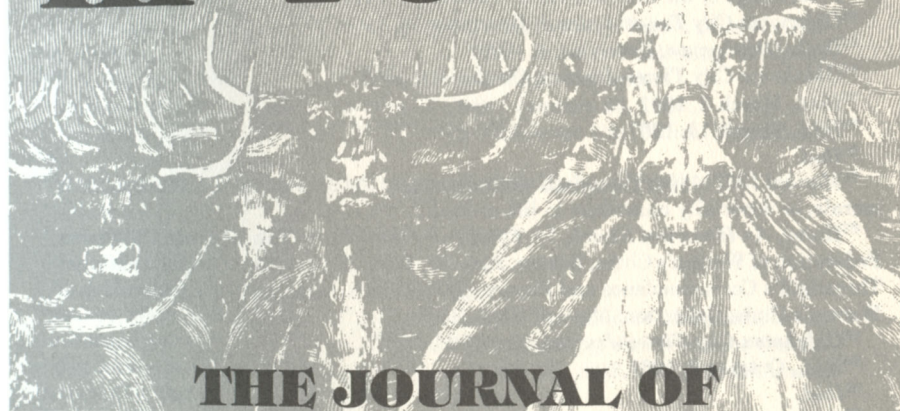


Up the Trail in '76



DETAIL FROM REMINGTON ILLUSTRATION

THE JOURNAL OF LEWIS WARREN NEATHERLIN

Edited by Leo Kelley

The year 1876 was remarkable for its historic events. The centennial celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence promoted a carnival-like atmosphere. Alexander Graham Bell exhibited his eccentric harmonic telegraph at the exposition in Philadelphia. General George Armstrong Custer and his subordinates were annihilated near the Little Big Horn River. And Wyatt Earp and "Bat" Masterson colorfully served as peace officers at Dodge City, Kansas. That eventful year also marked the first systematic cattle drives up the Great Western Cattle Trail.¹

At the close of the Civil War, Southwest Texas seemed to be dotted with longhorn cattle worth very little in the sparsely populated region. Markets for the cattle existed, especially in the eastern United States, while the government provided a steady market to feed soldiers and supply the Indian reservations. The demand for the Texas cattle was there; the problem was transporting beef-on-the-hoof to the markets. The railroads offered part of the solution, but the closest connections were in Kansas. To reach those railheads, the Texas cattle-trailing industry was born.²

At first, cattle were driven north on the old Texas Road, also called the Shawnee Trail. But the fertile land in eastern Kansas was quickly homesteaded by individuals seeking the opportunity to fulfill their dreams, causing conflicts between unruly longhorns and farmers. Compounding the problem was tick fever. The settlers despised the longhorn stock, which carried ticks that infected their native cattle with the fatal disease. The only alternative for the cattlemen was to veer their herds westward onto what was eventually called the Chisholm Trail. Meanwhile, the Sante Fe Railroad expanded westward and established Dodge City, Kansas, in 1872. Dodge quickly became the "unofficial" capital for the many buffalo hunters roaming that area of the Great Plains.³ Some cattlemen quickly foresaw a trail to Dodge, far to the west of existing settlements, that would traverse the short-grass country of present-day western Oklahoma.

One obstacle was the war-like activities of the Kiowas and Comanches, who remained a realistic deterrent to drives through their territory until 1875, when Quanah Parker and his Comanche band became the last hostile group to surrender and accept reservation life. This opened what would be called the Western Trail. In the early

¹ For an excellent account of the major cattle trails used by drovers see Jimmy M. Skaggs, "Cattle Trails in Oklahoma," a chapter in *Ranch and Range in Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1978), 7-17; Jimmy M. Skaggs, "Northwest Across the Plains: The Western Cattle Trail," *The Great Plains Journal*, 12 (1972), 65-66; H. S. Tennant, "The Two Cattle Trails," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 14 (March, 1936), 84-122; Harry Sinclair Drago, *Great American Cattle Trails* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1965), 251-252.

² Edward E. Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 10-14; Edwin C. McReynolds, *Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 251-252.

³ Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 27; Angie Debo, *The Cowman's Southwest* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 26-27; E. Douglas Branch, *The Hunting of the Buffalo* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 199; Wayne Gard, *The Great Buffalo Hunt* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1959), 101-111.

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spring of 1876, the first herds to travel the Western Trail as an alternate passageway converged in southern Texas.

An unassuming, Confederate veteran named Lewis Warren Neatherlin was one of the trail drivers who accepted the challenge of blazing this new trail. Thousands of individuals "ate the dust" of the trail, but Neatherlin was unique because he recorded his thoughts each day in his journal. It is remarkable that this journal was only recently uncovered in an old, dusty trunk near Dunkin, New Mexico, by Neatherlin's granddaughter, Opal Lee.

Lewis Neatherlin was born in Hinds County, Mississippi in 1833. His parents, Soloman and Elizabeth Neatherlin, relocated their family to Frio County, Texas, in 1850. It was also in this locale that Neatherlin's cousin, John H. Slaughter, maintained a large ranching operation. Slaughter gained fame as a Confederate soldier, Texas Ranger, cattle rancher, and sheriff of Tombstone, Arizona.⁴

In 1876 Slaughter prepared to drive his cattle to Dodge City and beyond. The longhorns were so numerous that three different herds were formed. Neatherlin was delegated the responsibility of the entire operation.⁵ The duties thrust upon him were demanding. Neatherlin, however, was an experienced cowman and had battled hostile Indians beginning with his youthful Texas days. The previous year he had "bossed" a herd to Kansas over the Chisholm Trail. His drovers had been arrested for trailing their cattle over private property. Neatherlin's affiliation with the Masonic Lodge somehow secured their release. This incident was possibly the deciding factor in Slaughter's daring decision to explore the new Western Trail.

Volumes have been produced which glorify the majestic cattle barons, but the vast majority of the men who actually supervised the herds north have long been forgotten. The journal of Lewis Warren Neatherlin relates a simple yet revealing story. It relives his crossing

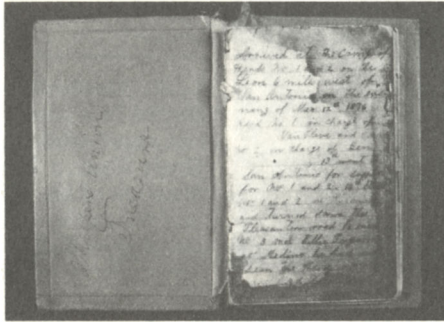
⁴ For an excellent account of the life of John H. Slaughter see Allen A. Erwin, *The Southwest of John H. Slaughter* (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1965). Also, Odie B. Faulk, *Arizona: A Short History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 47, 177.

⁵ It is evident that Neatherlin was a competent and experienced trail boss by the trust placed in him by John Slaughter. He was to supervise three herds—approximately 9,000 longhorns. Ramon F. Adams in *Western Words: A Dictionary of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), on page 329, states, "A trail boss . . . had to know men and cattle; he had to be aggressive, quick to handle an emergency, and resourceful. It is said that a good trail boss fed his hands out of his herd, lost a few en route, and yet got to his destination with more cattle than he had when the owner counted them out as they left the home range."

of the Red River two years prior to the opening of the famed Doan's Store. It tells of buffalo hunters, horse thieves, thirsty cattle, raging streams, and disgruntled Indians. This personal account also provides a look at the loneliness suffered by the cowboys while on the trail.

The trials and tribulations encountered by Lewis Neatherlin and his men on their drive in 1876 are chronicled in his modest journal. Each evening he reserved a few minutes to record the day's events. It is fortunate for us that one-hundred and twelve years later we can "go up the trail" with this remarkable man.

Punctuation has been added for the convenience of the reader.



