

BACK TRAILING ON THE OLD FRONTIERS

Civilization's Westward Advance Left Trails White With Bones of Buffalo, Which Were Slaughtered by Millions For Their Hides

Drawing by
Charles M. Russell

INTERWOVEN closely with the history of the "far west" is the story of the buffalo of the American plains, which roamed the prairies in countless millions a century ago and became practically extinct within a few decades after the killing of the animals for their hides became a commercial industry. It is believed that no other great animal family was ever wiped out so rapidly.

The American bison was found by the first colonists of the Carolinas, and other of the southern and middle states, from which parts of the continent they were soon frightened away or exterminated. In the latter part of the eighteenth century they were seen in a wild state in Kentucky. Early in the nineteenth century most of these animals in the region east of the Mississippi were exterminated or had found their way to the prairies west of the great river. The earliest account of buffalo given by white men is that of Coronado, who saw great herds of them on his march northward from Mexico in 1585, between the Missouri river and the Rocky mountains. One of the earliest buffalo hunts on a big scale was that described by M. Nicollet in the late 30's, which took place near Fort Pierre, in South Dakota. Horace Greely, in his journey across the continent by stage in 1859, encountered herds estimated to number millions in western Kansas.

The number of buffalo in the West in the early 70's was estimated roughly at from 15 to 20 millions. They ranged from Mexico north to the Arctic circle as far as the Great Slave lake, but their natural home was on the plains between the Missouri river and the Rocky mountains, and not farther south than the Rio Grande. Outside the limits of their real habitat, the few small herds that existed were stragglers. Daniel Boone once found a herd in Kentucky that numbered 1,000, but that was a large one for that territory.

For years a goodly portion of the meat consumed by early settlers in the Middle West and West was cut from the carcass of the shaggy animal which so long existed as monarch of the plains. Thousands of people who crossed the plains in wagon trains drew their supply of meat from the same source. Buffalo trails were followed westward because it was known that they would lead to water. "Buffalo chips" even furnished fuel to the plainsmen. The hides furnished many white men with garments and moccasins, as well as bedding.

Made Possible Pacific Railroad
The building of the first railroad to the Pacific was made possible at so early a date because the buffalo existed. From the mighty herds the army of railroad builders drew their daily supplies of fresh meat, and thousands of the animals were slaughtered for food annually while the work of laying rails was pushed forward. For a few years in the 70's the railroads did an enormous business carrying trainloads of buffalo hides and bones, which for a period formed the principal commercial product of the plains. Many settlers, beset by crop failures, gathered bones and sold them to make a living.

