HERALDRY OF THE PLAINS.

The Ingenuity Expended in Devising and Also in Appropriating Cattle Brands.

By Alice MacGowan.

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The king of old, who could not sign his name, needed a signet; the knight who went, armored, with his visor down, into battle, a cognizance, that his friends might know and his foes fear him.

Ciphers, seals, crests, coats of arms, are held by practical folk at this end of the century mere inoperative trappings, decorative belongings of the glories of our blood and State. Yet each, in its time of sprouting, struck root in a real need. A practical necessity called for them, and they were.

This also is true of the heraldry of the plains. And as the necessity which evoked it is first modified, then entirely removed, by the multiplication of fences, the curtailing of baronial estates and the diminishing of baronial herds, so will it fall into disuse and its character be changed.

Have you any idea what a cattle brand looks like?

Most people east of the Mississippi know in a general way that there are countless herds of cattle running loose upon the vast Western ranges, whose ownership is indicated only by means of the brand they bear; and a moment's thought will show how extensive and complicated this question of cattle brands would grow to be, where millions of dollars in perishable property, and thousands of different—often conflicting—interests are involved.

In the beginning, as in the beginning of heraldry, every man chose his brand, with reference only to his own needs and his own fancy.

As the number of brands increased, the encountering of similar, and even identical devices, led to misunderstandings, quarrels, and sometimes to bloody and fatal affrays concerning the ownership of cattle so branded.

As the battle of Barnet was lost to the cause of Lancaster through a similarity of cognizances—Warwick attaching his ally, Oxford, to mistake, taking the streaming star of that warrior for the sun of York—so, on many a battle field of our Western cattle country, has bloody war been waged, and the stver finally fallen to the better man, rather than the rightful owner, because an opposing A looked all too like a running W.

It was thus that the necessity became evident of an official registry and publication of brands, which should bring them into being before the law and diminish the danger of duplication—in short, a sort of college of heraldry. The business is now entirely systematized.

Tenderfoot Regalia.

and a man's brand is registered and published, just as a deed is.

METHODS OF BRANDING.

It behooves the cattleman to set this stern mautial upon his ambulatory property as early in its somewhat evasive career as possible. To this end the yearly branding begins about the first of May, when the mass body of the calf crop is probably from six to eight weeks old.

The cattle of a district are gathered in roundups, for owners of riders of each ranch cut out the cows of its brand that have calves with them, drive them in a bunch to themselves, and later drive them into a corral or branding pen where the calves are branded and ear-marked.

So far as I know, there are two ways of performing the branding operation; first, by roping and tying down—or holding down—the animal, while the cow-puncher applies the hot branding iron; second, by forcing the cattle which are to be branded slowly through a chute so narrow that it will admit but one animal at a time, a cow-puncher thrusting the branding-iron through the bars of the chute against the side or hip of each animal, as it is in turn presented to him.

This latter method, while it is very quick and easy, compared with the other way, with all the time and maneuvers involved in roping, throwing, tying, holding, is only practicable where nothing is to be done but put a single brand on the animal, as in the case of re-branding, trade-branding or some such special mark, which is added subsequently to the regular brand and ear-mark that a man puts on all his calves.

In order to do this regular branding, ear-marking, etc., the calf must be roped and tied, or held.

It will be at once evident to the thinking observer that, under existing methods of procedure, the responsibility for a good calf crop on any certain ranch rests more with the enterprise and "hustle" of its force of cow-punchers than with the cows themselves—since the XL cow who produces XL calves has her limitations; her scope of usefulness is circumscribed, and if she presents the owner of the XL ranch with an XL calf each year she is doing all that can be reasonably expected of her; but the cow-puncher who brands XL calves knows no such paltry restrictions. The number of calves he may brand XL is limited only to the number of unmarked, unbranded calves he can, as it were, lay his iron to.

Apropos, a tradition of the New Moon ranch says that its foreman, once upon a time, riding leisurely along at the tail of a trail herd of stock cattle, met the foreman of the Bar U ranch, also riding with a bunch of stock cattle. In the Bar U bunch the juvenile element predominated so disproportionately as to attract the New Moon man's attention.

"Helo, Tarbush," he called; "good cows you got there—that old long-horn's got about forty calves!"

"That's all right about my cows," returned Tarbush, easily. "That ol' Texas 's good enough; but she ain't no better'n some o' yourn I've seen."

These ranches were of those that return good yearly calf crops.

Brands are put on in two ways. First, there is the regular brand, where the design is printed upon the animal by a single pressure of a hot iron formed in the shape of the design and attached to a long iron rod.

