoon I was placed to ride with two of the toughest characters of the round-up. One of them spoke up and said,

"I didn't think any man could talk as you have to that outfit and not get killed, but you had truth and right on your side. I don't expect to be very good for it isn't in me, but from now on I'm not packing a gun while I am in a town where there are women and children."

The cowboys who rode the ranges of San Juan were much like any other western cowboy. They performed work which required courage and endurance. Some were efficient and took pride in their work, some were indifferent, and others were hiding from the law of neighboring states, but all left their mark and influence on the San Juan Territory.

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CHAPTER VI

RANGE CONFLICTS

The cattlemen and cowboys of San Juan were challenged not only with the usual responsibilities accompanying the raising of livestock, but additional problems had to be dealt with due to the nearness of other groups, such as Indians, sheepmen and settlers. The Indians seemed to have presented the greatest problem over the longest period of time.

From the beginning of Indian and whiteman relations in the Southwestern United States there had been many attempts to establish treaties. But it seems that the Indians were either tired of treaties, did not understand the full meaning of a treaty, or felt the whiteman was an intruder and they could continue to live as they had done for centuries.

The United States government made a number of treaties with the Indians, and were forced to send troops on more than one occasion to enforce them. In 1848, General Alexander Doniphan led a division of United States soldiers into the land of the Navajo to have them agree to terms with the new government. The quickest way to get rid of these troops was to agree to all they said; as soon as they departed the
treaty was worthless, and the Navajos went back to their age-old practice of robbing, plundering, and living off their neighbors, whether they be white men or other Indian tribes.

In September 1849, or about a year after Doniphan's effort, the United States sent General John M. Washington with some troops to clear up the misunderstandings and set the Indians straight as to the terms of the treaty. A treaty was agreed to between John M. Washington, governor of New Mexico, and lieutenant-colonel commanding the United States troops in New Mexico, James S. Calhoun, Indian Agent at Santa Fe, representing the United States, and Mariano Martinez, head chief, and Chapitone, second chief, on the part of the Navajo tribe of Indians. Some of the treaty terms were that the Indians were to be subject to the laws of the United States; were to return all white and Indian captives, and all stolen property. Also the whites were to be allowed to pass unmolested through Indian lands. For the Indian, the treaty stated that any white who mistreated a Navajo was to be punished by the United States. The treaty also provided for gifts, such as donations of various types, presents, implements, and food. This treaty was proclaimed September 24, 1850. Again as soon as Washington and his men were out of sight the Indians were back to their usual


activities.

The Navajos agreed to no fewer than six treaties with the United States, disregarding every one of them with premeditated resolution. After mocking successfully all that time at the new government, and mistaking its patience to mean its weakness, they had evolved a pitifully exaggerated notion of their own power and importance as a people.3

As they continued their plundering and kidnapping; the cries of their victims reached the leaders of the United States Government.4 From Kit Carson's own narrative we have the following.

The Navajo Indians were very troublesome. For a whole decade they had defied the Government, and now, enlisted as savage cohorts of the rebels, they were especially dangerous. They numbered several thousand warriors, and roamed over an immense tract of country. General Carlton selected Carson to command two thousand picked men, consisting of Californians, Mexicans, and Mountainers, to operate against the Indians. The campaign was a most brilliant one. After a succession of skirmishes, Carson succeeded in getting the enemy into a bed or ravine, and had his own forces so disposed as to command every approach, and in doing this compelled the surrender of ten thousand Indians, being the largest single capture of Indians ever known. The captured Indians were afterwards sent to a reservation on one of the tributaries of the Arkansas River.5

This conquest of the Navajos took place in 1863, and the Indians were taken to Fort Sumner in New Mexico. Behind

them Carson and his troops destroyed everything the Indians owned, leaving the country desolate.  

After a few years at Fort Sumner the Navajos were allowed to return to their reservation; finding everything destroyed and being destitute they turned to stealing from whites in San Juan.

This was the situation that prompted the Mormon Church Leaders to call a company of people from the Cedar City and Parowan areas to settle in San Juan in 1880, to try to establish a basis for friendly relations and to win the confidence of the Indians. The Mormons were to make it clear to all of the Indian tribes that they were their friends. By 1886, the Navajos realized that the Mormons were sincere in their offer of friendship and good will and in return offered their own pledge for good relations. However, it appears the Piutes were not so willing to accept the white man:

From the time of the coming of the missionary company in 1830, they (Piutes) plotted one robbery and one murder after another, killing an average of more than one white man every year for 40 years. As we shall see later, many of those killed were employees of some of the cattle companies.

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9 Ibid., p. 73.
One such killing occurred in 1881, when a number of cowboys lost their lives as they tried to fight the Indians on the Indian's own terms. The following account is given by Jordan Bean, a cowboy from Colorado who was wounded by the Indians in the battle.

The Indians were bad all the time. At night we never exactly knew where we were going to wake up, above or below. . . . The Indians got worse and worse. They would round up our cattle, cut their tongues out, shoot at us and didn't care if they hit; stole our horses.

John Thurman was running J. B. Alderson horses at Burnt Cabin Springs. Alderson lived in Nevada. R. W. May and a man by the name of (Frank) Smith went to Thurman's camp the evening of April 30, 1881, to stay all night. That winter about fifteen cowboys had wintered at Thurman's camp. On the last day of April they packed up and moved to Piute Springs. The next morning some of their horses were gone. Mike O'Donnell and Jess Seeley tracked them to where Thurman's cabin had been. They rode up on a rise and looked for the cabin but couldn't understand the situation, so they rode down to where the cabin had stood and found it burned to the ground. Dick May was in the cabin, John Thurman about one-fourth of a mile from it, dead, with his bridle on his arm----evidently looking for his horse. Smith had gone about half-way with Thurman and had turned to the right. His body was never found, so much high sagebrush. Then of course, all the settlers were mad. They buried Thurman where he fell and brought May's body back to the Dolores and buried him on his own place.

As soon as the boys were buried the round-up started at Blue Mountain. Mike and Pat O'Donnell, Spud Hudson, the Johnsons, Lou Paquin (Louis Pequan), Al Nunn, George West and Dave Willis. The first day the Indians attacked them the men killed one Indian. None of the whites were hurt, they got into the timber.