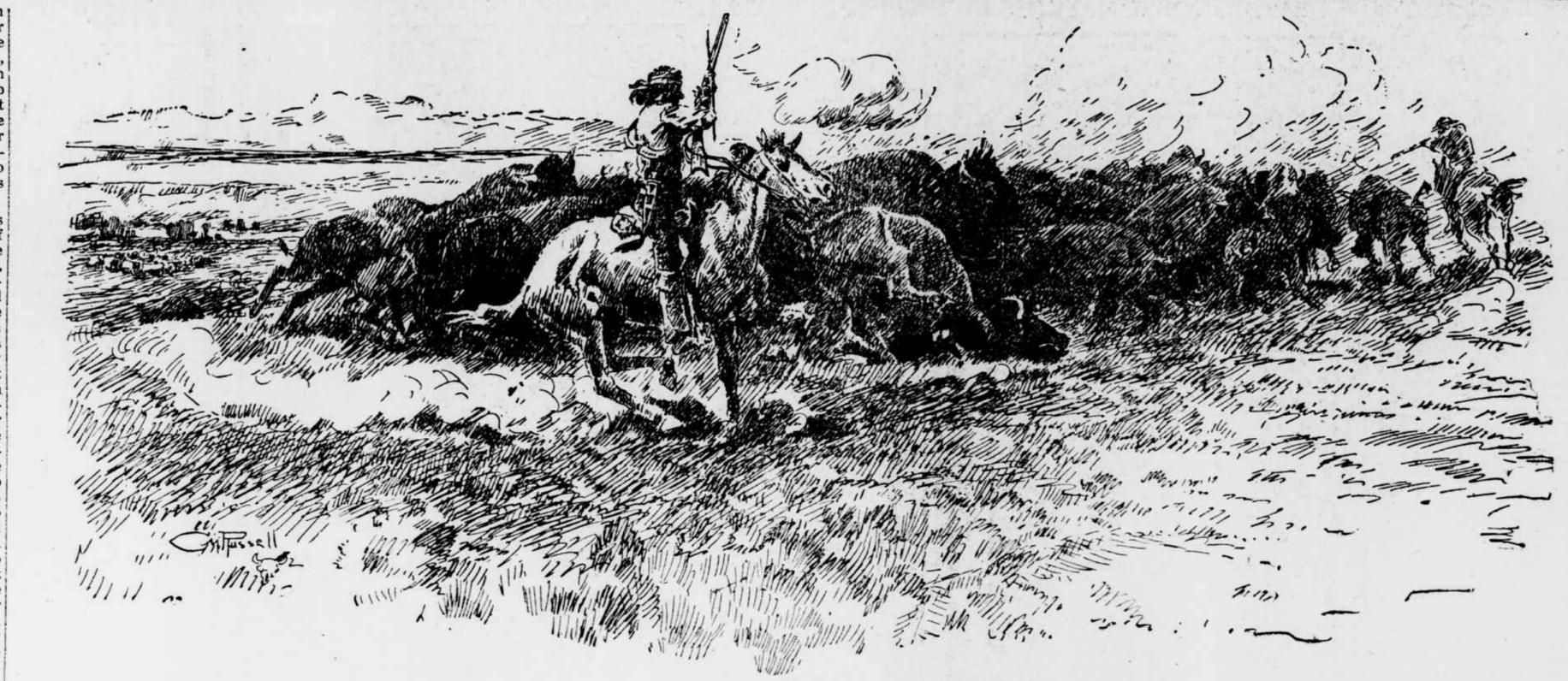
The buffalo in color is brown, but the shade varies as the seasons advance. It is in every respect a peculiar animal, unlike any other. A characteristic of the buffalo is that it never trots, but either walks or gallops, and it usually travels against the wind. Its sense of scent is so keen that it can smell a foe two miles away. The best meat obtainable in the to the windward.

Best Meat Obtainable
Early-day frontier towns were buffalo. The markets of such places as Atchison, Topeka, Leavenworth and other Kansas towns, as early as 1857 and for some years following were often supplied with buffalo meat. The hump upon the shoulders was an especially rich morsel, as was also the tongue. Rich, juicy steaks and roasts of the buffalo were unexcelled by any other meat. Thousands of tongues were dried and shipped east to the Boston and New York markets, where they were in great demand and brought fancy prices.

The American bison differs materially from the buffalo of the old world. At first view, his red, fiery eyes, shaggy mane and long beard, the long, lustrous hair on his shoulders and fore quarters and the comparative nakedness of his hind quarters suggest the lion, but the buffalo carries his head low and is enormously powerful in neck and shoulders.

The most promising distinguishing trait of the American bison from the European buffalo is the fact that the cow refuses to breed with the European buffalo, and such is the aversion between these creatures that they always keep separate, even if bred in the same pasture and raised together. The American bison, however, breeds freely with the domestic cattle and in this manner propagates a new species that continues its kind.

'70's Show Vast Sales
The sale of buffalo hides reached vast proportions in the '70's. In St. Louis one firm bought 250,000 skins in 1871. There were many trading posts dealing in these and smaller peltries. In Cheyenne in 1872 there was a shed at the Union Pacific tracks that measured 175 feet by 60 feet and 30 feet high that was literally so packed with buffalo



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EARLY DAY WHITE BUFFALO HUNTERS

falo hides that the walls bulged. Fort Benton, Mont., sent 80,000 buffalo hides to market in 1876.

