

CHAPTER 5

THE WEST

Section 3

“The Cattle Kingdom”

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- 1) Identify the factors that led to the cattle boom.
- 2) Describe what life was like for cowboys.
- 3) Analyze the causes of the Cattle Kingdom's decline.

The Cattle Boom

- Spanish brought their cattle to CA & Texas
- Spanish cattle mixed with English breeds to create Texas longhorn
- TEXAS LONGHORN - hardy breed of cattle raised by ranchers throughout western Texas

The Cattle Boom (cont.)

- Texas longhorn - lean, tough cattle with horns up to 5 feet across
- Suitable to environment - needed very little water, and could survive harsh weather
- After Civil War, demand for beef in the East increased (expanding economy & growing population)

The Cattle Boom (cont.)

- Cattle sold for prices:
 - \$3 to \$6 in Texas
 - \$38 in Kansas
 - \$80 in New York
- Cattle could not be driven all the way to eastern markets:
 - Distance too far
 - Fear that Texas fever would infect animals

The Cattle Boom (cont.)

- Joseph McCoy - businessman that came up with idea of building pens for cattle in Abilene, KS
- Kansas Pacific Railroad line went through Abilene
- Cattle could be shipped east by RR
 - Cattle drives north to Abilene
 - Cattle to the East by railroad

The Cattle Boom (cont.)

- In the 1860s & 1870s cattle ranching began to expand onto the Great Plains
- Ranchers moved north with the longhorns into Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, & Nebraska
- Ranches extended from Texas north to Canada, where cattle were raised in late 1800s = CATTLE KINGDOM

The Cattle Boom (cont.)

- Rise of Cattle Kingdom:
 - Economic & population growth increased demand for beef
 - McCoy's pens eased shipment east
 - Ranching expanded on the Great Plains
- **OPEN RANGE** - public land used by ranchers to graze herds
 - Once occupied by Plains Indians
 - Once roamed by buffalo herds

Cattle Towns

- Long cattle drives ended at towns located along a railroad
- Brokers bought cattle to ship to East
- Cattle towns consisted of:
 - General store
 - Hotels or boardinghouse
 - Railroad depot
 - Stockyard

The Ranches

- Elizabeth Collins (Cattle Queen of Montana) - successful, wealthy cattle rancher in Teton Valley in Montana
- Charles Goodnight -started the first ranch in the Texas Panhandle (250 miles from any town or railroad)

The Ranches (cont.)

- Speculators in East & Europe invested in ranches (much as people invested in railroads)
- Some ranches were huge
 - XIT Ranch covered over 3 million acres
- Most ranchers did not own so much land

The Ranches (cont.)

- Many ranchers concentrated on buying the RANGE RIGHTS (rights to water sources on the Great Plains)
- Ranchers bought these rights to give them exclusive control of both the water & the land around it
- Cut out their competition from using the water

American Diet

- After the cattle boom, Americans began to consider beef as a healthy alternative to pork
- Serving beef at dinner became a symbol of wealth & the “good life”

The Cowboys

- Cowboys (or cowhands) - those that took care of ranchers' cattle
- Borrowed many of their techniques, terms, clothing from the Mexican vaqueros
- Vaqueros - Mexican ranch hands who cared for cattle & horses

The Cowboys (cont.)

- Clothing styles taken from vaqueros:
 - Western saddle
 - Lariat
 - Leather chaps
 - Broad felt hat
 - Bandana
- Terms taken from vaqueros:
 - Lariat, stampede, lasso

The Cowboys (cont.)

- Most cowboys were men
 - Some women became cowboys
 - Many African Americans
 - Nat Love - wrote an autobiography about cowboy life
 - Many Mexican Americans

The Cowboys (cont.)

- ROUNDUP - gathering cattle together & collecting them in a herd
- Spring roundup - cowboys branded young calves & horses with ranch's unique mark to prevent thieves from selling stolen livestock

The Cowboys (cont.)

- Dangers faced by cowboys:
 - Cattle thieves
 - Bad weather
 - Unpredictable livestock
 - Hard work
 - Low wages

Cattle Drives & Cattle Towns

- CATTLE DRIVE = long journeys on which cowboys herded cattle to northern markets or grazing lands
 - Lasted several months, covered 100s miles
- CHISHOM TRAIL = one of the earliest & most popular routes for cattle drives
 - Marked by Texas cowboy Jesse Chisholm in the late 1860s
 - Ran from San Antonio, TX to Abilene, KS

Cattle Drives & Cattle Towns (cont.)

- GOODNIGHT-LOVING TRAIL = blazed by Charles Goodnight, ran from Texas to New Mexico Territory
- WESTERN TRAIL = north from San Antonio, TX to Dodge City, KS
 - One of most heavily used routes

Cattle Drives & Cattle Towns (cont.)

- Difficulties:
 - Herding through harsh country
 - No tents or shelter for months
 - Cattle difficult to handle (stampedes)
 - Tracking down strays
 - Standing watch over cattle at night

Cattle Drives & Cattle Towns (cont.)

- Large cattle towns lay at the end of trail:
 - Dodge City
 - Abilene
 - Kansas City
 - Denver
- Businesses developed in cattle towns:
 - Boardinghouses, hotels, saloons, restaurants

The End of the Open Range

- 1880s refrigerator railroad car made it possible to carry meat from packing plants to eastern cities
 - Cities like Chicago, IL became famous for meatpacking plants
- Competition for grazing lands increased
 - Competition between large ranchers, small ranchers, and farmers

The End of the Open Range (cont.)

- Joseph Glidden (1874) patented barbed wire, which allowed farmers & ranchers to fence off large areas of land
- Large ranchers moved to fence in open range & valuable water sources
- Some farmers & small ranchers cut fence and moved onto land (or stole cattle)

The End of the Open Range (cont.)

- RANGE WARS = battles among large ranchers, small ranchers, & farmers on the Great Plains for use of the open range
- Cattle ranchers also fought with sheep owners
 - Number of sheep grew greater in 1880s
 - Sheep chewed grass down, nothing left

The End of the Open Range (cont.)

- Cattle prices dropped in 1885 (during the economic depression)
 - Brought eastern cattle to the western range
 - Eastern cattle were not well adapted
- Severe winters in 1885 & 1886
 - Thousands of cattle died (30% of herds)
 - Ranchers ruined financially
 - Cattle towns hit hard
 - Forced to buy winter feed for herds

The End of the Open Range (cont.)

- Fall of Cattle Kingdom:
 - Beef prices were low
 - Competition for grazing lands increased
 - Harsh weather made raising cattle difficult