The round-up stopped at this point and the men went

to Colorado (the Big Bend of the Dolores) for volunteers to help fight the Indians. They left the Bis Bend on May 31, 1879, and picked up the Indian's trail June 1, 1879, at the Blue Mountains in Utah. The cowboy's food supply ran low and Green Robinson and Pat O'Donnell were sent to Hudson's cow range for a beef. The two of them never returned. It was later learned that O'Donnell and Robinson were cut off by eight Indians and chased into the timber. They then rode to the Big Bend to report the fight.

The cowboys ran into the Indians on the morning of June 15, about 9:00 a.m. at the La Sal Mountains. A small group of cowboys were sent ahead to make a stand against the Indians, who had gone into the canyons, while the remainder would get there as soon as possible. The fight started and proved very costly to the cowboys. They were joined by some Mormons who were herding cattle on the mountain and by some men from Moab.11

Mr. Bean, as he relates, was in advance of this party, and did not see the main engagement. A contemporary account of this is contained in the Denver Tribune, July 9, 1881, a reprint from the Dolores Star's account:

The first days fight began on a small creek near Mill Creek, the Indians firing and retreating for a distance of seven miles, to Little Castle Valley, which is about 800 yards wide, walled in with steep bluffs on both sides. The Indians took shelter or protection in the rocks at noon, from where they kept up a continual firing for about an hour-and-a-half, when they divided their forces, sending mounted, to the valley, sixteen Indians,

11Ibid., pp. 20, 22.
armed with Winchester rifles. Captain W. H. Dawson had with him in this engagement eighteen men, who he says were brave without exception. The party of eight who were killed, together with the Wilson brothers, were in the rear, and were first seen and met by the Indians who were mounted and sent out into the valley. Dawson, with the remainder of the party, were further up the valley and nearer to the Indians who were firing from the rocks. The killed, it is supposed, fought for about seven hours where they were killed. They had been engaged in the running fight from 10 a.m. and fought till sunset. Jack Galloway had one hand neatly bound and tied with a white handkerchief, when found. . . . The white party fought in every conceivable manner, the Indians having a great advantage the first day. The mounted warriors would charge, and a number of footmen would sneak up nearer the whites and fire. 

Back to Mr. Bean's account. The survivors finally started back out of the mountains.

In the meantime, the rescue party from Rico, led by Grigsby, went to the battlefield and we passed while they were looking for us. The third day after we made camp on Pack Creek (we had traveled nearly all night) the men went back to bury the dead. They had to bury them chaps and all. . . . The first day, back we went to Hatch Springs. . . . From Hatch Springs we went to Hudson's camp right where Monticello, Utah now stands. While we were camped at Hudson camp the Grigsby party came to us on their way back, and Major Carroll from Fort Lewis with a company of Negro soldiers met us too. Told us we were everyone under arrest for attacking and disturbing the Indians. Bill Dawson drew his rifle out of the scabbard and told Carroll he just didn't have "niggers" enough to arrest his men. Every man pulled their guns. Grigsby and his men, too, never faltered. Carroll said, "Tut, tut, I don't want to fight." Dawson said, "We have just come from a fight and can fight some more."

Then Carroll said, "If any of your men will show us the Indian trail we will overtake them."

Dick Curtis and Gus Hefferman (of Rico) stepped out and said, "We will show you the

12 Ibid. p. 22.
They started back the next morning. Carroll had a cannon. Dick and Gus said everything was fine and Carroll wanted to fight until the Indian signs got fresh; then Carroll discovered he was short of rations and turned back.\textsuperscript{13}

There are conflicting reports as to the total number of whites killed in this battle, but most all writers agree that the Indians got the better of the fight by leading the cowboys into their country to fight their kind of fight.

A San Juan resident gives his account of the fight, which is not conflicting, but gives some different views on the incident. With regards to the killing of Thurman, May and Smith he states:

In the spring of 1881, John H. Thurman was tending a herd of fine horses near Piute Spring, east of Blue Mountains. Herds of cattle had also been located in that region, and west of there to Recapture Creek. About the last of April, Richard May took Byron Smith out to Thurman's camp to buy horses. One of the men, perhaps Smith, carried with him considerable money, which may or may not have helped to bring the fate which overtook them.

No white man knows how it came about, but they were killed by the Utes, their bodies were robbed and mutilated, and the Thurman cabin burned. Friends from Mancos buried two of the men, but Smith's body was not found.\textsuperscript{14}

As the Indians made their escape with Thurman's horses they ran onto a herd of horses belonging to the settlers at Bluff, which they included in their herd of stolen animals and continued on their way toward Butler Wash. Because of their desperate need for their horses, eleven men

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, pp.23-24.

\textsuperscript{14}Albert R. Lyman, "History of San Juan County," \textit{op. cit.}, p. 20.
from Bluff followed the Indians to recover the stock.15

Platt D. Lyman records the following observation in his diary under date of May 6, 1881, apparently just a day or so after the above mentioned incident occurred.

Started this morning very early and rode to the Indian camp just as they were gathering their horses to move. They seemed very friendly but a few of them were very mad when another stolen horse was taken away from them. We traveled with them for several miles and as we returned found that they had been shooting down our cows and destroying our calves.

They had about 40 horses branded "B" some of them fine large horses of good stock, they also had plenty of greenbacks to which they attached very little value. It is very evident they have raided somebody's ranch as in addition to the horses and paper money, they have harness lines and blind bridles and halters.16

Nine days later on May 15, 1881, the diary has the following entry: "We have learned that the Indians who we saw had killed three men at Yellow Jacket Springs near the Blue Mountains and plundered the ranch."17

After killing the three men the Indians were apparently in no hurry to effect an escape as they traveled slowly toward the La Sal Mountains. Some of the men from Bluff crossed the trail of the Indians and..."found many cows the Utes had killed, only to cut off the bag (udder) and leave the carcass to rot. Besides this, they had caught


17 Ibid., p. 40.
and mutilated a number of calves.\textsuperscript{18}

While the Indians were making their leisurely retreat a band of 60 cowboys with some soldiers left Mancos, Colorado in pursuit only to have a disagreement before locating them and the soldiers turned back. The cowboys found the trail of the Utes and followed them to the La Sal Mountains where they surprised the Indians and forced them to seek shelter among the rocks without either guns or horses.