Journal of Lewis Warren Neatherlin

March 12–July 17, 1876

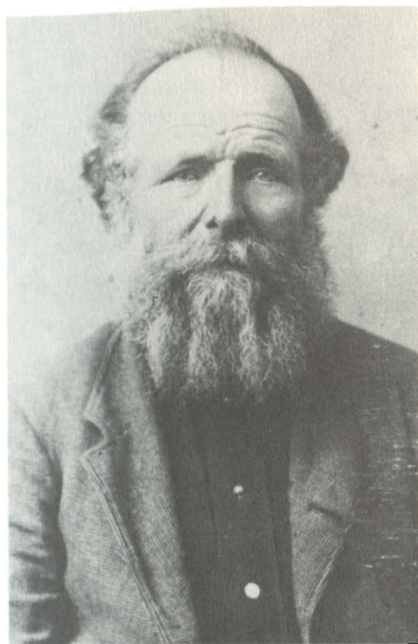
March 12: Arrived at the camp of herds no. 1 and 2 on the Leon [River], 6 miles west of San Antonio, on the evening of Mar. 12th, 1876. Herd no. 1 in charge of van Cleve and no. 2 in charge of Ben.⁶

March 13: Went to San Antonio for supplies for nos. 1 and 2.

March 14: Started nos. 1 and 2 in the country and turned down the [North] Pleasanton Road to meet [herd] no. 3. [Met] Billie Ferguson at Medina. He had not seen the herd. My pony very tired. Turned up the Leon, 2 miles on. Stayed all night with Dr. Jillispie. Found the doctor and ladies very kind. No charges.

⁶ Probably Benjamin Slaughter, father of John H. Slaughter. The elder Slaughter, a successful cattleman, often would help drive cattle from their south Texas ranch to San Antonio, and then allow the younger men to trail the herd north. See Erwin, *The Southwest of John H. Slaughter*, 30–36; J. Marvin Hunter, comp. and ed., *The Trail Drivers of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 3rd ed., 608.

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L. W. Neatherlin recorded his activities in a pocket journal (previous page) while trailing on the Great Western Trail (Courtesy Museum of the Western Prairie and the author) (Map courtesy of Dr. Robert Kelly).

March 15: Continued down the N.P. Road to meet no. 3. Met it 3 miles below Medina in charge of Sam Kellogg. Only six hands and they want to quit. Had hard work to get to flag pond where we camped.

March 16: Went to San Antonio for supplies and men. Got 5 men. Come back and met the herd at 6 Mile Branch. One of the men that quit shot a Mexican hand in camp at or a little before dark.⁷ Another Mexican ran off leaving his own horse and saddle. Sent the wounded man to town. The cook borrowed a horse and saddle and went to town. Did not return.

March 17: No. 3 lay over on Six Mile [Branch]. I went to town in the evening and bought 2 horses. The cook not come yet.

March 18: No. 3 moved on across Castroville Road. One of the new men quit this morning. The cook come in [and had] been on a drunk. I went to town for another cook, but did not get one. All [are] afraid because the Mexican was shot in the camp.

⁷ The Mexican cowhands were considered to be excellent at their craft and they worked for meager wages. Slaughter, as well as a majority of the large-scale cattlemen, used a large number of Mexican hands. See Jasper Lauderdale, "Reminiscences of the Trail," in Hunter, *The Trail Drivers of Texas*, 406.



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March 19: A rain this morning at daybreak. The cattle drifted. Took us until one o'clock to get them together. I went to town to meet Slaughter.⁸ He was not there. I went to Barnhart's and stayed all night, being afraid of measles to stay in town all night. Cold norther at sundown.

March 20: Very cold this morning. Went to town to meet [John Horton] Slaughter. He was not there. I started after dinner to look at some horses. Met Slaughter as I started out. Went on to the horses. Looked at 2 bunches [on the way] back and stayed all night in town.

March 21: Sent out for one bunch of the horses to meet me at San Padre Creek. Bought 33 head at \$21 per head. Come back to town and turned 11 head to Sam Kellogg. Drove the remaining 22 to van Cleve's camp, where I stayed all night.

March 22: Cut out 30 of the poorest horses from nos. 1 and 2 to send back. Threw nos. 1 and 2 together and left it in charge of van Cleve, which will be no. 1, and put no. 3 [with] 2. Drove the old horses back to town and turned them over to a man employed for the purpose. Met Kellogg in town. Bought leggins and overcoats for his men.⁹ J. W. Caie, who is in charge of now no. 3, come in this evening, and I bought him a wagon, 1 work horse, supplies and hired him a cook, and sent him out.

March 23: Went to the bank with Slaughter where he made arrangements for me to draw money at Fort Griffin to buy supplies.¹⁰ The men from old no. 2 come in and I paid them off. Caie came in and I hired him a man. He went out. Begins to rain at dark. Went to the hotel and got a bed. Caie come in at midnight and reported his herd all gone.

⁸ Unlike most successful cattle ranchers, John Slaughter often traveled up the trail with his herds. He required his trail bosses to maintain a record of the herds, the different brands and the number of cattle belonging to other ranchers. James H. Cook, *Fifty Years on the Old Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 2nd ed., 28.

⁹ Neatherlin possibly purchased his men's equipment at the prominent businesses of the kind in San Antonio. These included Rice's Saddlery and Harness Shop and Langholtz's Saddlery Shop. See Vinton L. James, "Old Times in San Antonio," *Frontier Times*, 6 (September, 1939), 489-492.

¹⁰ It was a common practice for banks to issue due bills which were payable on demand. Neatherlin was able to secure credit on Slaughter's name in most places. See Frederick W. Rathjen, *The Texas Panhandle Frontier* (Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1975), 2nd ed., 166-167, for an account of the activities at Fort Griffin during this time.



John Horton Slaughter, a cattle baron and Neath-erlin's cousin, later became a sheriff in Tombstone, Arizona (Courtesy Museum of the Western Prairie).

March 24: Started out to no. 3 at daylight. Helped round up til noon. Come to town to send no. 2 a cook. Sent it out a little before night, and rested the balance of the evening.

March 25: Bought dry goods for no. 3 and went round after a bill of all that I had bought since I [had] taken charge of the herds, and left town on hunt of no. 1 at 3 o'clock in the evening. Traveled 8 miles. My pony give out and I stayed all night with an old Dutchman. He treated me clever in his way. Slept on a wagon-sheet by the cookstove. Being very tired, I slept soundly.

March 26: Went on and found no. 1 on the Salado about 10 in the morning. The boss [Slaughter] about to get in trouble about having cattle in [our herd] that did not belong to him.¹¹ I compromised with them by hiring one of their party to go with the herds [to] keep their

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cattle out. Started back to meet no. 2. Failed to meet it where I thought I would, and failing to get to stay at a house, I slept in the prairie without fire, grub or blankets, except my saddle blanket, but being very tired, I rested well.

March 27: Went on down the country and met no. 2 about 6 miles from town. Went on with it and camped at the same place where I stayed last night. Cattle all right but horses very poor.

March 28: Rounded up no. 2 this morning and cut out all strays. Took until 10 o'clock. Went to town, 10 miles distant, to see Shook about no. 1 trouble.¹² Seen him and come out and overtaken no. 3, 7 miles from town. Camped all night with it.

March 29: Rounded up no. 3 and cut out the strays. Went on up the road and met 2 men from no. 2. Just turned off and settled with them [when we] overtaken no. 2. Give it some instructions, it being on the march. Went to no. 1 where it was camped in the Salado Cut. Cut all strays out of it and prepared to start it on in the morning. This is the first day I have seen all the herds in one day. Camped with no. 1.

March 30: Started no. 1 on the right-hand Boerne Road and turned across to the other road to meet no. 3. Went about 1 mile, found 2 cows and 1 two-year-old and drove them back to the herd. Went back to the other road and went back toward town, but did not meet it. Went to where it [no. 3] stayed all night and found I had fell in behind it. Took



As seen through Neatherlin's journal, trailing cattle was hard work filled with a variety of dangers (Courtesy Western History Collections).

¹¹ The inclusion of stray cattle in the trail herds led to many disagreements.

¹² Neatherlin had a problem with one of his trail bosses, J. W. Caie, but replaced him very gently, securing for him transportation back to Texas. Shook could have referred to Slaughter.

back [road] toward Boerne and met a cow half after two. Drove her back to overtake no. 3 but it being off the road to graze, I missed it and went on til I overtaken no. 2 in 1 mile of Boerne, where we camped.