Toward the end of the '60's the buffalo had divided into two great herds—the southern and northern. The great southern herd was the first to go, being practically extinct at the close of 1872. After that date only a few straggling herds remained. The northern herd became extinct in the early '80's. The greatest slaughter of the animals took place in 1872-73-74, when the number slain ran into the millions.

Hundreds of the most famous hunters of this country and Europe visited the plains in the early '70's to take a farewell hunt before the bison disappeared. The Grand Duke Alexis, youngest son of Emperor Alexander of Russia, with a numerous retinue, came with a party from St. Petersburg and went on a tour through "Buffalo Land" in the winter of 1871-72. After a grand chase on the western plains in Wyoming under the guidance of Buffalo Bill and Generals Sheridan and Custer, they realized that the buffalo as a wild species was doomed.

Last Eastern Buffalo in 1832
The most conspicuous person engaged in killing bison was Colonel William F. Cody, who sobriquet "Buffalo Bill," has been a household word for more than half a century. In 1832 when the Kansas Pacific was being built across the plains to Denver, Cody, then a young man, was employed at \$300 a month to keep the army of workmen supplied with meat. He was engaged in this work for 18 months during which time he killed on an average of eight buffalo a day. After 1850 few buffalo were seen from the stage lines near enough to permit of the passengers shooting them, although thousands could often be seen in plain sight out of range. The buffalo soon became shy and kept away from the traveled roads. The last buffalo killed east of the Mississippi river was shot in 1832.

The trading posts, and especially those along the Platte river, made enormous profits bartering for buffalo hides. There were more than a dozen of these within a distance of 200 miles between Fort Kearney and Julesburg, and about half as many between Julesburg and Denver. Many of the shrewdest traders in the west engaged in that business and acquired fortunes in a short time.

For a pound or two of a cheap grade of brown sugar or an equivalent of cheap coffee, they could buy a buffalo robe worth from five to 10 dollars at the Missouri river towns. The finest tanned cow robes were obtained for twice that amount of sugar or coffee. Some of these were painted in aboriginal style, with many hieroglyphics of the red men. Eastern tourists would pay from \$50 to \$100 for a fine, painted robe. These cost the traders perhaps 50 cents.

Traded Much With Indians
As early as 1863 the trade in buffalo robes with the Indians was enormous, hundreds of thousands of the animals being killed annually along the Platte, and the hides became a staple article of commerce. Every plainsman had one or more robes and thousands were made into overcoats. Every freighter and mail carrier also had buffalo overshoes, made with the hair inside.

During the immense overland travel in the early 60's portions of the plains were fairly white with the bones of buffalo. No one then seeing the apparently endless mass of bones in Kansas and Colorado, as well as farther north, ever thought that any use could be made of them, but after the completion of the Union Pacific railroad and its branches across the plains, a new industry was inaugurated in the collection and shipping of bones. The trade carried on in that line is astonishing to contemplate. In ten years' time sales of bones aggregated \$3,000,000, at an average price of \$8 per ton. In 1874 alone there were shipped east over the Kansas-Pacific and Santa Fe roads 10,000,000 pounds of bones, more than 1,250,000 buffalo hides, and 600,000 pounds of meat. The bones were ground up into fertilizer and the horns were polished and sold largely for dwelling and office ornaments.

Importance to Indians
The passing of the buffalo spelled disaster to the plains Indians, for this animal furnished everything, practically, that entered into every part of their life. The hide was dressed in a variety of ways, each special treatment having its particular use. The lodge of the Indian, his bed and covering when sleeping, his clothes, his weapons of war, his shield in battle, kettles for his food, boats on the rivers, leather for his saddle and halter, strings for his whip and bow, hair for dress ornaments—all these and many other articles were made from the buffalo robe. His bones, also, from the short, curved, strong horns to the hoofs were manufactured into an endless variety of articles that entered into every part of the domestic life of the Indian.

