

## A CATTLEMAN'S REMINISCENCES

By A. J. SPAWN.

The first cattle brought to the Yakima valley by a white man were driven in from Klickitat county to winter, November, 1860, by Benjamin E. Snipes, Dr. D. B. Baker and a Mr. Allen. The following spring these cattle were driven to the Cariboo mines in British Columbia.

Bands of cattle were brought to the Yakima valley to winter, their destination being British Columbia. The Yakima having become a noted wintering ground, (that winter was the longest and hardest winter known before or since) about all the cattle together with thousands of Indian horses perished. The settlers in the Moxee had put up hay, therefore they suffered no serious loss.

In 1864 Elisha McDaniel came with his herd and turned them on the range opposite Mabton. He was the first large owner in Yakima, but after a time he sold the band, which had increased to many thousands, to Benjamin E. Snipes, who was after that the cattle king, not only of Yakima, but of the state of Washington. There is no doubt that he owned in 1880, 50,000 head of cattle in Yakima.

On Cold creek there reigned supreme and alone Nick McCoy, who was not a good rider, nor an expert with the rope, but notwithstanding this his unflagging energy coupled with the staying qualities of his old yellow horse put him there just the same, for his ear marks showed up on all parts of the range.

Cattle were fat the year around; in mid winter or early spring thousands of fat steers could be gathered from the range that would compare most favorably with the stall fed ones of today. Cattle could be seen grazing the white sage in the coldest weather absolutely shaking with fat.

From 1861 to 1869 our markets were the mines of British Columbia, Idaho and Montana. The annual drives would start from Yakima in the spring, occupying several months on the journey. Prices ranged at \$40. per head in Yakima and from \$75 to \$100 at the mines. Men did not do business for their health as the risk in driving was considerable from swimming streams and the lurking savage who was ever hovering on the trail.

In the early '70's Phelps and Wadleigh who were associated with W. S. Ladd of Portland, Oregon, bought and consolidated land which is now known as the Snipes ranch of Parker Bottom. They owned several thousand head of cattle, were in the butchering business in Seattle and were for ten years the largest buyers of beef cattle in Washington.

In 1869 many of the Yakima owners drove their cattle to the Kittitas valley for summer grazing. It was one of the most beautiful valleys one ever looked upon. No stock save an occasional Indian horse ever ate the tall grass; beautiful streams meandered through the valley from the mountains on the north, making it an ideal cattle heaven; and here the herds had their easy times.

In 1869 Joseph Borst, a member of the firm of Booth, Foss & Borst, butchers at Seattle, came over the Cascade mountains via Snoqualmie pass and bought steers and drove them over the mountains to Seattle.

These were much larger, fatter and better than the cattle raised on the west side of the Cascades, so the firm continued to buy all their supply in Yakima. Soon other western buyers came and a new market was opened for our beef which has remained ever since.

In 1872 the increase of cattle far exceeded the demand and prices dropped to \$18 and \$20 per head and continued low until 1875, when the eastern buyers made heavy purchases and drove them over to Wyoming, where they had just begun stocking the ranges. For a few years that trade was brisk, but the winter of '80 and '81 killed off about 60 per cent of the cattle in Eastern Oregon and Washington, which made a scarcity and placed the prices at their old mark. That winter Benjamin E. Snipes alone lost 20,000 head.

From 1875 to 1880 there were in Yakima 200,000 cattle at an average price of fifteen dollars per head, amounting to three million dollars. This was the principle occupation and people who disposed of their beef once a year were prosperous and happy.

In 1878 Portland buyers began to come, thus opening another needed market.

In 1887 the cattle business began to decline, the hard winter immediately following killed many on the ranges. Then too sheep had begun to destroy the grasses. The cattle raisers latterly did not thrive till Yakima was no longer considered a cattle country and remained so until the last two years, which the following will show: The assessed valuation of cattle for the year 1889 was \$164,431 and for sheep \$229,921, while in 1900 cattle jumped to \$235,627 and sheep decreased to \$246,290.