March 31: Went to Boerne this morning to get the inspector to come out and look at no. 2.¹³ All the Dutch turned out in mass; men, women and children. Some on foot and some on horseback. We crossed the Cibolo without any trouble, or without them finding anything in the herd. Went 3 miles out and stopped for the day. I eat dinner and turned back to meet no. 3 on the left-hand road. It did not travel yesterday and I found it on the Leon, 8 miles back. Stayed with it all night. Had a storm and did not sleep but very little.¹⁴

April 1: No. 3 drifted on the mountain. Lost some cattle. The boss said he would stay till noon and hunt [lost cattle]. I left it early and went to no. 1 on the right-hand road, 4 miles off. Found them all right [and] we started. Crossed the Cibolo [River]. Good turnout of Dutch, but not so many as yesterday. Got over all right. Passed the inspection. No damages, as we had no strays. Camped 2 miles north of Boerne.

April 2: Went back to meet no. 3. Met it at the crossing [at] Cibolo. We did not have as good a turnout of Dutch as yesterday, it being Sunday. Some had to go to church; some to the beer saloons and some a fishing. The herd got to Parson Potter's,¹⁵ four miles north of Boerne, where we camped.

April 3: Made arrangements for Mr. Caie to go back [home]. Went to town and I bought him a horse on a trade with the citizens for horses. Met J. M. Neatherlin¹⁶ and made arrangements with him to take

¹³ In an attempt to prevent the practice of trailing out lost or stolen cattle, the Texas legislature in 1870 authorized the governor to appoint cattle inspectors for counties that required them. This position was not provided with a salary so it was often held by the local sheriff or other government official. See Baylis John Fletcher, *Up the Trail in '79* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 28; Manfred R. Wolfenstine, *The Manual of Brands and Marks* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 283.

¹⁴ Weather was a constant concern on the trail, especially lightning, which often caused stampedes. See Charles Goodnight, "Managing a Trail Herd in the Early Days," *Frontier Times*, 6 (March, 1929), 251-252; T. J. Burkett, "On the Fort Worth and Dodge City Trail," in Hunter, *The Trail Drivers of Texas*, 929; Will Gay, "Open Range Sketches," *Frontier Times*, 14 (February, 1937), 216-217.

¹⁵ Andrew Jackson Potter's name was a household word in Texas during the 1870s. He was a Methodist preacher who was known as a fierce Indian fighter. Potter had delivered many sermons in Frio County, and knew the Slaughters and Neatherlins well. See Erwin, *The Southwest of John H. Slaughter*, 71; J. Warren Hunter, "Jack Potter: The Fighting Parson," *The Trail Drivers of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 3rd ed., 278-287.

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charge of no. 3. Went back to the herd to get Potter to vouch for my order on Slaughter for the horses. He did so [and I] come back to town in the afternoon to get the horses. Bought 8 head. Drove them to camp of no. 3 just at night. A man waiting for me to swap horses. I swapped a poor one for a fat one.

April 4: Went on up the road to overtake nos. 1 and 2. A poor, dry, hilly country. Not good land. Two nice running creeks between Boerne and Comfort. Overtaken nos. 1 and 2 near together, 2 miles below Comfort. Helped them across the Guadalupe and through the town, and camped them 3 miles above Comfort. Grass very poor.

April 5: A very cold norther blew up at 4 o'clock this morning. We made a 9-miles drive with nos. 1 and 2 and camped on Silver Creek. Grass a little better than last night. Swapped horses. Gave 2 for 1.

April 6: Grazed 2½ miles to the next creek, and stopped to wait for no. 3. I went to Kerrville this evening. Received a letter from home.¹⁷ The grass very poor here, indeed.

April 7: [All three] herds passed through Kerrville. Nos. 1 and 2 in the forenoon, and no. 3 in the afternoon, and all camp[ed] in one mile of each other on Goat Creek, 3 miles above town.

April 8: The [Kerrville] citizens stopped all the herds and cut out strays, or their own cattle, as they term it.¹⁸ Did not get through till 2 o'clock, at which time we started up the mountain. Nos. 1 and 2 making the upland, and 4 miles distant from noon, but no. 3 was overtaken by night and camped on the side of the mountain, but made out very well until morning. Two horses got down today and could not be got up, and was left on the road.

April 9: I went and looked around no. 3's old camp in the rough-lands and found seven good cows and drove them to the herd. We made

¹⁶ James Mabry Neatherlin was a younger brother to Lewis. He was born February 3, 1837. James Neatherlin married Susan Savannah Clinton, sister to brother Lewis's wife. See *U.S. Census of Walker County, Texas* (1850). James, also known as Jim, had been selected by an association of trail drivers which had met at San Antonio. He was asked to perfect a route through the settlements north of San Antonio which were located in Bexar, Kendall, and Kerr Counties. Further north the area was very sparsely populated. For a full account see Jack Potter, *Cattle Trails of the Old West* (Clayton, New Mexico: Laura R. Krehbiel, 1935), 17-19.

¹⁷ This letter was undoubtedly from Mary Elizabeth Neatherlin, whom Lewis had wed twenty-two years earlier near Belmont, Texas. They later celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 1904 at Carlsbad, New Mexico. *Argus*, Carlsbad, New Mexico, July 11, 1975; *Neatherlin Family History*, compiled by J. A. Fallin, located in the archives at the Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma.

¹⁸ The trail drivers resented these delays, but just as they accepted the hazards of their profession, they followed the "unwritten" laws of the trail.

about a 7-miles drive and camped on the head of the Perdenales' high, rolling country. Good grass. No water for stock.

April 10: Made 9-miles drive before reaching water. Grazed South Fork of James River. Very rough, bushy and rocky. Several cows left in river. Could not get [them] out. Camped on the hills, 1 mile from the river.

April 11: I went back this morning and traded 13 giveout cattle for a Winchester gun. They could not get up. Sold 2 cows with young calves for \$18. Traded 2 cows with young calves for a horse. Had to drive 6 miles to make a watering on James River. Very bad watering. Lost other cattle in the bog. Left a lame horse with J. H. Baxter on the South Fork of James River. The lame horse gave out late this evening. We camped 1 mile from Taylor's Ranch on James River.

April 12: I went to Creed Taylor's Ranch¹⁹ and asked his advice about leaving the trail. He thought it best to do so and went to show us the way, going about 4 miles with us and giving us the course. We camped after making a 6-miles drive on some high prairie hills or mountains. Fine grass but no water.

April 13: Made a ten-miles drive today, going down the mountain into the Llano Valley, but no. 2 did not reach the water and left without grazing in the valley.

April 14: Did not drive today. Lay over to rest and graze the cattle. Lost five horses last night. I think they are stolen.²⁰

April 15: We crossed the Llano today. No. 2, taking the lead, reaching the Big Saline, where it camped, 7 miles from Llano, but nos. 1 and 3 did not make more than 5 miles. The five horses not found yet. Swapped a poor horse and cow & calf for a fat horse.

April 16: No. 2 made 7 miles today, reaching the divide between the Llano and San Saba, but nos. 1 and 3 are still behind on the Little Saline. The lost horses not yet found, although I have offered a reward of 5 cows and calves.

April 17: Nos. 2 and 3 crossed the San Saba today, making about 9

¹⁹ Captain Creed Taylor was recognized as a hero by many fellow Texans for his bravery in the Mexican War, and was known throughout the southwestern United States. He was related to General Zachary Taylor and was the first settler of Kimble County, Texas. J. Marvin Hunter, "A Hero of Texas Independence," *Frontier Times*, 5 (September, 1928), 490-493; "Creed Taylor was an Early Texas Ranger," *Frontier Times*, 15 (November, 1937), 77-81.

²⁰ For additional information on the horse-stealing problem in that area see E. C. Abbott and Helena Huntington Smith, *We Pointed Them North* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 20; Carl Coke Rister, *Fort Griffin on the Texas Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 151-156; *Denton Daily News*, June 4, 1876.