The methods of capture of the buffalo by the Indians and whites were various. With the Indians, wholesale destruction was commonly resorted to by driving a big herd at full gallop to the brink of a precipice or into the mouth of an artificial enclosure. The force of the mass behind crowded those in advance ahead until they fell on each other at the foot of the cliff or in the enclosure, and thus they were slaughtered by hundreds.

A great deal of skill, as well as favoring condition of the wind, made the success of this maneuver complete. These hunts were matters of great ceremony with the Indians. Days and weeks were devoted to the attack, and the hunters gathered against individual hunting or rights of the herds, and there was due observance of the established religious rites of the tribes.

"The Surround" Attack
The true sportsman-like attack was by direct onslaught on horseback, known as "the surround." It was managed with the same ceremonious preliminaries that were observed in all great buffalo hunts by the Indians. The attack was made in careful order, under strict discipline, directly upon the herd until the latter had fully sensed the danger, when the hunters broke into a wild gallop, each free to go where he chose, chasing and slaying amid the thunder of hoofs, the bellowing of the beasts and the clouds of dust raised in the mad rush of so many animals. These mighty herds became, and so it is sensible of where to flee that most of them fell victims to their pursuers and the ground would soon be strewn with dead bodies. Then for days the women would be busy gathering the meat, hides and other fruits of the few hours' hunt.

One of the picturesque types of the early days on the plains was the white buffalo hunter. At first these men, much after the manner of the Indians, using, however, long-barreled, muzzle-loading guns and carrying in their hands the ramrods used to press home the powder and ball after each shot had been fired. Later, when the extermination of the species was proceeding in full swing, "still-hunting" was practiced. This was a simple, effective method of slaughter.

The hunter would crawl from the leeward to within sure rifle shot without being discovered. Then, choosing the best concealment the ground afforded, he would begin the work of destruction by firing at the nearest animal. The buffalo, seeing nothing and hearing only the report, would usually remain quiet in woodment. Presently the wounded animal would fall and the other, smelling its blood, would gather round and try to make it rise or else go on grazing, evidently thinking that their companion had lain down to rest. Meanwhile the hunter's rifle would be busy. Shot after shot would bring down victim after victim until the whole band had been killed.

BUILDING
(Continued From Page 1)

upon in every emergency. If one of the men cuts a hand or a foot he hurries to her to have the wound treated and bandaged. In case of sickness or death it is for her that everyone sends, and she never fails to answer the call. If strangers come into the community and need a place to stop over night, Mrs. Cullom will take them in, and she has such a quiet way that no one is ever allowed to feel they are causing her the slightest inconvenience.

The Culloms not only run their large ranch, but the postoffice and grocery store at Alger, and Mr. Cullom has business connections which require him to be away from home several months each year. During his periods of absence, his wife not only superintends the affairs of the ranch, and gives her personal attention to the large flock of poultry, but she attends to the house and the store, as well—and for some time was in charge of the Camp Fire Girls of the valley. She is a quiet, unobtrusive little woman, who until eight years ago lived in Helena. When questioned as to how she managed to accomplish so much, she replied quietly: "Oh, I just keep busy, that's all."

Asked whether she was not lonesome during the past winter when Mr. Cullom was in the east four months, she said: "I didn't have time; and one can't be lonesome with such fine neighbors and friends as we have here. And then, you know, I have my dogs. Those dogs are fox terriers, Bob and Jack and Jill. Bob is nine years old, a grandfather, and most dignified. More than anything, he loves to ride in Dan's wagon. So fond is he of this particular 'wagon' that during Mr. Arn's sojourns at the ranch, he camps on the running board, ready to travel. Jill just now is nursing a family of six babies and has no time for anyone else, but Jack, the maternal parent, is not as devoted to family duties, and derives his chief pleasure from exercising the privilege of waking the

neigh has had a hand in most of this work, for she is busy out of doors day in and day out. And in addition to the volume of work she does on the ranch, she finds time to keep her little house in spotless condition, to cook and bake faultless viands, to make butter and cheese, and to freeze the famous ice cream almost daily. And

is beautiful. Mrs. Hackley spends much of her time among the long rows of luscious plants, which were loaded with blossoms and green fruit. "If nothing happens we will have a big crop," she predicted. "Last year was the first season, and we took in more than \$150. We will do much better than that this year."