Not being too well acquainted with Indian fighting tactics, and not content with the advantage they had gained, the cowboys rushed on to overtake and capture or kill the Utes. The Indians, however, were equal to the challenge and led them into a trap; recovered their own horses plus those of the cowboys. Twelve cowboys were killed, four others wounded, with only one Indian being reported killed in the fight.\textsuperscript{19}

It will be noted in the above quotation that the name "Utes" is used as the name of the tribe of Indians involved in the incident related. From the individuals quoted and from other writings on the same incident, and from personal interview with Albert R. Lyman it was learned that the name "Ute" in this case has reference to the Piute tribe. They were on the spot and hardest to make friends

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Albert R. Lyman, "History of San Juan County," op. cit., p. 21.}
\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Ibid.}
\end{flushright}
with, while the Utes of Colorado, and further north in Utah were more friendly to the white men.\textsuperscript{20}

There seems to have been continual irritation between the Indians and cowmen which could have broken out into serious conflict at any time. Perhaps one of the things that kept conditions from getting worse was the knowledge the Indians had of mountain hideouts, and their ability to withdraw rapidly into these areas largely unknown to the cowboys.

It took a long time to convince the Indians that they were not to molest cattle not belonging to them. Under date of October 26, 1882, Platt D. Lyman records in his diary:
"The Navajos have brought many of their sheep onto this side of the river eating up a great deal of grass and scattering our cattle badly. The Utes who have been around here lately, have in their travels shot some of our cattle, leaving them to rot on the ground."\textsuperscript{21}

On Monday, July 7, 1884, the following entry is found in the same diary: "During the past week a difficulty occurred between cowmen and Indians on the South Montezuma during which two Indians were killed and two white men wounded. This may yet lead to considerable trouble."\textsuperscript{22}

The continual irritation can further be seen: "The

\begin{equation}
\text{\textsuperscript{20}Statement by Albert R. Lyman, personal interview, August, 1954.}
\text{\textsuperscript{21}Platt D. Lyman, Personal Diary, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 55.}
\text{\textsuperscript{22}Ibid.}
\end{equation}
Indians shoot down cattle on various parts of the range, using parts of some of them, but not as much as touching the carcasses of others.\(^2^3\)

As time went on the Piutes grew bolder and more demanding of those around them. They continually demanded food when they could find none to steal. The stealing of horses and cattle was an ever increasing practice, and the destroying of cows and calves by shooting them and leaving them to rot was a constant annoyance and cause for growing hatred on the part of the cattlemen.

Another incident indicates the constant tension which existed between the two groups. On one occasion the Piutes pitched camp near the Carlisle Cattle Company, shortly after a heated argument arose between a cowboy named Brooks and some of the Indians over a stolen horse. The cowboy was of the hotheaded, irresponsible type and in the course of the argument shot one of the Piutes in the mouth. The shooting did not kill the Indian, but it was cause enough to arouse the Piutes to seek vengence. They promptly withdrew and fired on the cowboys as they attempted to corral their horses. The cowboys then ran their horses into a gulley until the firing subsided. Then they put their belongings in a wagon, drove their loose horses around the wagon to protect the team and driver and made a run for safety.

Just as the cowboys felt they had reached safety they

\(^{23}\) Albert R. Lyman, "History of San Juan County," op. cit., p. 40
ran into an ambush where two cowboys were wounded, the mules drawing the wagon were killed and the cowboys had to make their escape the best way they could. The Piutes rounded up the horses, raided and burned the wagon and then made their way to their hideout at Elk Mountain.

Shortly after the incident the cowboys with some soldiers took up the trail of the Piutes. Apparently the Indians had been expecting the posse, because they had not gone far and only moved fast enough to keep out of range and slow enough to keep the pursuers encouraged. The country was well known to the Indians but unfamiliar to the cowboys, still they followed into a trap where the Piutes stopped and waited for them.

As the soldiers and cowboys approached, the Indians shot the first two men, a cowboy named Wilson and a soldier named Worthington. The rest of the posse dropped back for cover and waited all day until they could make their escape under the darkness of night back to their camp at South Montezuma. The Indians proceeded on to a place of complete safety where they could celebrate their victory and enjoy the spoils.\(^2\)

They danced and sang and exulted with savage shouts which echoed and re-echoed in the naked cliffs. They gluttoned themselves and their yellow dogs on the choicest cuts of beef from the best animals on the range. Yet the number they could consume in their most riotous extravagance, was small indeed compared to the number they shot for

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the love of slaughter, leaving them untouched to rot.\textsuperscript{25}

One of the final troubles in San Juan with the Indians and involving the cowmen occurred in the year 1894.

In order to understand what led up to the Indian outbreaks in San Juan County we must go back to 1877-78. After many years dickering with the Indians through Chief Ouray of the Uncompagre or White River Utes, and Chief Ignacio of the Southern Utes, a peace treaty was signed whereby all the vast territory now called the western slope of Colorado, was to be ceded to the Whites, and in return, the Uncompagre Utes were to receive a certain lot of land situated in eastern Utah, now called the Uintah Ute Indian Reservation. The Southern Utes agreed to a reservation 15 miles wide and 80 miles long in southwestern Colorado, bordering New Mexico. They were also to get their rations from the Government, and some money. The majority of the Indians were satisfied with this arrangement but some were not and especially the younger Indians were dissatisfied as they liked to roam free over the country that had been theirs for so many generations. Thus a number rebelled and would not accept rations from the Government nor would they stay long on the reservation.\textsuperscript{26}

There seems to be conflicting reports as to the true conditions in San Juan at this time. Some felt the Indians had a right in the area, while others felt they were off their reservation and encroaching on the white man.

From a letter to the Governor of Utah, the Honorable Caleb W. West, from Willard Butts, Sheriff of San Juan we receive one view regarding the situation.

The Southern Utes were sent in by Indian Agent D. Day, who told them they have a right to be here and that the settlers have no right.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., p. 572.

\textsuperscript{26}Frank Silvey, "History of San Juan County," op. cit. (No page numbers).
I tried to persuade them to leave and told them that the cattlemen were getting impatient and would drive their stock out if they did not leave. But they refused and said they are ready to fight.