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A good cow pony was essential for success on the trail. Large remudas usually accompanied the herds (Courtesy Western History Collections).

miles for no. 2 and 11 [miles] for no. 3. Camped in a nice valley, ½ mile north of San Saba, but no. 1 is some 3 miles behind. We are crossing the San Saba at what is called Peg Leg. Fine grass and plenty of prairie dogs.

April 18: I went to Manardville²¹ today after supplies. I found it about eleven miles up the San Saba River. Seen some nice valleys but the most of the country I do not like. No. 1 got in about 12 o'clock today. A severe drought on San Saba.

April 19: Nos. 2 and 3 pulled out after watering in the river, leaving the river after dinner and drove some 5 miles. The grass very short owing to a burn last fall and the drought on hand now. No. 1 will leave the river tomorrow about noon. High, dry south wind yesterday and today.

April 20: Nos. 2 and 3 made a 7-miles drive today, reaching the South Brady Creek. No. 1 stayed where nos. 2 and 3 stayed last night.

April 21: I received a note this morning at 6 o'clock from one of the Ellison and Dewees' bosses at Fort McKavitt stating that the inspector had cut some of my cattle out of their herd.²² In 30 minutes I

²¹ Known today as Manard.

²² For an account of Fort McKavitt see J. Marvin Hunter, "Fort McKavitt Has Interesting History," *Frontier Times*, 8 (November, 1930), 58–60; Colonel C. C. Smith, "Old Military Posts in the Southwest," *Frontier Times*, 7 (June, 1930), 385; "Fort McKavitt was a Frontier Post," *Frontier Times*, 15 (June, 1938), 401–402.

was on the way to that place, it 40 or 45 miles distant, as I was at the camp of no. 3, who is now in the lead. Camped 6 miles below the fort, with but little to eat and my saddle blanket for a bed.

April 22: Reached the fort and found my cattle advertised for sale. Went to the ring-head and proved the cattle and sold out to them for about half-price as I knew of no herd near to put them in. We bought some provisions and started back for the herds at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and made about 12 miles. Mr. Pond's²³ horse failing, we stopped a little before sundown.

April 23: We continued our journey down the San Saba Valley. Seen some fine productive lands and some very fine running creeks and springs, with beautiful groves of pecan and other timber, but useful timber very scarce. We reached Manardville at 9:30, and having some letters to write, we did not get off till 11:20. We took dinner 5 miles below town, and crossing the river, we took our course for the herds through the woods and camped on a small creek an hour before sundown, where we found fine grass for our tired horses, having made 30 or 35 miles. Warmest I have been.

April 24: At sunrise we were in the saddle and continued a northeast direction about 14 miles where we struck the trail of the herds. About 2 miles further on we found a cow with a young calf. We killed the calf,²⁴ and drove the cow on some 6 miles and lost the trail. Leaving the other 2 men with the cow, I turned to the left to look for the trail, and found it 1½ miles to our left, and in it I found 2 other cows, and being hid from the other men by a ridge, I commenced to drive the cows toward them, and in running to keep them together, my horse put his foot in a prairie dog's hole and turned over with me, but I out-turned him and come out in the lead.²⁵ We drove the 3 cows some 4 miles further and found a yearling. About one mile further we found water and stopped for dinner, and drove to herd no. 1 an hour before sundown, some 8 miles further. Fine grass. Indications of a storm tonight. No. 1 got its wagon broke down on yesterday.

April 25: Mr. Pond and the other man that went with us to McKavitt

²³ Mr. Pond was apparently along to familiarize himself with the new trail, and possibly trailed cattle for Slaughter at a future time.

²⁴ This was a common practice when the trail herds contained cows. The trail bosses often sold cow and calf when it was handy; the alternative was to mercifully dispose of the newborn, and continue herding the mother north.

²⁵ For additional reading on the activities of the prairie dog see J. Evetts Haley, *Charles Goodnight: Cowman and Plainsman* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), 2nd ed., 427; Debo, *The Cowman's Southwest*, 35-36.

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(he being one of the no. 3 hands) and myself set out this morning to overtake the other 2 herds, not having heard from them since I left them 4 days ago. There being no road and the country very broken and hilly, the two herds ahead left but little trail and we lost it and struck the Colorado too low down. Turned up and found a good crossing 4 miles above where we struck the river, but no news from the other 2 herds. Mr. Pond went back to meet no. 1 and pilot it to the ford we found, while the other man and myself went on up the river in search of the trail of the other 2 herds. Six miles further up we found where they had crossed. One on the 23rd and the other on 24th. I started the man from no. 3 on the trail and I went on up the river in search of wagon for no. 1. I had gone about 3 miles when no. 3's man called to me from the other side and said his horse had failed. I called him over to me and not finding any wagon, we turned on the river and stopped all night at a house on the trail.²⁶

April 26: I again started no. 3's man on this morning. I turned back to meet no. 1, but soon found that it had crossed yesterday evening at the lower crossing. Taking the trail I come up with it at 11 o'clock just as it stopped for dinner, some 8 miles from the river. I look upon this as being very poor country. Camped on some creek, 12 miles from the Colorado.

April 27: We started this morning but did not get more than a mile before the wagon broke down. I started out to swap for another and after riding till 3 in the evening, I swapped for one but very little better, but had 2 axles. I give 2 cows to boot. We did not make more than 2 miles. Still dry but indications of rain.

April 28: No rain last night but a great deal of thunder and lightning. I sold 20 lame yearlings this morning. Swapped a cow & calf for a three-year-old steer. Two men ran a buffalo [within] 300 yards of the herd and killed it.²⁷ We looked at it and drove on. After dinner I saddled my horse and started to overtake the other 2 herds. Rode some 15 miles and overtaken them in 3 miles of Camp Colorado,²⁸ where we camped for the night. Plenty of grass and water.

²⁶ Scores of cattle-trailers recalled in late years the hospitality provided when they were cold and lonely on the trail.

²⁷ In 1877 a herd of approximately 40,000 buffalo was reported on the North Canadian near Fort Supply. See Arrell Morgan Gibson, *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 2nd ed., 168.

²⁸ Camp Colorado was located in Coleman County, approximately twelve miles east of Coleman. It had been established in 1856 by Major Earl Van Dorn. Don H. Biggers, "Five Forts on the Texas Frontier," *Frontier Times*, 18 (June, 1941), 405.

April 29: Went to the store at Camp Colorado to get provisions for nos. 2 and 3. Plenty of flour but no bacon. None in the country. Crossed Jim Ned Creek. Got dinner with no. 3 and turned back to meet no. 1. Met it some 10 miles back. Camped for the night. It had a heavy shower on it last night.

April 30: Mounted my horse this morning and rode on some 4 or 5 miles. Stopped to write some letters and wait for the herd to come up. We crossed Hoard's and Jim Ned Creeks today and camped 3 miles northwest of the post. Found a horse dead on the road out of no. 2.

May 1: A brisk norther come up this morning. Crossed Pecan Bayou at noon. We made a 10-miles drive and camped on the ground where the other 2 herds camped last night.

May 2: The norther blew all night and blows this morning with more violence than ever. Blew all day. We made some 12 miles today, crossing the divide between the Colorado and the Brazos. A belt of scrubby, post oak timber. Some 4 miles through it on the divide, south side; black, waxy land and the north side, sand.

May 3: I left no. 1 this morning to overtake the other 2 herds. Traveled over a broken, hilly country. Very rocky in places. Crossed Deep Creek and overtaken the other herds on Hubbard's Creek. After riding about 18 miles, crossed it and rose the hill onto a beautiful prairie. Fine grass. The creek valley is similar to the Cibola at home. Camped on the prairie, 23 miles south of Fort Griffin.²⁹

May 4: I left the herds this morning and went to Griffin. Found everything all right. Met Ellison there who said he would let me have all the supplies I needed. Returned to Field's camp, 6 miles from town on Foil Creek and stopped for the night.

May 5: Went down the road and met the 2 foremost herds. Found them out of meat. Went back to town and carried some out on a horse to their camps, 4 miles. No. 1 not come up yet.