the work in hand, was neat and pleasant. "It's plain and small," said Mrs. Hackley, "but after all it's home," and she sighed contentedly.

One Woman's Courage
"Now," said Arms, "I'm going to take you across the fields to see Mrs. Cullom."

It was a Monday morning, and Mrs. Mackley was busy with her weekly task of laundering the family linen. "Come in and sit down," she invited. "I'm washing and the house is upset, but I'd like to have you come in and talk a while. We don't meet strangers every day."

There was a note of wistfulness in her voice, and a suspicion of loneliness. But a little chat seemed to brighten her wonderfully. The house, despite

when Mrs. Cullom needs help, it is she who comes to the rescue and allows her own work to wait. When asked how she could find time to work away from home, Mrs. Laney, who is sturdy, pink checked and smiling, replied: "I just can't do enough for Mrs. Cullom. I don't know what 'Merica be like without den. When my husband be sick, Mr. Cullom come take him to hospital for several months, and Mrs.

fine out for me how he is. It was hard time, but they so good to me and help me so, I do anythin' for dem."

Up the road a mile or so from the Cullom ranch lives Mrs. Ernest Hackley. More than anything else she is interested in her strawberry patch, which is in course of construction. Mrs. Laney occupies perhaps an acre of ground

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ROAD THROUGH THE VALLEY OF PIONEERS



ANOTHER TYPE OF FARM HOME IN CLARK'S FORK VALLEY. THE MCMURTHNEY RESIDENCE BEYOND TROUT CREEK

Bischoffer. You'll like her. She is a fine example of the model settler. And her name is not Bischoffer, but Peterson. She hasn't been married to Peterson very long, and we are all accustomed to the old name. When Joe Bischoffer died, I offered to take the place off her hands. I told her that a logg'd off farm was a pretty stiff proposition for a woman to handle alone. But she declared she was going to stick to her home. 'I may have to leave it and go to work,' she said, 'but I will always have it to come back to.' Mrs. Peterson is from Alsace-Lorraine. She is small and birdlike, with the bluest of blue eyes, fair hair just turning gray and delicate pink cheeks. She must have been a Dresden china sort of a girl. Her eyes dance and twinkle.

"I have been here eight years," she said, "and I never had a crop failure; no, nor my neighbors, either. Come, see my alfalfa, my clover and my potatoes. Just look at my strawberries, and my raspberries and my orchard. See all the little apples. And my garden, isn't it grand? I wish my cows would come home. I wish you see how beautiful they are. Last winter we had long, long snow, but I did not have to buy any hay. I feeded four head of stock, and I feeded them good. They eated an awful lot, too."

"She fitted about like a little bluebird in a gingham gown which matched here eyes, and a cap of the same azure hue. Pride was in every gesture. She said she had 40 acres of land cleared and under cultivation, and the rest of the ranch land burned off and making fine pasture. "And when I come here eight year ago," she continued, "you could not go from where the house now stands to the spring without climbing over piles of logs, seven, eight feet high, and it was like that everywhere. I tell you me and Joe worked hard. "Someone asked her if she was not afraid to go on alone after her husband died, and she replied: "It was mine home, and I want to stick by it—so I tell myself, now you just got to long the best you can—and then I just go ahead and do it. But I'm married again now, and so I get along all right. My husband, he got farm, too. "You are going to continue living here, aren't you?" asked Arms, "or are you going over to his place?" The blue eyes snapped.

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