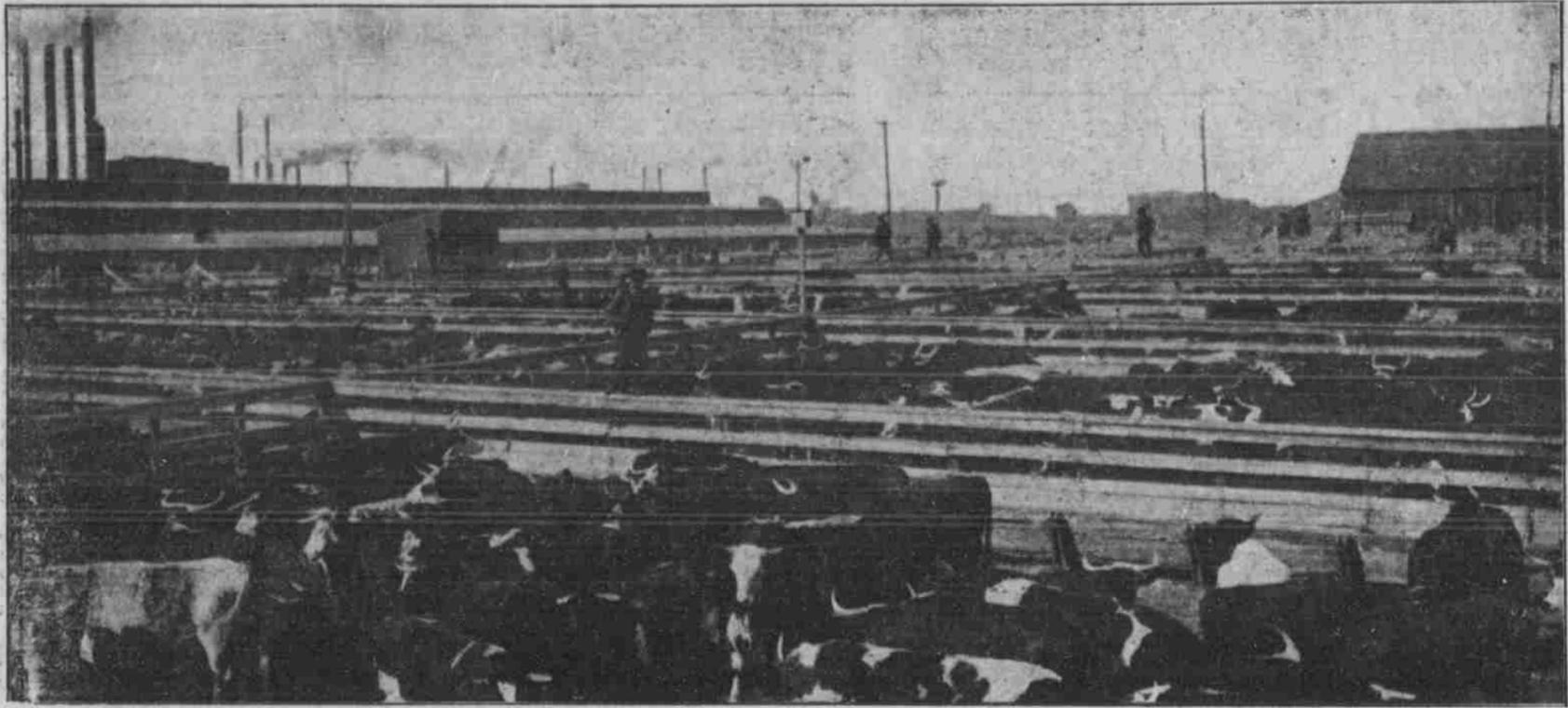


Handling Cattle at Big Markets

Pictures from Photos by a Staff Artist at South Omaha



EARLY MORNING SCENE AT THE SOUTH OMAHA STOCK YARDS.