May 6: Met no. 1 on Foil Creek. Counted all the herds and put the 3 in 2 herds.

May 7: Sent one boss and 5 men back. Went to town. Swapped wagon after a great deal of trouble trying. Bought supplies and made camp, 3 miles west of Griffin, just at night.

²⁹ Fort Griffin was established in 1867 and abandoned two years after Neatherlin ventured through the area. General Sherman once remarked after arriving at Fort Griffin, "If I owned Texas and hell, I'd rent Texas and live in hell." See Rister, *Fort Griffin on the Texas Frontier*, 160; "Tells of Old Fort Griffin," *Frontier Times*, 5 (September, 1928), 485; Joseph H. Toulouse and James R. Toulouse, *Pioneer Posts of Texas* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1936), 33-45.

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May 8: Started the herds on and went to the town to get the bill of yesterday's purchases and settle up. Found one man [drover] in town who had lost his horse and wanted ten dollars. Did not get it. Also, another was in town last night and has not come out yet. Both rode horses in. I overtaken the herds as they were crossing the Clear Fork of Brazos. We made 10 miles today.

May 9: The 2 men not come yet. I went back to hunt them, or rather, the horses. Met them coming. One asked me to go to town and redeem his pistol. He, having been a good hand, I did so. It took ten dollars to get it.³⁰ I returned and overtaken the herds at 4 in the evening. Made 9 or 10 miles. Good grass but very rocky and hilly.

May 10: Drove to Elm Creek 2 miles and stopped. Ellison cut van Cleve's herd. Met T. P. Thompson who was at work for Ellison and Dewees.³¹

May 11: Rounded up the other herd this morning and cut it. Thompson gave me a receipt for all that was cut out. We drove some 4 or 5 miles in the afternoon. Been plenty of rain here about 1 or 2 weeks ago. None on us yet. Got fine grass and plenty of water in all the small creeks, which are plentiful in number.

May 12: I will here remark that [we] have had no road since leaving Elm Creek yesterday morning. We crossed the Brazos today, 12 miles above Round Timbers. The grass very fine. Plenty of mesquite wood for the last week or ten days. The trail not very plain.

May 13: Crossed Deep Creek and the headwaters of Little Wichita. Fine grass and plenty of wood and water. Drove some 10 miles. Indications of rain this evening.

May 14: Crossed the Big Wichita River. After crossing had some 5 or 6 miles of hilly salt-land, which was very difficult to drive over [as] every animal [wanted] to stop and lick or eat the salty dirt and weeds.³² A little rain just at dark. A man taken sick this morning.

May 15: Crossed what is called Beaver Creek. Had considerable trouble in getting the wagons over. Had to let them down the bank

³⁰ Trouble was always awaiting incoming drovers at the wild "cowtowns." The civilian settlement near Fort Griffin, known as the "Flat," was especially bad. Fletcher, *Up the Trail in '79*, 27; Rister, *Fort Griffin on the Texas Frontier*, 132-160. It was a violation of the law to carry pistols in selected Texas counties.

³¹ John Dewees and James Ellison were two of the most successful cattle-trailing contractors. Jimmy M. Skaggs, "Hip Pocket Businessmen: The Cattle-Trailing Contractors," *The Great Plains Journal*, 10 (Fall, 1970), 1-10; Drago, *Great American Cattle Trails*, 100; Wayne Gard, "Retracing the Chisholm Trail," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 60 (July, 1956), 64.

³² Animals on these long stints were prone to suffer salt deficiency.

UP THE TRAIL

and across the run by hand. The water and land of said creek very red. In fact, everything has been red since we left the San Saba, but gets a little more red each day. The sick man no better.

May 16: Found buffalo today. I ran after and shot at one but did not get him. Brother Jim killed one. Crossed a large, sandy, brackish creek. Reached Pease River. One herd crossed but the other did not. We had a rain and hail storm at 4 o'clock and a very heavy rain at sunset.

May 17: Still raining this morning. The other herd got over without



Doan's Crossing, in this modern view looking north, probably looks much as it did in 1876 . . . "very wide and sandy and [with] very little water" (Courtesy the author).

any trouble. The sick man is better. The ground being very wet and heavy, we made a short drive, and camped in the valley of the Red River. The inspector overtaken us after we camped.

May 18: After a long talk with the inspector, I give him a due bill and we crossed the Red River.³³ Very wide and sandy but very little water. We took dinner on the bank of the North Fork of Red River, 2 miles from where we crossed the main river. The trail lay on the west side of the North Fork all the afternoon, and we camped near it tonight.³⁴

³³ Crossed into Oklahoma at a spot that would later be known throughout the region as Doan's Crossing. Herd bosses were fined by brand inspectors for each animal not possessing the proper road brand. J. Frank Dobie, *The Longhorns* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 120; Andy Adams, *The Log of a Cowboy* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 2nd ed., 120-121.



Neatherlin's herds passed through a gap between Soldier Mountain (left) and Tepee Mountain (right) in present-day Jackson County (Courtesy Museum of the Western Prairie).

May 19: The trail still lies west of the river and we are on what is called the panhandle of Texas.³⁵ The Wichita Mountains lie east and in front of us. Have been in sight of them 2½ days. No timber in sight, except a small skirting of scrubby elm and cottonwood on the North Fork. Two to four miles to our right, a very fine valley of rich productive land, some 10 miles in length and seems to be 3 to 6 miles wide. Had a rainy night and could not hold the cattle. Both herds in one this morning but all in sight of the wagons. Camped in the big valley. Had to carry wood a mile or more [with] our horses.

May 20: Everything all right this morning. I got an early start and made good time until 11 o'clock when we met a body of Wichita Indians, who treated us friendly but wanted 2 cows. Not feeling disposed to the contrary, I gave the cows to them. Then they wanted sugar, coffee, flour and soap, but I was getting a little tired of them and wanted to be on the march, so I give the chief 1½ lbs. of coffee and a very small piece of soap. Told them that was all I would let them have, so they left and we went on our way.³⁶ Made a good evening's drive.

³⁴ Traveled in present-day Jackson County. For an excellent account of the history of the cattle industry of this area see Dean Cecil Chesser, *Across the Lonely Years* (Altus: Altus Printing Company, 1971), 2nd ed., 9–21.

³⁵ This was in the old Greer county area claimed by Texas until the Supreme Court ruled in 1896 that it belonged to Oklahoma Territory. See McReynolds, *Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State*, 257; Webb Leonidus Moore, *The Greer County Question* (San Marcos, Texas: San Marcos Academy, 1938), 11–103.

May 21: Drove some 2 miles and crossed the North Fork of Red River.³⁷ Soon after crossing, we come to the foot of one peak of Wichita Mountains. I [climbed] about halfway to the top. Getting tired, I turned back. At the foot is as pretty [a] running spring branch as I ever seen and as good water as I ever tasted in [my] life. Some post oak on the valley between the river and mountains. After dinner, our trail lay in a gap or valley with peaks on both sides.³⁸ The valley was about one mile wide and some 2 or 3 long. Mesquite grass and timber on it. While at dinner one of the men shot a bear but did not get it. The valley gradually widened out until the mountains were soon at a considerable distance on each side, but extending farther on our left. By night we were on a smooth prairie but found no water for the cattle and grass shorter than usual. Camp on a plain. No timber in sight.

May 22: We got a little lost this morning. The trail, laying on very hard land, it being a general camping place. The trail was very dim. We drove until 4 in the afternoon before we found water for the cattle at which time we reached a small, deep creek. The water very bitter.³⁹ At a little after sunset there came on a rain and lasted until after 8 o'clock. The men held the cattle well.

May 23: This morning at 3 o'clock we had another rain, but the cattle were all right. This morning, after driving 2 miles, we come to a deep, muddy creek which we had some difficulty in crossing. After noon, we crossed another. Had more timber on it than any of the same size that I have seen in this country. Owing to a late start and the trouble crossing the first creek, we made but a short drive, some 8 miles. Camped on a red, sandy prairie. Fine grass.