Last season was unusually dry, consequently feed is short and insufficient for the stock already here.

The Indians have between 3,000 and 4,000 head of horses, and from 8,000 to 10,000 head of sheep and goats, and herd them all around the ranches and settlements.

The Indians are camped at most of the watering places and herd the other stock away so that they are suffering for water. 27

In another letter, this from C. L. Christensen, Indian Interpreter, to the Deseret Evening News we find a similar account of the situation.

Today the county is full of Ute Indians from Colorado, sent here by their agent, David Day, to harass this people. He is either malicious in his act, or unwilling to do his duty in keeping the Indians where they belong. 28

There are usually two sides to every story, and perhaps this is no exception. The other side of the story came from Durango, Colorado, on November 28, 1894.

In regard to the reported Indian trouble, Indian Agent Day made this statement tonight: "The Indians have always wintered their stock in Utah. They have been in the Blue Mountains since October and they are there with their families and ponies and are well behaved. The cowboys protested, but as San Juan County, Utah, has been withheld from settlement since 1888, they are the trespassers. Chiefs Ignacio and Mariano are with the Indians, and as the whites have robbed the

27 Letter from Willard Butts, Sheriff of San Juan County, Journal History of the Church, Church Historians Office, Salt Lake City, December 27, 1894, p. 27.

Ute reservation of forage, one would hardly expect them to allow their ponies to starve. There will be no trouble unless the cowboys precipitate it."29

A similar report was sent to General McCook by the Indian Agent on November 29, 1894, indicating that the cowboys and not the Indians were the trouble makers and trespassers and he expected no trouble unless the cowboys started it.30

One final report seems to present the most mature and complete observation of the problem. Seymour B. Young, who in December, 1894, had just returned from visiting the Mormon settlements in San Juan County reported:

There are a good many hot headed, intemperate cowboys on the frontier who have done some loud talking and would on very little provocation shoot an Indian or several of them. Should this be done there is no doubt but that the Indians would seek revenge by attacking.

The greatest trouble to be feared, was from cowboys who were really transients in that part of the Territory. The real bona fide stockman while feeling that they are being imposed upon to a degree that is difficult to endure are more conservative and are willing to await official orders from Washington.

The man who is responsible above all others for the invasion is Indian Agent Day, of Colorado who informed the Indians and still maintains that they have as much right in Utah as the Whites.31

It seems the cooler heads prevailed and a series of lengthy pow wows brought about the peaceful return of the


30 _Ibid_.

31 _Ibid_. , December 1, 1894, p. 7
Indiana to Colorado. D. F. Day, the Indian Agent was removed from his agency, and what might have been a disastrous situation ended peaceably for all parties concerned.32

In making an overall appraisal of the relationship between the Indians and cattlemen it would seem that they both had justifiable complaints. As far as the Indians were concerned, it would be a challenge to watch others move in and take over land that had been yours for centuries, knowing you would lose much of it. From the cowboy's point of view; a continual loss of livestock, and human life in constant danger made the more hot headed and less responsible element inclined to fight and kill at every opportunity.

The solution of the problem rested in the hands of such cool headed individuals as Jim Joe, Tom Holiday, Henry, and some of the great chiefs of the Indians, and with Thales Haskell and Kumen Jones of the Whites. With these people, and others as capable, guiding the way conditions were eventually brought about where all could live at peace and prosper together in a land with many resources.

In addition to the Indians, the cattlemen had a second problem to cope with in the outlaws and cattle rustlers who dwelt in the area, sometimes in rather large numbers. Many of the outlaws were employed by the cattle companies and were worth their wages, others worked for a while awaiting the opportunity to make personal gain at the

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expense of the companies for whom they worked.

The county of San Juan seemed to have ideal terrain for the outlaw element; the rough, rugged country was ideal for a hide-out or to set up an ambush for anyone who had any idea of enforcing the law.

One example typical of the outlaw tactics occurred in 1886, at the L. C. Cattle Company where three men, with an unknown past, were given the consideration of living with the cattle outfit all winter. When spring came they went on their way and took some of the good L. C. horses with them. A cowboy posse followed, and when hot on the trail of the thieves were ambushed, and the foreman of the L. C. Company, Bill Ball, was killed and the thieves made good their escape across the Colorado River. The cowboys wanted to lynch Cass Hites for taking the desperados across the river without reporting it to the law.33

A similar account of this incident was written to the Ogden Herald by F. A. Hammond of Bluff. His letter carried this additional comment. "...Between the Colorado and San Juan Rivers before they come together is found a very rough rugged and barren country, a resort for rogues and thieves, a country hard to dislodge them from."34

After the death of Bill Ball, a Bob Holt (Hott) was hired as foreman of the L. C. Company and employed a string

33Ibid., pp. 40-45.
of wild gunmen for the next 15 years or more who were either looking for or making trouble of their own.35

To the outside world the San Juan area had a reputation as being a tough place, as a result those wanted for law breaking in several states found their way to the safety of the Blue Mountains. A Robber's Roost was organized to look after and hide those who sought escape. This group drove off cattle, killed cows to get their calves or for beef in which case hides and brands were destroyed, or they would steal cattle and burn over their brands. Also during this period there were a number of killings, generally among the outlaws themselves. All of this helped to give the area a worse reputation, and served as an invitation for more of the same lawless element to make their way to the district.36

The outlaw group had some rather interesting though lawless practices on the range.

In the language of the cowboy, a long-eared, unbranded animal, separated from the mother was a maverick and belonged to the first person catching it. Only an adept roper with a well trained horse could secure a wild steer. Some cowboys not content with the maverick business would steal calves from the mother. These were called sleeper calves. With such practice in vogue the rider would soon have more cattle than the real owner. The calves cut out from the mother were picked by a small cattleman working in partners with an outlaw rider. His brand would not be put on the calf until thoroughly weaned, thus avoiding the danger of any calf returning to its mother with the tell-tale brand on its side. The sleeper calf game was the


36Silvey, "History and Settlement of Northern San Juan County," op. cit., pp. 54-55.
one most generally practiced among the cattle thieves.\textsuperscript{37}

As the L. C. Cattle Company left the county in the early nineties, the part of their herd left behind was stolen by one and then another of these thieving cowboys who took advantage of every opportunity to put their own brand on a maverick. From stealing mavericks it became natural to start branding every unbranded calf they could find. It is reported that one man operating in the White Mesa area had a cow with 50 calves.\textsuperscript{38}

One final example of these outlaw practices concerns two men who invented a brand which they called the "M POLE," consisting of a huge M reaching from the cow's ear to her tail which was made in a variety of ways with many different curves and shapes with a large bar running through it. It was designed to cover almost every brand excepting the E L K M brand. In addition their ear marking could eliminate any other or the ear itself if necessary.