OVER 8,000,000 cattle were sold last year at the six principal market points in the United States. This includes Chicago, Kansas City, Omaha, St. Louis, St. Joseph and Sioux City. A large proportion of these cattle were slaughtered and consumed in this country, while others were shipped abroad either alive or as dressed beef. A good many of the cattle offered are, of course, unfit for beef and are purchased by farmers, fattened and returned to market.

Few people realize the magnitude of the cattle business nor the organization required for the disposition of these 8,000,000 cattle yearly. A person who watches the constant stream of cattle pouring into any of the live stock centers cannot help, however, but marvel at the way the big packers buy them, dispose of them and make way for the next day's receipts. No matter how heavy the supply may be nor the prospects for the future, the packers keep buying, buying, buying, until it seems as though there could be no further outlet for the thousands to come.

Of course, prices fluctuate back and forth, according to the law of supply and demand, but the changes from day to day are comparatively slight, seldom being more than a dime or 15 cents per hundred pounds. Were it not for the perfection of the present organization for carrying on the beef trade the fluctuations of prices would be something terrible from the shippers' standpoint. Suppose the capacity of the packing plants at any one market was limited to about the average day's receipts and that there was no demand for more than a certain number, what would become of the shippers who had stock on sale when the receipts were excessive? The market would be simply demoralized, the cattle could not be sold and prices might fluctuate 50 cents or even \$1 per hundred from day to day. As it is, however, the packers apparently have an outlet for everything in sight. If the receipts exceed expectations prices may break a dime or so, but still the cattle are bought, slaughtered and a market found for them. Looking at it from this standpoint the packers are certainly deserving of some credit, no matter what their faults may be, for if it were not for them and the perfect way in which they have organized their business the cattle growers would have no stable market and could never estimate the price the stock would bring when ready for market. The reason why packers have such an outlet for their product is found in the fact that they have representatives all over the world. A poor demand in one section is offset by a brisk demand from another, so they are not dependent upon the conditions existing in any one locality and a few thousand cattle, more or less, affects them but little. In times of general financial depression the



"OLD-FASHIONED LONG HORNED STEER"

beef trade, of course, suffers the same as all other industries, and in fact when people begin to feel the effects of hard times they can reduce their consumption of meat about as quickly as anything else and a slump in the price of beef follows.

During the fall months the receipts of cattle at the principal market points are the largest of the year. It is at that time that western ranchmen dispose of the cattle they have grown on the western ranges. Not very many years ago the cattle from the western states were considered a pretty scrubby lot. Most of them were long horned, big boned animals with but little flesh on them, and in reality seemed to be little but skin, bones, horn and hoof. They were wild as tigers and about as dangerous to a man on foot. The cattle, however, that are coming from the western ranges today are a far different lot. Ranch owners have bred up their stock until the old-fashioned, long horned steer is getting comparatively scarce except as he is imported from Texas, and even in that state the cattle are much better bred than they were a short time ago. The majority of farmers in the corn belt now prefer to buy the western cattle for feeding purposes, as they do better than the natives.

Not only are the western cattle better bred, but they are better cared for. Most ranchmen now make some preparations for

feeding their cattle hay during the severe storms in winter. That reduces the loss and puts the cattle in much better condition for the spring, which, of course, makes them better when they arrive at the markets in the fall. It is also noticeable that they are not nearly so wild as formerly, which makes them still more valuable when sold for feeders.

One of the most interesting features of the western cattle trade is the way in which the ranchmen brand their cattle. Every ranch owner has one or more brands. No two brands are alike, and consequently when the brand is burned into the flesh of the calf his owner is able to identify him at any time. These brands are recorded the same as a deed or mortgage is recorded,

and the public has access to the records. In the states of Montana, Colorado, South Dakota and Nebraska the brands are recorded at the state capitols, while in Wyoming the records are kept at the different county court houses. Every cattle man knows not only his own brands, but all the more important ones in his section of the country. Where the cattle are running on the range at large many of them will, of course, stray away and mix in with other brands of cattle. These are known as estrays. Were it not for the brands the rightful owners would never see these cattle again, and thieves could operate unmolested.