May 24: More rain last night. Still raining slow this morning, with a strong wind from the north and disagreeable cool. Ceased raining about 9 o'clock, but cloudy and cool all day. Crossed some red, sand hills this morning, with spring marshes among them and covered with a post oak runner or shin oak, about 4 miles over them. Crossed 3 creeks. Do not know the name of any of them, but one thing I do know, they are troublesome to get the wagons over. Made some 10 miles.

May 25: Traveled over some red, rocky hills with sandy soil, but harder than we traveled over yesterday. Crossed [eight], small, high-banked, muddy creeks and arrived on Washita River in time to go

³⁶ The Indians would not eat beef as long as they could hunt buffalo and supply their needs. By 1876 the herds had been thinned to the extent that cattle were now welcomed into the Indian's diet.

³⁷ Into Kiowa County. This crossing was known as Warren's Crossing. Chief Quanah Parker often met the herds at this precarious spot.

³⁸ Soldier and Tepee Mountains.

³⁹ Gyp Springs.

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down and find 6 other herds, all waterbound.⁴⁰ The valley is a dark, sandy soil and I think is fine farming land. The grass very fine.

May 26: Early this morning we were making preparations to cross. Rafted over our baggage and pulled the wagons through the water by hand. Set the cooks to getting dinner and at 12 o'clock everything was over and dinner ready. The Washita here is about 50 feet wide. We drove some 5 miles this afternoon over a beautiful, rolling prairie, but late in the evening we crossed the worst creek that we have seen. Had to unload the wagons, wading in soft mud to the knee to do it and broke one tongue. Bogged about 20 cattle but got them all out except 2.

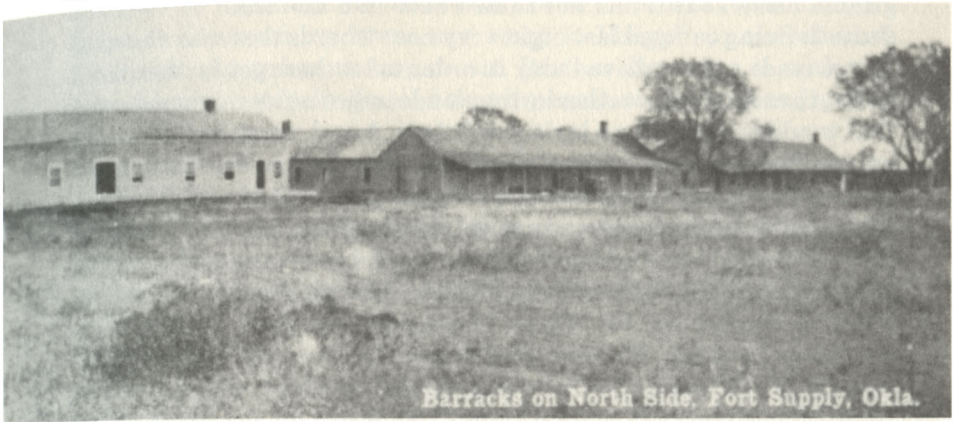
May 27: Another bad creek in front by 9 o'clock. We had our wagon tongue spliced with rawhide and continued on our march. We had to turn to the left and head the creek going west. Got into some more real rocky hills, worse than those we passed on the 25th, with occasionally a deep ravine heading on either side of the trail. We drove until 3 in the afternoon before we found a place to get dinner. We again struck some high, gray-sandy prairies with shin oak, but no water. Cooked the last bread stuff we had for dinner. Started on but had to turn back on account of some hills and gulleys that we could not hold the cattle on at night.

May 28: Started the cattle at 5 o'clock to hunt water. Drove some 4 miles through steep hills and deep gulleys and come the Canadian River. The river bed seems to be about 600 yards wide but the water was not exceeding 40 yards and not more than 12 inches deep. After crossing the river we had gray on white sandy, high ridges, dotted over with sand mounds all covered with post oak runners, but no timber, except a very little on the deep ravines, with but little water in them. In fact, none that we can water the cattle at, and as is common on sand, the grass is very poor. Camped on a dry ravine but dug in the bed of it and found water to use in camp.

May 29: At 5 o'clock this morning Mr. Pond and I mounted our horses and started to hunt Camp Supply⁴¹ to get flour. Still sand hills and oak runners for some 15 or 20 miles and no water. After riding 11 hours, we stopped in 4½ miles from Supply. Mr. Pond, being very unwell, we stopped all night with one of Ellison and Dewees's herds.

⁴⁰ Most of these herds had probably turned west off the Chisholm Trail.

⁴¹ For an interesting look at the activities that were taking place at Fort Supply during this time see Susan Peterson, "Fort Supply, Isolated Outpost," a chapter in *Early Military Forts and Posts in Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1978), 78-79.



Barracks on North Side, Fort Supply, Okla.

Cattle herds had to stay well away from Camp Supply, but necessary provisions were available at the post store (Courtesy Western History Collections).

May 30: At 5 we were again in the saddle and at 6 rode into the post. The store was not opened until 8. We went in and bought 100 lbs. flour and in 15 minutes were on our way back to meet the herds. At 3:15 P.M. we met them 26 miles from the post. They had just watered the cattle; the first they have had since we crossed the Canadian, which has been almost 48 hours. We drove on down a few miles and camped on Wolf Creek, a large, sandy stream, some 60 feet wide and very shallow. Fine grass. We struck the first road today that we have seen in 200 miles.⁴²

May 31: This morning I give directions for the herds to move on down the creek 5 miles and pull up for the day and rest, and wash saddle blankets. I took a lead horse and went back to the post to get flour and bacon to do us to Dodge. Returned late in the evening and found the herds at the crossing of Wolf Creek, 18 miles above the post where we have to leave the road and turn north. The post commander [had] issued orders for no herds to come nearer than 12 miles of the post under penalty of being arrested.⁴³

June 1: Drove some ten or twelve miles and camped on a nice, little running creek among high, steep hills and very short grass. The

⁴² Fort Supply to Fort Reno military road. See John W. Morris and Edwin C. McReynolds, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), Map 24.

⁴³ The army was determined to keep the drovers and their cattle off the Indian reservation. Edward E. Dale, "The Cheyenne-Arapahoe Country," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*. 20 (December, 1942), 360-371; Peterson, *Early Military Forts and Posts in Oklahoma*, 81.

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ground looks as if it had not rained here in 3 months.

June 2: Being camped last night very near 2 herds that was ahead of us, we made a short drive today in order to let them get farther from us for, in case of bad weather as the clouds indicate, we might mix and that would be worse than laying up 2 days. A cool, north wind today. I am comfortable with 2 heavy shirts and a heavy coat on. We crossed the North Fork of Canadian this evening and camped in the valley. Very coarse, white sand and coarse, rough grass, but fine water.

June 3: Rained last night and still raining this morning and is cold as a December rain at San Antonio. Stopped raining about 9 A.M. and by 1 P.M. it cleared up. Mr. Perry Thompson, just from Fort Griffin, overtaken us today. We were glad to see him as we get lonely in this country. Made a 12 miles drive and camped on a high, pretty prairie. No wood but plenty of buffalo chips.⁴⁴ No water for the cattle today but fine grass.

June 4: Having but little to do I rode on with Mr. Thompson. After riding some 15 or 18 miles, we overtaken a herd and got dinner at which place we come in sight of several herds who had been stopped by Ellison and Dewees' agent in order to cut out cattle and fill one of their contracts. He also wanted to cut mine, but not knowing whether Slaughter was willing to have them cut or not, and learning that he was in Dodge City, I pushed on to see him, leaving the camp of the herds at 4 P.M., it being 45 miles to Dodge. I crossed the state line into Kansas this morning about 9. At 10 we crossed the Red Fork of the Arkansas River, called here the [Cimarron]. I stayed all night with a herd about 33 miles from Dodge City. I will state [now] that Dodge is 40 miles.

June 5: At sunrise I was in the saddle steering north. At 12 o'clock I rode into the town. Stopped 4 hours, had a talk with Slaughter and started back [down] the trail to meet the cattle. Stopped about 15 miles from town with a herd all night. Would have have gone further but my pony was very tired.