After much planning these men were caught in a trap prepared for them; arrested by the U. S. Marshall, Joe Bush, and thrown into jail. After eight months they were released because witnesses refused to testify against them. However, they never returned for their stolen cattle; a large herd whose calves became mavericks as long as the old cows

\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Carter, op. cit.,} Vol. 12, p. 342.

\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Albert R. Lyman, "History of San Juan County," op. cit.,} p. 93.
lasted. 39

Shortly after this incident Marshall Joe Bush and two deputies, Hanzon Bayless and John Allen, from Bluff with some Navajos were on the trail of two train robbers when they unknowingly followed their trail to where it was crossed by two other individuals and they picked up the wrong trail. They finally caught two men in some cliff formations and learned they had caught two horse thieves who had among other stolen animals six horses belonging to Bob Holt of the L. C. Cattle Company. The men were finally captured with the able assistance of the Indians and were riveted together with chains on their boots, at an opportune time they slipped their boots off and escaped. A few days later they were caught in the cliffs where they had killed and were eating a cow. 40

It must not be thought that all of the riders for the cattle companies were outlaws. Kumen Jones states: "The cowmen, who came into the country about the same time we did, were practically all a bunch of nice fellows with whom we got along very nicely." 41

Many of the cowboys served as a check which kept the bad forces from gaining the balance of power in early San Juan history. Some of these cowboys were well educated with


good Christian backgrounds. Their friendliness and common sense in dealing with the other elements added considerable strength to the forces of peace.\textsuperscript{42}

The outlaws, particularly those of the Robber's Roost bunch, who were organized in the Blue Mountains and because of their reputation drew law breakers from many states, were put out of business when the large cattle companies left San Juan and sheep were brought into the county. The thieves were forced to look elsewhere to continue their practices.\textsuperscript{43}

A third problem to face the cowmen, but of less seriousness in San Juan than elsewhere in the west, was the encroachment of the sheep into the cattle domains. While this must have undoubtedly been a source of irritation and concern for the cattlemen, still there are no available accounts of bloody range warfare between sheep and cattle owners like the ones we read about in other parts of the country. One band of sheep was located in the area on the north of the La Sal Mountains. The owners feared trouble with the cattlemen so they asked to have the Marshall, Joe Bush, give them protection, but no trouble developed. Soon after this more sheep were trailed into San Juan and a number of local, former cattlemen went into sheep so that in

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., p. 36.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{43}Silvey, "History and Early Settlement of Northern San Juan County," \textit{op. cit.}, p. 55.}
a few years sheep outnumbered cattle many times.44

Sheep in every area are noted for their ability to close-crop and tramp down any grass or other plants if allowed to remain in one place very long. But it is of interest to note that in San Juan or any place else where the same man owned both cattle and sheep the two worked out very well together. It was in situations where the two were owned by separate owners that trouble arose.

The first sheep brought into Utah by citizens of the United States were in the Mormon migration of 1847-49. The Indians undoubtedly had sheep in Utah and San Juan long before this which they obtained from the Spaniards. Sheep were not taken to San Juan, other than by Indians, until 1880, when the Mormon colony settled at Bluff; the number of sheep involved at that time was very small.45

In the winter of 1884-85, two men, O'Donnel and McAllister, trailed some sheep into San Juan and located them north of Bluff. That same year a Mexican, Bonedita, drove a flock in from New Mexico and located them in the same area. The people, mainly because of their cattle, strongly opposed sheep invading the land where feed was not too plentiful for the number of cattle that were rapidly overstocking San Juan. However, their protests went unheeded, so they formed a company and bought part of the

44Ibid., p. 56.
sheep and the remainder of the flocks were returned to New Mexico. 46

The first sheep in San Juan were usually sheared a number of years for the wool they produced and then were taken to the higher range lands in Colorado to be fattened before being shipped to packing houses for slaughter. 47

In the earlier days of San Juan raising cattle was more practical than was the raising of sheep due to the distance from market. Cattle could be trailed greater distances with more speed while other transportation was needed with sheep to move the wool to the eastern markets. But when the railroads reached the Rocky Mountains, sheep raising became more attractive than the raising of cattle. Raising sheep required a lower investment and less expense in handling which enticed some cattlemen to enter the sheep business. 48

Many have wondered why sheep were so hated by the cattlemen aside from the fact that they took some of the grass desired for cattle. Dr. Edward Norris Wentworth presents a good explanation for this hatred.

Sheep cropped the range closely, and when too large a number were crowded together, or when they were held too long in one area, they ate into the crowns of the grass and trampled the remainder into dust or mud. Areas overgrazed by sheep became

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46 Albert R. Lyman, "History of San Juan County," op. cit., p. 42.
47 Wentworth, op. cit., p. 233.
48 Ibid., p. 522.
practically bare, and during dry weather could not recover. Furthermore, sheep could move profitably onto rocky or sparsely grassed sections entirely unsuited to bovine occupation, while the cattleman remained helpless on the stripped lower ranges. Nothing angered the cattle owner more than the dallying of sheep, across range which he normally used, while they were enroute to the foothills or mountain altitudes. Cattle needed the lower pastures, but the public lands were open to all, and stockmen recognized that the grass belonged finally to the man that got it.

The idea that sheep produced a scent offensive to cattle came from the denuded pastures that sheep frequently left behind. Between the toes of sheep (and cattle as well) is located a deep glandular sac, having the form of a retort, with a small external opening. This produces a sticky and odorous secretion. Perhaps this gland has a survival value from the standpoint of evolution, for it enabled a species with an adequate sense of smell to locate others of its kind.