This sort of brand is usually a small, neat device. Where so large and straggling a mark is used that it would be impossible to have every part of the design come in contact with the irregular surface of an animal's body at once, it is simply drawn, or "run," upon the hide, using a long, sharp-pointed, hot iron rod for a pencil; and those so made are called "running brands."

The running iron, or gauche, and the big, ugly, disfiguring, as well as cruel brands they imply, are now considered bad form by progressive cattlemen. The tendency is toward small, neat brands, inconspicuously placed, often—especially in the case of fine horses—on the jaw, or inside of the hind leg.

THE HUMORS OF THE CATTLE BRAND.

Because the cattleman's life is so hard and monotonous, so bare of the diversions and amusements that lend variety and interest to urban existence, he is fain to turn everything—even the common affairs of daily living—to a jest.

One would not expect to find humor in the subject of cattle brands; but, in point of fact, quite a large proportion of them are of an avowedly jocular character, and those originally altogether serious are continually parodied, burlesqued and jested upon.

The monogram brand P U P becomes, in the vernacular, Pup; the ranch is universally alluded to as the Pup ranch, and the tenderfoot who fails to ask, in his innocence, what sort of dogs they raise there, is rifled by his entertainers to be a disappointment.

Jokes on a brand like the H-E-L Down below are obvious and staple. An odd-looking brand, brought into a district from outside, having on it the letters, numerals or familiar figure to which it might be called, receives from the logy, the mysteriously significant name of Fundy Mustard. Running brands, like running coats of arms, are frequent; old man Patrick's cattle wear a P and a Pee. Mrs. Parr, a successful schoolmistress, has for her brand a little rebus which, pronounced in full, means, K-T-Bar—Katie Barr. Such names as Hart, House, Head, Swann and Hall have all been used as brands, and are each neatly represented by a small and simple device.

Cattle brand designs have been largely the produce of exuberant and untutored minds, and there would be as difficult to found any certain, well-defined sign to known rules and classifications as the free and noble wearer himself. And it may be said, in a general way, that brands are most commonly rough representations of familiar objects, monogram or rebus, with variations and combinations of these forms.

AS TO THE DOLLBABY BRAND.

Old Dad Morrison, who used to have his headquarters on Rock creek, Briscoe county, in the Texas Panhandle, found how unpredictable it is to be superior to a prevailing prejudice. He suffered the discomfort and faced the pains that wait on originality.

The brand which his triumphant fancy had achieved was a shocking, rudimentary human figure, such as infancy draws upon its slate at school about the time it can read, "This is a man."

The boys wondered and hoed in. They christened it the Dollbaby brand, and its inventor promptly reported the sale request of Dollbaby Morrison.

It was a burning, blazing, and old Dad was sad, in the storm and stress of stamping it with a red-hot iron upon the unoffending and resistant yearling, in defiance of the circle which represents a head more like a horizontal oval. From this cruelest irregularity, a miserable Dollbaby the cowboys came to call the Morrison cattle as "Old Dollbaby's children."

When science and opportunity served, they would rope and throw themselves a fellow or two, and impose themselves upon an afternoon's artistic amusement and exercise. The blank outline circle at a head would form a set of rude features, wearing an expression of the utmost surprise and despair. Wildly protesting limbs would be added to the simple parallelogram of a brand, the arms thrust frantically out, the legs on a dead run. And then, when the old man came upon his outlaws, as purposed, he would be sewed vermicular, (sic), heel!

MEXICAN BRANDS.

Spanish or Mexican brands are already upon the Arkansas. Here the spirit is never jocular, nor the forms grotesque. Instead of straight lines and angles, are beautiful sweeping curves and forms of dancing grace.

The Mexican horseman, swaggering in his silver-laden saddle, fringed and gay, and the cattle upon a ranch, and usually less great in number, are equally elegant and graceful, as would be apparent to one who upon them at mess, if the impression of the whole, set in mind, which is a valuable item for pastime, the graceful and the humorous, the dignity, the horrible, the awkward, the gay, with the commonplace, are all represented in the brands of the Lazo Lee, the Slap Jack, the Bar Circle, the Circle Dot, the Circle Bar, the Lazy Y, the Lazy S, the Lazy Bar, the Lazy Dot, the Lazy Circle, the Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Circle, the Diamond Dot, the Diamond Bar, the Diamond Y, the Diamond S, the Diamond Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Diamond, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Bar, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Dot, the Diamond Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Lazy Circle, the Diamond Lazy