June 6: Went on and met the herds about 35 miles from town at 10 A.M. We drove some 5 miles this evening and camped on bald prairie with short grass.

June 7: We drove on to Bluff Creek, 5 miles distant, and stopped and got an early dinner. Drove some 6 or 7 miles and camped. Some light showers about this evening. No wood from Bluff Creek to Dodge;

⁴⁴ Though the buffalo would soon cease to roam the Plains, the chips that were left behind would be used for years by the settlers. See Edward E. Dale, *Frontier Ways: Sketches of the Old West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1959), 102-103.

distance 25 miles and no timber on the Arkansas River at Dodge.

June 8: Mounted my horse and went to Dodge⁴⁵ to see whether Slaughter wanted us to stop or not. Brother Jim went in with me. After dinner, not feeling well, I sent my horse out to camp and stayed all night in town.

June 9: Put the herds over the river and bought supplies.

June 10: Moved the herds out 10 miles north of [Dodge] on Saw Log Creek.⁴⁶ They got lost from each other as I was not with them, having



Neatherlin lost several of his drovers at Dodge City where they cashed in their "bar-tender money" before returning home (Courtesy Western History Collections).

stopped at town to cut our cattle out of other herds.

June 11: I went across the river and cut some cattle and drove them to the herds, and cut the horses out that I have been ordered to send back.

June 12: Went over the river and found some more cattle in a herd and sent them to the herds. Van Cleve come in this evening and I was very busy in settling with the hands and fitting them up to start home. Both herds are thrown together but we were told by Mr. Ellison that there will be 1500 or 2000 taken out here.

⁴⁵ In 1876 Dodge City was inhabited by only 1,200 citizens, but 19 saloons were licensed to sell liquor. William Barclay "Bat" Masterson served briefly as a deputy under Marshal Wyatt Earp during the summer of Neatherlin's drive. See Stanley Vestal, *Queen of Cowtowns* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 273-274; Drago, *Great American Cattle Trails*, 206-219.

⁴⁶ Herds that were moving on to Nebraska normally camped near this location after moving around Dodge. The drive to Ogallala under normal circumstances required approximately 18 days. The trail from Dodge City to Ogallala was sometimes referred to as the Jones and Plummer Trail. Drago, *Great American Cattle Trails*, 59.

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June 13: I went over the river again today and got some more cattle out of a herd and sent them to camp. Am very tired and feel lonely this evening.⁴⁷

June 14: Slaughter is sick today.⁴⁸ I went out to the herd and cut and graded cattle. In running my horse, my pocketbook, containing \$98.55 was lost and I have not found it at this time.⁴⁹

June 15: Still putting up cattle all day. Did not find my pocketbook.

June 16: Finished cutting [herd] at noon. Counted over and found the numbers all right. Went to camp to dinner when six men, who [were] on herd, sent me word to get some more hands as they were going to quit. I went to town and made a start to get them.

June 17: Walked over town several times and at one o'clock I started out to camp with 4 men. Got them out, and having hired a wagon on to take them out, I hauled the other six into town just at night, and went to Mr. Ellison and drew money and paid them off.

June 18: M. B. Stephenson arrived in Dodge yesterday and informed me that he had in his possession 25 horses. I went to his camp, 5 miles below Dodge, this morning, and got the horses and came back to town. Hired some more men and we overtaken the herd; it having left Saw Log today after dinner. Drove 5 miles. A strong, north wind; cold.

June 19: I taken 4 men with me this morning and went back within 5 miles of town to hunt cows. Frost this morning. A great many are having calves, and some were suckling yearlings that were cut out a few days ago.⁵⁰ I found 21 and overtaken the herd at sunset, 22 miles from Dodge. Crossed a pretty little creek this evening called Buckner.

June 20: Went back this morning cow-hunting again [and] found 2. Overtaken the herd at 1 o'clock. Crossed Pawnee Creek this evening. Drove about 10 miles today.

June 21: Made a 13-miles drive. Crossed Walnut Creek. High, rolling prairies with very short buffalo grass. No road since we were in 5 miles of Dodge City.

⁴⁷ The life of the cowboy has often been portrayed as a constant barrage of thrills and excitement, when in reality, the open range was possibly the loneliest place imaginable.

⁴⁸ John Slaughter was never entirely healthy. He suffered from asthma and tuberculosis, but those ailments did not keep him off the trail. Erwin, *The Southwest of John H. Slaughter*, 82.

⁴⁹ Neatherlin's organizational abilities are apparent. It is remarkable that he was cognizant of the exact amount of money that was missing.

⁵⁰ Herds trailed on to Nebraska often consisted entirely of steers that were needed to replenish the northern ranges; however, some were contracted to the army and Indian agencies.

June 22: Drove 11 or 12 miles today. Crossed a small, running creek; do not know the name, but from the number of beaver dams across it, I suppose it should be Beaver Creek. Camped on a high, level prairie. Turned off the cook at dinner. Can see a cow 5 miles. Grass very short and dry. A heavy rain fell behind us this evening but none on us.

June 23: Drove 10 miles today. Crossed Smokey [Hill] River today. A small, sandy stream a little larger than the San Miguel on the road from Pleasanton [Texas] to Dogtown. It runs through a poor, hilly country. No timber where we crossed.

June 24: Mr. Pond, having been suffering from a pain in his jaw and teeth, asked me to go with him this morning to Buffalo Station on the Kansas Pacific Railroad.⁵¹ We found the place between 12 and 1 o'clock. Had some trouble to find the way as there is no road and the trail not plain, as only 4 herds are ahead of us and I think every one has done like we have; made his own trail. I come back and met the herds about 8 miles from the station on a vast prairie; the station being in sight. No water for the cattle today and have been drove some 16 miles today and will have to go 10 miles tomorrow before they get water. The weather quite warm and so the cattle are very restless for the want of water.

June 25:⁵² Drove 10 miles before noon. Reached Saline Creek where we stayed the balance of the day to graze and rest the cattle after driving them 26 miles in a day and a half. The grass short and dry, but water plenty [but] no wood and buffalo chips are scarce.

June 26: Did not leave the Saline until noon, thinking it best to graze and water before leaving as it is said to be 14 miles to South Fork of Soloman River; it the first water. Drove some six miles and camped on the divide. Grass still short and dry. No wood, very dusty. One of my Dodge City men quit today.

June 27: Drove some 14 miles today. Nooned on South Soloman where we had the best grass and water since we were 45 miles south of Dodge City. Cold, north wind again this evening. Cloudy, looks like snow. Two men with wagons following us to pick up [the] young calves.⁵³

⁵¹ Buffalo Parks Station on the Kansas Pacific Railroad. In 1877 two bandits who had participated in the infamous Big Springs, Nebraska, train robbery were killed here. Fletcher, *Up the Trail in '79*, 49.

⁵² Neatherlin and his men were surely unaware of the fate of Custer and his men on the Little Big Horn on this now memorable day. It is likely that Neatherlin's entire crew had fought Indians and would have been sympathetic with the soldiers.

⁵³ Local homesteaders often followed the herds and gathered the abandoned calves as they were left behind by the surging herds.

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June 28: Another December rain come on at 1 o'clock last night from the northeast. Rained til 6 this morning. Was foggy and cloudy til noon. Crossed North Soloman at noon, but owing to the rain and coolness of the day, the cattle did not drink. Drove some 16 miles today. Camped on a high prairie.

June 29: Drove 12 or 14 miles today. Crossed Prairie Dog Creek. Grass very short.

June 30: Did not make more than 10 miles today. Crossed Sappa Creek.

July 1: Cold norther blowing all day. Left 6 cattle; 4 from being poisoned, one from lameness and one from disease and old-age. Crossed the state line and entered the state of Nebraska. Crossed Beaver Creek and camped on Driftwood Creek. Drove 15 miles.

July 2: Did not leave Driftwood til after dinner as the cattle are very tired, and I want to camp on the divide between creeks, and water in the middle of the day. Made 5 miles this evening.

July 3: Crossed the Republican River. Drove about 10 miles.