But the cowboy chose to believe that when sheep walked the range they tainted the ground sufficiently to make the remaining grass unpalatable to cattle. This belief was fallacious, though persuasive. Only when separate men owned the cattle and sheep did a conflict develop, for when the same man owned both, the two species coordinated well. 49

Some trouble developed between the cattle companies and sheep owners in the Blue Mountains and between the Indians and sheep men in the Elk Mountains area, but in neither case was it serious or did it extend over a long period of time. 50

A number of conditions came about to make the development of the sheep industry in San Juan a natural thing and were also largely responsible for preventing any

49Ibid., pp. 522-523.

50Statement by Albert R. Lyman, personal interview, August, 1954.
serious range conflicts between sheep and cattle owners. These factors were an extended drought of the nineties, the low price of cattle (the profits in cattle went down and sheep became the best investment) and cattle rustlers. 51

51 Silvey, "History and Early Settlement of Northern San Juan County," op. cit., p. 55.
CHAPTER VII

DECLINE OF THE CATTLE COMPANIES

The cattle companies of San Juan County, which came in from outside the Utah territory, had a rapid rise, a rather short life and a fast decline. There were a number of causes which led to the moving of these companies to other sections of the country or the selling of their livestock to the local settlers who managed to develop prosperous companies of their own. Most of these occurred in a short period of time; in the eighteen nineties with their roots dating back into the eighties. Had they happened one at a time the companies might have withstood them, but coming all at once they proved disastrous.

As mentioned in the previous chapter the rise of the sheep industry was one of the developments that led to the decline of the outside cattle companies. Other factors aided in the introduction of sheep into the area; among them was the extended drought, low cattle prices, and cattle rustlers. At a time when money was scarce it became imperative that a business be found that would bring a quick return on an investment. As a result many of the cattlemen turned to the sheep business, some completely while others
ran both cattle and sheep. The yearly sale of wool plus the
lamb crop gave the owners the rapid return on their investment
they needed and thus sheep began to replace cattle on the
ranges of San Juan.

A second reason for the decline of the cattle
companies had its origin in the early days of the stocking
of the ranges. There was no range management at that time
and everyone was interested in exploiting the choice range
lands with their own interests only in mind, and without
even thought of these for the future. With the lack of
control in stocking the range they were too heavily stocked,
there was no attempt made to use the ranges during the
proper seasons and no one was interested in proper dis­
tribution of stock on the range. All of this resulted in
a badly depleted range making it unfit and unsuited to care
for the number of cattle that had been using it. As a result
some had to go.¹

A third cause was the large number of cattle rus­
tlers who had assembled in San Juan during the late eighties
and nineties, and the active way they practiced their trade
against the cattle companies. These old time rustlers
seemed to have no principles in the way they obtained cattle.
They practiced the then legitimate operation of catching
Mavericks with little attention being paid to this rather
shady enterprise until some of the cattle companies were

¹Statement by Al Scorup, personal interview, August, 1954.
badly hurt by their loses.\textsuperscript{2}

The rustling business went from bad to worse; from catching and branding unbranded animals to the changing or burning over of brands already evident. In some cases the rustlers would soon have more cattle than the real and honest owners.\textsuperscript{3}

When the L. C. Cattle Company left San Juan a remnant of the herd was sold in the county. These cattle went from one group of rustlers to another who made their claim to these cattle an excuse for plundering other cattle on the range. The country became a den of thieves.\textsuperscript{4}

A fourth cause for the decline of the cattle industry lay in the low price of cattle. This was undoubtedly one of the major factors that drove some of the cattlemen to move. Frank Silvey states: "...with the low price of cattle the majority of the cattlemen sold out their interests, and the cattle were shipped to Montana."\textsuperscript{5}

While there are not many prices on cattle available for this period of time, one might serve to give us an insight into the price decline. Steers were selling for $75.00 per head in the middle eighteen eighties, just ten years

\textsuperscript{2}Silvey, "History and Early Settlement of Northern San Juan County," \textit{op. cit.}, p. 54.

\textsuperscript{3}Carter, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. 12, p. 342.

\textsuperscript{4}A. R. Lyman, "History of Blanding," \textit{op. cit.}, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{5}Silvey, "History and Early Settlement of Northern San Juan County," \textit{op. cit.}, p. 54.
later the price had dropped to around ten or eleven dollars per steer.\footnote{Letter from Albert R. Lyman, \textit{op. cit.}}

Even with the free feed of the open range such prices were hardly worth the time and efforts of the cattlemen when they would not enable him to even meet his expenses.

A fifth cause had its origin in the creating of the San Juan area into a county of the Utah Territory, and the resultant levying of taxes on livestock and property to finance the county organization.

When the Mormons arrived in San Juan they found a number of cattle outfits in the area who had moved into San Juan to escape the taxes of the organized counties of the neighboring states as there was no county organization in San Juan at that time.\footnote{Ibid.}

San Juan County was created by an act of the 24th Territorial Legislature in February, 1880.\footnote{Noble Warrum(ed.), \textit{Utah Since Statehood} (Chicago - Salt Lake: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1919), p. 512.} A county organization was not affected until after the Mormons arrived in April of 1880. With the organizing of a county came the appointment of a tax assessor. The appointment went to L. H. Redd Jr.

When L. H. Redd, Jr. received his commission as Assessor and Collector, he began promptly to hunt down all property which had enjoyed in the wild region a safe retreat from taxation. Let no one suppose for a minute that the owners of these herds submitted willingly, often they pro-
tested and in some cases they flatterly refused to be assessed, and they threatened the young assessor if he insisted. "I came here to assess this property," affirmed L. H. Redd, according to an eye witness, "and I shall assess every bit of it, and when the time comes, I shall collect every cent that is due." Another item worthy of mention is that taxes were collected according to promise.9

In addition to the taxes placed on cattle the Board of County Commissioners of San Juan County passed an ordinance which required a license on all animals run in the county. The ordinance is as follows:

Section I That any person, company or association owning, raising, grazing or pasturing horses, mules, cattle, sheep or goats within the boundaries of San Juan county, State of Utah, shall procure from the County Clerk, a license, and shall pay therefore, into the County Treasury, two and one-half (2 1/2) cents for each head of all such horses, mules, cattle, sheep or goats so owned, grazed, raised or pastured in said County, from and after August 1st, 1897, until March 1st 1898, and annually thereafter, and the County Clerk shall, on the payment of such sum of two and one-half cents per head for such livestock, issue to the person so applying, a license, showing that such amount, for such kinds and number of animals so licensed has been paid, and for what year, or if the party or parties owning, raising, grazing or pasturing any of the kinds of livestock before mentioned, so elect, the amount of such license may be paid to the Treasurer at the time of the payment of the taxes for the current year, and the treasurer is hereby authorized to issue such license, and shall report the same to the County Clerk.