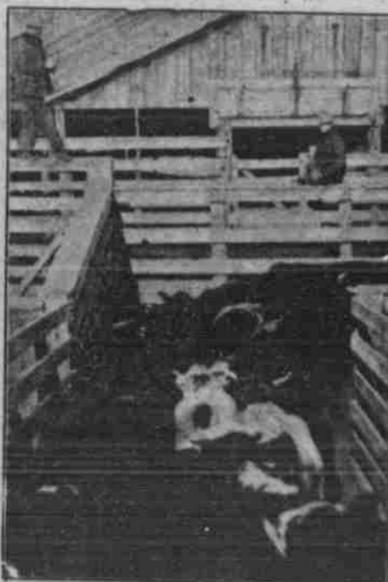
At the live stock markets the estrays always cause an immense amount of trouble

for the reason that the money is not paid to the man who ships them in, but to the original owners. The legislatures of Colorado and Montana appropriate a sum of money each session to defray the expenses of maintaining brand inspectors at the different market points. In South Dakota and Nebraska no appropriations are made, and consequently the cattle men have formed live stock growers' associations and the expense of brand inspectors is divided among the different members. In Wyoming the state defrays part of the expense and the state association stands the rest. About the same results are reached by these different methods, except that where the state stands the expense all the cattlemen receive protection, where in states like Nebraska only members of the state associations receive protection.

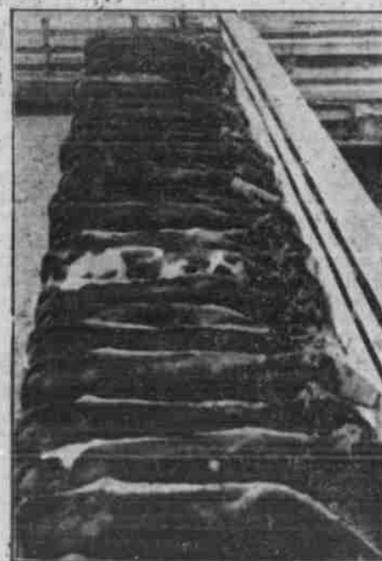
At South Omaha C. L. Talbot has charge of the inspection and represents the Wyoming, South Dakota and Nebraska associations, and also the state of Wyoming. He is assisted by M. H. Beetham, George Carley and Joe Flood. The state of Colorado is represented by W. B. Horne and Montana by R. H. Rickard. These men for years have made a business of the study of brands and as a result they know all the more important ones and many of the less important. These men inspect every bunch of cattle shipped from the above named states and the shippers are obliged to show proper ownership before the cattle can be disposed of.

Every market day the inspectors are in the saddle at daylight and not an animal is sold or weighed until they have satisfied themselves that he has not been stolen or strayed away from his rightful owner. They have books showing every recorded brand, the owner and his address. When they ride into a pen of cattle they look at the brand on every steer. If there are no estrays among them and if the railroad billing shows that they were shipped from their proper station and by their rightful owners they are passed. If, however, there are any cattle among them of different brands they must be weighed separately and the inspector instructs the commission man having the cattle in charge what he shall do with the proceeds. The inspector has the authority to have the money turned over either to the rightful owner or the secretary of the state association in which the owner lives. In this way ranchmen are saved thousands of dollars every year.

It should not be imagined that it is considered an attempt at dishonesty for a ranchman to ship in cattle that do not belong to him, for that is the easiest way to settle it, as the inspectors see to it that the rightful owner gets the proceeds. Many times a ranchman will ship in a carload of cattle and not own a single steer in the bunch. The freight then has to be



GOING DOWN INTO THE PENS FROM THE STOCK CARS.



FILLING UP BEFORE WEIGHING.