July 4: This being the one-hundredth anniversary of American independence, it seems as if we ought to have rest and amusement, but it was to the reverse with us, as I believe we have had the hardest day's work that we have had on this trip. Drove 16 miles and crossed a very rough and brushy stream called the Frenchman; up and down steep hills and in deep canyons that was almost like a wall on either side, and could hardly see our horses' ears for [the] dust, and the day very warm. Met a man this evening with an order for 50 yearlings.

July 5: Cut out the yearlings this morning. Come to Stinking Water Creek at noon. The trail lays up the creek, and [we] camped on it. Grass very bad; almost none. Drove 10 miles.

July 6: The trail continues up the creek to the head where there is some fine springs of water where we took dinner, and [then] struck out on the plain toward the Platte River. Met C. H. Slaughter,⁵⁴ who told us of some ponds, one mile from the trail ahead of us 8 or 10 miles, which we were glad to hear as we had been told there was no water from the head of Stinking Water [Creek] to the Platte, which is 30 miles. Bad grass again tonight.

July 7: Drove 2 or 3 miles and turned off where Charley told us. Found plenty of good rain water in 2 large ponds among the sand

⁵⁴ Charles H. Slaughter was the younger brother of John H. Slaughter. See the *U.S. Census, Caldwell County, Texas* (1850); Erwin, *The Southwest of John H. Slaughter, 72-73*; Cook, *Fifty Years on the Old Frontier*, 51; J. J. Roberts, "Fifty Years Ago," in Hunter, *The Trail Drivers of Texas*, 785.

hills. Good grass where we would have never looked for water. I put up a board directing other herds how to find it.⁵⁵ We drove some 8 miles further and camped on a vast, sandy plain with but little grass. The wind is blowing like a hurricane from the south and has been ever since yesterday morning, and feels like it was off of a furnace.

July 8: The cook gave us a light breakfast owing to the wind blowing so hard that he could not cook well. We started at 5 and at one, I reached the Platte River with the rear cattle 2 hours behind the front cattle. We took a hearty dinner and drove 4 miles up the river valley to Ogallala,⁵⁶ a small town on the Union Pacific Railroad, our destination.

July 9: Commenced this morning to cut out and deliver cattle. Got 500 out and drove them across the river. Had some trouble in getting them over as they were all young cattle and none did not want to take the lead. The river seems to be about half-a-mile wide but not quite swimming to a horse. Penned the cattle and returned to camp.

July 10: I went this morning up the river 9 miles to look through a herd for cattle [strays]. Found 4 cows and returned to camp at 2 o'clock and found the boys cutting out the receiver. Did not come til late and they did not get to work til after dinner. Only got 200 out. Very dry here and grass very short. Helped to round up cattle and just as I unsaddled my horse, a man came over the river and told me that Slaughter had sent for me to come to town. I resaddled and went. He said, "I want to you to go to San Antonio." I got ready and at 11 o'clock and 40 minutes P.M., I stepped aboard the train.⁵⁷ In a few minutes [I] was rolling down the Platte Valley at the rate of 20 miles an hour toward Omaha.

July 11: Taken breakfast at Grand Island, 200 miles from where I eat supper. Run down the Platte Valley all day until in 30 miles of Omaha, where we struck a hilly country. Seen some fine farms on Platte and plenty of room for more. Arrived at Omaha at 3:30 P.M. Changed cars and waited 15 minutes. Crossed the Missouri to Council Bluffs and waited 20 minutes more, and then rolled out down the Missouri River Valley toward Kansas City. Passed some of the finest

⁵⁵ The cowboys who trailed the Longhorns followed a strict, unwritten code that required the drovers to help each other. Cook, *Fifty Years on the Old Frontier*, 105.

⁵⁶ Rathjen, *The Texas Panhandle Frontier*, 128; Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 42.

⁵⁷ It was commonplace for the drovers to ride the rails on their return trip to Texas at the end of the trail. Some traveled on a freight train in lieu of paying the regular fare on a passenger train. They called it "saving money for the bartender." See "Cowboy Life in West Texas," in Hunter, *The Trail Drivers of Texas*, 333.

THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA



This family photo was taken nine years before the death of Neatherlin, seated on the left with his wife, Mary, at right (Courtesy Museum of the Western Prairie).

farms of corn that I ever seen in my life. The corn is generally about waist-high, while some are larger and some smaller. I looked and admired until the darking of night shut it out of sight, when I doubled myself up and lay down on the seat and went to cat-napping.

July 12: I was aroused this morning at daybreak by the conductor calling out, "Kansas City change cars for Texas," but to my mortification, the clerk told me I would have to lay over til 5 o'clock this evening. So I put up at the hotel nearby and took a ramble uptown, but the day being very warm, I give it up and returned to the hotel to drag out the balance of the day. Sure enough, at 5 we rolled out and a little after 10 we had to change cars and was told by the conductor that we would have to wait 45 minutes. Soon after the train left, the telegraph operator received a telegram stating that our coming train was 2 hours behind time,⁵⁸ and so we waited and noded around for three hours before she come, but we were soon aboard and whirling south.

July 13: We were in Parsons this morning at daylight. It is in south Kansas. Soon we crossed the state line into Indian Territory.⁵⁹ Run at

⁵⁸ Travel on the trains during these early years often proved to be very frustrating. Seldom did they arrive or depart according to schedule.

⁵⁹ For a detailed account of railroad building in Oklahoma see V. V. Masterson, *The Katy Railroad and the Last Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952); Grant Foreman, *A History of Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), 176-180.

a rapid rate in the forenoon, but later in the day we come to where there had been very heavy rains and the streams all [had] overflowed, so we had to run very slow for 2 or 3 hours. We reached the Red River half-an-hour before sunset and had to be ferryied over the bridge; [it] being swept away by the waters. Reached Denison [Texas] at early twilight and had to wait there 2 hours when we started for Houston. I took a berth in the sleeping car and soon forgot the past.

July 14: I awoke this morning a little after sunrise and found we were near Bremond. Arrived at Houston half after 4 P.M. and had to wait 4 hours for the Harrisburg train, but it proved to be 5 hours. So, half after 9 we pulled out.

July 15: At daybreak we were at Eagle Lake. Took breakfast at Luling. Took stage at Kingsbury at 10 A.M. Arrived at San Antonio at 5:30 P.M.

July 16: Bought a horse and saddle and started at 9:30 A.M. for home. Come by way of Castroville. Reached Mr. Weaver's on Francisco just at night. Being very tired, I stopped until morning.

July 17: At 6:30 A.M. I was on the road and at 3 P.M., I arrived home.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ It is not known whether Neatherlin went up the trail again. On October 6, 1879, Neatherlin and his family sold their ranch which was located at the present site of Derby, Texas. They first settled in Roswell, New Mexico Territory. They next relocated to Seven Rivers, on to the Black River, Cuevo Ranch, and finally back to Roswell. He became the tax assessor for Lincoln County, which then included present-day Chaves, Eddy, Lea, Lincoln, and Otero Counties. Neatherlin continued his affiliation with the Masonic Lodge in New Mexico. He was installed as steward at the organization of Roswell Lodge no. 18 on June 24, 1889. Neatherlin died on April 30, 1909. A resolution produced by the Roswell Lodge stated: "He lived a life of usefulness, filling the sphere in which he was placed with credit to himself and honor to the fraternity. And he has now gone to his reward, full of years, honored and respected by all who knew him." For additional reading on the life of John H. Slaughter see Walter Noble Burns, *Tombstone: An Iliad of the Southwest* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955), 295-316. Biographical information provided in interviews with Neatherlin's grandchildren, Opal Lee, Jean Fallin, and Raymond Netherlin. (Note: the current Netherlin families have dropped the *a* from their last name.)

*Leo Kelley received the B.A.Ed. and M.Ed. from East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma, and is an assistant curator at the Museum of the Western Prairie, an OHS facility in Altus, Oklahoma. He wishes that acknowledgement be given to Dr. Marvin Kroeker, Professor of History, and to Dr. Robert Kelly, Chairman of the Cartography Department, East Central University, for their assistance in the preparation of this article.