Section II Traveling herds that continuously pass along any of the highways of the County in passing through said County, shall, unless grazed more than one-quarter (1/4) of one mile from such public highway, or unless traveling less than four (4) miles each day, be exempt from the provisions of this ordinance, but not otherwise.

Section III  Transient live stock that is held or grazed for part of the year in San Juan County shall be licensed the same as resident livestock. . .

Section IV  Any person, company or association owning, raising, grazing or pasturing any of the kinds of livestock before mentioned in San Juan County, who fails to apply for such license and pay the amount required therefore, before the 15th day of November each year, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof in any court of competent jurisdiction, shall be fined in double the amount of such license as should have been paid and costs of suit. . . .10

The assessment of taxes and the license along with the declining cattle prices was both burdensome and discouraging to the cattle companies and was a major reason for their decision to sell out or move from the county.

The final cause for the decline of the cattle companies and perhaps the most serious was the disastrous drought of the eighteen nineties. The drought seems to have had its beginning in the late eighties. F. A. Hammond in reporting on conditions in San Juan in 1889, states:

"...all things are fairly prosperous. Stock has not done quite as well as formerly, owing to drought."11

This was one of the most severe and extended droughts known in the area. From 1891 to 1898, there was no snow, nor rain, the cattle either starved to death or left the country. This drought caused the disbandening or leaving of the large

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10 Ordinance, passed July 12, 1897, Minutes of the County Commission of San Juan County, Utah, from April 26th, 1880 to March 5, 1900, pp. 244-245.

cattle companies.\(^{12}\)

A second report from F. A. Hammond was published in 1894, at the height of the drought. "Our cattle are bone-poor on the range. We have had no rain to speak of for three years. Drought and Indians will yet drive us out of the country if some change for the better does not soon come."\(^{13}\)

Another report of the time indicates the seriousness of the conditions. "The great drought of the nineties had a telling effect on the cattle range, where they fought each other away from the disappearing tanks and springs, leaving their dry carcasses on the nearby banks and hills in memory of that terrible famine of water."\(^{14}\)

The winter of 1894-95, saw the effects of the drought at its worst. One report indicates that they lost nearly half of their cattle during that winter through starvation.\(^{15}\)

When the large cattle companies left San Juan County they took some of their cattle with them, sold them to interests in other states or sold them to settlers in San Juan. The L. C. Cattle Company sold most of their cattle outside of the state, a few were left in the county and changed hands many times as they were stolen first by one

\(^{12}\)Statement by Al Scourup, personal interview, August, 1954.

\(^{13}\)Deseret Evening News, Journal History of the Church, Church Historians Office, Salt Lake City, July 12, 1894, p.7.

\(^{14}\)A. R. Lyman, "History of San Juan County," \textit{op. cit.}, 95.

\(^{15}\)Silvey, "History and Early Settlement of Northern San Juan County," \textit{op. cit.}, p. 54.
band of rustlers and then another.16

The large Carlisle Company sold out to outside interests. They had about 30,000 head of cattle when they closed out.17

The settlers of Bluff had tried since 1888, to purchase the Longhorn stock of the ELK Mountain Cattle Company. At first the cattle were not for sale.18 However, existing conditions brought about a change.

In 1891, or in 1892, the Texas outfit manifested a willingness to sell their holdings in San Juan, and a company was formed in Bluff to consider their terms. The deal was closed for $20,000, and the ELK M Brand became the property of the new company, which included nearly everyone in town.

The deal marked an important improvement in the country's complexion, and it was followed by a general and wholesale rounding up of the long-horned cattle, and when they were sold off, the range was left near the original type of Utah stock.19

The Pittsburg Cattle Company with the cross H brand sold out to the La Sal Livestock Company.20

The Indian Creek Cattle Company which was created when a number of small herds combined, eventually sold all of

16Albert R. Lyman, "History of San Juan County," op. cit., p. 93.
17Carter, op. cit., Vol. 12, p. 34.
19Albert R. Lyman, "History of San Juan County," op. cit., p. 71.
20Silvey, "The History and Early Settlement of Northern San Juan County," op. cit., p. 42.
their interests to the Scorup-Summerville Cattle Company.21

Thus one by one the great cattle interests that originated outside the territory of Utah for various reasons moved out or sold their interests to the settlers of San Juan. These settlers increased their herds of sheep and cattle by united efforts, bought other herds that had been crowding in on them from New Mexico and Texas until their livestock occupied most of San Juan County.22

Improved breeding and better transportation changed somewhat the practices of raising livestock, but did not alter the fact that cattle raising remained a very vital part of the economy of San Juan County.

21Ibid., p. 43.

22Albert R. Lyman, "San Juan County Livestock," Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah, (Typewritten).
SUMMARY

San Juan County was the most unknown part of the State of Utah during the period covered by this study. Its western boundary is formed by the Green and Colorado rivers and the great canyons they have worn in the rock formations. The south boundary is the State of Arizona, and to the east the State of Colorado.

The early inhabitants were the Pueblo Indians, followed by a more nomadic group represented in the Ute, Piute and Navajo tribes who were in the country when the first white men explored its borders. The first explorers were Spanish, led by Captain Cardenas in 1540, in search of the Seven Cities of Cibola. These were followed by other Spaniards including Fathers Escalante and Dominguez searching for a route from Santa Fe to California.

Next on the scene were the trappers and the mountain men. Foremost among these were Jedediah Smith, Antoine Robidoux, men of the Rocky Mountain and American Fur companies and the famous Kit Carson. Then came the geographic and geologic expeditions led by John C. Fremont, Captain Gunnison, J. N. Macomb and others. Most of these traveled over part or all of the Old Spanish trail which passed through the northern part of the San Juan area. Some ex-
plored the interior of the county.