This condition can be accounted for from the fact that the dairy business is growing rapidly. Most of the farmers are stocking their farms with cattle of both dairy and beef breeds. There are no more large herds on the range; the grass has been destroyed by sheep grazing and cattle cannot exist now where they once flourished. The cowboy may as well sell his schapps and rope, take hold of the plow handle with both hands and go at it, for his day has gone. He will no longer shine at the round ups, his camp fire songs will be a thing of the past and his voice will no longer be heard in the land.

The alfalfa ranches must support the cattle of the future in this county; the beef farm with the best beef breeds; in that way the beef raisers will market their steers at 18 to 24 months old and will realize as much money as the 4-year-old range steers of the past. Thus the winter losses will be avoided and business much more satisfactory.

In 1867 Mr. A. Cleman brought the first sheep to Yakima and settled on Wenas. He was a man of more than ordinary ability. He was very successful and accumulated a fortune. In the early 80's a few other bands of sheep were driven into Yakima, but the owners were not successful. It remained for that hardy race of Scotchmen to make a success and demonstrate Yakima to be one of the best sheep counties on the globe. Now hundreds of thousands graze within our borders

and their owners have made great fortunes. Cattle and sheep can be raised here at a good round profit by avoiding the scrub.

We have in our county a few pure-blood cattle of the dairy and beef breeds. Mountain View Farm, owned by O. A. Fechter and Louis Janeck, of Natchez, have fine Jerseys; J. E. Shannon, of Nob Hill, Polled Durhams; Fred Brooker, of Selah, Shorthorns; A. J. Splawn, Springdale Stock Farm, Cowyche, Herefords and Polled Angus. These herds will be added to and others go into the business until this county will take high rank as a producer of pure-blood cattle.

The cattle industry will gain rapidly within the next few years. Our market for beef, mutton and dairy products could be no better, for we are at the door of Puget Sound, Alaska and the Orient. No other State is so favorably located.

On the Pacific Coast must the increase in population be much more rapid than elsewhere; therefore, I say, increase your alfalfa fields, improve your stock and you will reap your reward.

### A Big Landholder.

Probably the largest tract of land lying in one body under control of one individual is owned by W. H. Babcock, the wheat king of Eureka Flat fame. People have heard that Mr. Babcock owned thousands of acres of land, but when those thousands run into nearly thousand the amount seems enormous. Mr. Babcock farms in the neighborhood of three thousand acres on Eureka Flat, but this is a small amount compared to what he owns and partly farms in Douglass county, on the line of the Great Northern railroad.

A few years ago he purchased this land, some, 46,666 acres, which lies in the vicinity of Waterville and Trinidad, for a stock range, at from 50 cents to \$1.25 an acre. The land, to the uninitiated, looked like a barren waste and only fit for this purpose, but Mr. Babcock was under the idea that excellent wheat crops could be raised, and two years ago put in a crop, which averaged as good a yield as the land on the flat.

He was satisfied with the outlook, and made arrangements to farm an immense area lying in one body and comprising about forty-two sections.

The recent influx of home seekers from the East has caused him to change his plans somewhat, and he has decided to dispose of some of his holdings in order that the country thereabouts may be developed. Three townships have been placed on the market and several sections have been disposed of so far. One feature of the sales is that a bona fide settler must be the purchaser. This has had the desired effect of shutting out the professional speculator, and is filling up the country with a class of people who will actually farm and develop the country.

Mr. Babcock was seen by a Walla Walla Statesman reporter in regard to the sale of his land in that section, and the amount he owned. He said: "Yes, I own a few acres in that neighborhood. I guess it would take you a day or two to 'hoof it over,'" and he smiled at the thought of a pencil pusher plodding his way over forty or fifty thousand acres of ground.

"I have some three townships on the market, and the agent reports a sale every day or so.

"I will sell only to actual settlers,

the idea being to get the country settled up as soon as possible.

"There is some excellent land in that section, and just as good yields can be obtained as on the flat. The prices range from \$4 to \$8 per acre. One half must be paid down and the balance in three yearly payments, drawing 6 per cent interest."

When asked about the water supply Mr. Babcock replied: "I have two wells on each end of my land that furnish plenty of water, and they were obtained with less trouble than the one on my Eureka Flat farm."

When asked what he was going to do with the balance of his land in that section he smiled one of his rare smiles and said nothing.

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