In spite of the rivers that form the western boundary of the county and the San Juan River which flows through the southern part; water for irrigation has always been a problem. The channels of these rivers, for the most part, make the availability of the water almost an impossibility. In addition the rainfall is scant which does not aid the situation.

There are several mountains in the county, not a part of any range system, but individual mountains of considerable size, and of great importance to the cattle industry. These are the La Sal in the north, the Blue and the Elk in the center, and the Navajo in the south. All but the Navajo were the central cattle ranges and headquarters of some of the large cattle companies.

The large cattle companies first appeared on the San Juan ranges in the latter part of the eighteen seventies. The plentiful supply of grass in the county plus the inexpensive cattle available in the Utah "settlements" persuaded a number of Colorado cattlemen to buy these cattle and drive them to San Juan. This was the beginning of a program that soon overstocked the ranges and set the stage for later problems.

Perhaps the four largest cattle companies were the Carlisle Company, owned by an English syndicate; the L. C. Company from Texas and New Mexico; the Elk Mountain Company from Texas and the Pittsburg Company backed by eastern
capital. In addition there were a number of smaller companies which in most cases, either combined their interests or sold out to the larger organizations. It is estimated there were over 55,000 head of cattle on the ranges during this period.

The first cattle were of a grade or cross breed type, resembling little the popular, selected breeds of cattle of a later period. The famed Texas Longhorn found its way into Utah at this time. Eventually as an improved breeding program developed the Hereford was found to be the most profitable, and by nineteen hundred the characteristic white face of the Herford breed was common in San Juan.

With the absence of a railroad in Utah most of the cattle were driven or trailed to the Colorado towns of Dolores, Durango, Mancos, Cortez and Montrose, where they were loaded on railroad cars and shipped to the markets of some of the larger midwestern cities. Prices varied considerably and information on the numbers of cattle shipped is not available. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, who did most of the hauling, destroyed their freight records on cattle prior to 1928, thus eliminating the possibility of obtaining much information of this type.

The life of the cowboy in San Juan was rather typical of cowboy life in most sections of the Southwest. They experienced times of relaxation and recklessness; periods of hard work and danger; and moments of loneliness. There seems to have been three main types of cowboys; the
young men who were looking for adventure, the fugitive from justice who found San Juan an excellent place to hide, and the long time professional cowboy who knew his work and found satisfaction in doing it well.

Some of the chief problems of those who looked after the cattle came from their forced association with others who also made a claim to the range. The first, and perhaps the most constant difficulty, came from the Indians who did not like the idea of sharing their ancient hunting grounds with the great herds of cattle. A second problem was the constant loss of cattle to outlaws and cattle rustlers. Third, the settlers who began fencing the ranges and waterholes; and finally, the traditional enemy, the sheepmen, who arrived in the eighteen eighties.

The eighteen nineties proved to be a disastrous period for the cattle companies. A drought which lasted for several years depleted the cattle's feed and water supply. Add to this problem the fact that sheep were arriving to compete with the cattle for the ranges, and settlers were taking up the choice land. As a result the companies began to dispose of their cattle. Some were sold to permanent settlers and local cattlemen, others were sold and trailed out of the county. By nineteen hundred nearly all of the cattle left in San Juan were owned by the Mormons and became the foundation of an economy that has over the years been based largely on the cattle industry.
In this study there are two areas where more research should be done. First, in the area of marketing of cattle during this period, with special research into prices, numbers of cattle sold from San Juan, and the amount and effect of this income on the development of the county. A second area of interest would be to learn more of the biographies of the personal of the cattle companies, particularly the owners.

The damage caused by overstocking the ranges during the period studied was no doubt serious and has proved long lasting. But on the other hand the overall value of the cattle industry to the development of San Juan County should never be underestimated.
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The purpose of this study was to learn the reasons for the movement of cattle into San Juan County, Utah, the development of the industry, and its contribution to the growth of the county.

The few written accounts in existence of the cattle industry in San Juan are brief and found in widely separate areas. The whole and complete account will likely never be written, but there is need for gathering as much of the scattered information as possible.

A study of the early history of the inhabitants of San Juan was made, along with an examination of the geography of the region, and of early explorations into the area. The first inhabitants were likely a group of Pueblo Indians whose cultural remains indicate that they were a settled people with a higher standard of living than the Indians who succeeded
them. The latter group was represented in three tribes, the Navajos, Piutes, and the Utes.

The first white people into the area were the early explorers, trappers, and traders. It appears that most of them touched only the borders of San Juan, but some of the more adventurous probably did explore the interior.

One of the major problems in San Juan has been the scarcity of water for irrigation purposes. While there are three great rivers on the borders, because of the deep channels they have cut, their waters have never been available to benefit the people.

The first large cattle herds were moved into San Juan County from the neighboring states in the late eighteen seventies. By the middle eighteen eighties there were several large companies with thousands of head of cattle on the ranges. Their main reasons for moving into San Juan were to utilize the vast virgin ranges with their plentiful supply of good grass, and to avoid the taxes placed on cattle in the organized counties of other states.

The cattle of early San Juan were a grade type and inferior to beef cattle of today. At first the Shorthorn (Durham) breed was the most prominent. The famed Texas Longhorn with their hardy characteristics also played a part in the early industry. Later there was a program of breed improvement, and the Hereford became the most desirable and profitable breed in San Juan.
The country in the beginning of the industry was especially inviting. There were a plentiful supply of grass, good shelter for the stock, and usually sufficient water. However, in time overgrazing proved a very serious problem.

There were no railroads in the San Juan country, so the cattle had to be driven to market. The most likely places for selling them were the railroad towns of Dolores, Durango, and Cortez in Colorado.

A study was made of the life of the cowboy and some of the range conflicts in which he became involved. There were many types of cowboys, and their work was rigorous and demanding, and sometimes dangerous. They frequently had trouble with the Indians, with rustlers and outlaws, and later with their traditional rival, the sheepman.

Finally, research was made to determine why the large companies left San Juan and turned the cattle industry over to the settlers. Several factors were involved: first and most serious was the drought of the eighteen nineties; second, the large flocks of sheep that were trailed into San Juan; third, the county organization levied a tax on cattle; and finally, the prices of cattle dropped, making the business unprofitable. As a result, by nineteen hundred most of the cattle left in the county were owned by the permanent settlers.

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Committee Chairman

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Committee Member