

THE TUTTLE TRAIL

By *Berenice Lloyd Jackson and Max Blau**

The Tuttle Trail started at the Springer Ranch located one-half mile east of Lake Marvin in Hemphill County, Texas. This location was on the Fort Supply-Fort Elliott Military Road and stage route. Oliver Nelson, in his book *The Cowman's Southwest* states that "A.G. (Jim) Springer came to Boggy Creek in the early 1870s to establish a trading post for the buffalo hunters, and a relay station for the stage and mail route." Building a stockade, including a blockhouse with loopholes on all sides, and an underground passageway leading to a covered fortified pit and to the corrals and stable, he believed he was secure from Indian attacks. In the fall of 1875, when the Indians were subdued, Springer bought three hundred head of cattle from a passing trail herd and turned them loose on the open range. Springer and an associate, Tom Ledbetter, were killed by some disgruntled soldiers in 1877 over a poker game.¹

Two Dodge City, Kansas, men, John F. Tuttle and Frank Chapman bought the Springer Ranch in 1878 and began collecting cattle to drive to the railroad. Tuttle was a Civil War veteran having served with Company I, Second Michigan Cavalry. Chapman was a cowman, buffalo hunter and Indian trader. Using CT (Chapman and Tuttle) as their brand, the ranch was known thereafter as the CT ranch.

Tuttle and Chapman chose a more direct route to the shipping point at Dodge City, Kansas, than either the Jones and Plummer Trail or the military road from the ranch to Fort Supply, Indian Territory. The route they chose went almost between the above mentioned trails and later became known as "The Tuttle Trail." The first herd driven over this trail was cattle owned by Tuttle and Chapman in the spring of 1879, later the same year Chapman sold his interest in the CT Ranch to Tuttle. (*Historic Trails and Landmarks of Hemphill County, Texas* by Elmer Sparks)

Tom Conaster, the present owner of the Springer Ranch said, "the herd was driven along the military road approximately ten miles, turning directly north and staying east of the Dry Fork of Boggy Creek." The grass was luxuriant and there were watering places along the route where the cattle might be bedded down at night.

* Berenice Lloyd Jackson is a native of the Oklahoma Panhandle, and an organizer of the Panhandle Writer's Club. Max August Blau is the editor of "The History of the Northeast Corner of Texas," published as a part of *A History of Lipscomb County, 1876-1976*.

¹ Lipscomb County Historical Survey Committee, *A History of Lipscomb County, Texas 1876-1976* (n.p.: Lipscomb County Historical Survey Committee, 1976).

THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

The Tuttle Trail entered Lipscomb County, Texas, on what is now section 83, block 43 according to the Houston and Texas Central Railroad Company Survey. Today, The Canadian River Cattle Company of Jones and Jones owns seven sections which the Tuttle Trail crossed. The greenery of the low rolling plains are cut with deep draws that project wild life and wild flowers. Indian blanket, Indian paint brush, creamy blossoms of the wild yucca or as the natives say "the soap weed," goldenrod, tiny purple aster, oxeye daisies, vetch, purple and yellow clover, sunflowers and the purple flower of loco weed are some of the native wild flowers, and cattle still enjoy the luxuriant grass.

One of the old landmarks which was a "look out" for the hunters was a high flat mesa located in section 358. It was used by the cowboys to wave herds in their turn up the trail. It was called "Flat Top" by the herdsman. Today it is being levelled, and the rich top soil is being spread over the sides and the owners are planning to raise crops on this land by irrigation. Another historical marker is lost.

This trail crossed Wolf Creek in section 622, then north near where George Wilkerson Walton settled in 1885, section 787. The present owner is Vernor Parker and his cattle stand knee deep in native grass. This portion of the trail is being irrigated and sunflowers bow their heads over the old Tuttle Trail. The herds moved on north crossing Mammoth Creek, passed by the Mammoth Post Office where the cowboys could send mail home and pick up any letters that may be waiting for them.

Mammoth Creek was named by J. C. Studer, a Kansas blacksmith. Studer and his sons had unearthed some mammoth fossils on the banks of this creek in the early 1880s. So "Mammoth Creek" was properly named.²

In May, 1879, the Tuttle outfit camped in a low sandy place that was called Sand Springs in section 1052. The Cullen outfit was camped in section 1061 near Willow Springs. Some cowboys from each camp got into an argument which ended in a "shoot-out" and two men were killed. The Cullen man was buried on the spot, and a crude marker was put on the grave with the inscription "Hawk Hanks" May 10 1879. Relatives claimed the grave, and the body was moved in 1941.³

The Tuttle man's body was carried to "Soddy Town" in No Man's Land and buried without any marker. Taking the cattle slowly from Texas to Dodge City, Kansas, meant grass along the entire route, and the cattle would reach their destination in good condition. In order for this to be accomplished, the second herd coming from the south would be moved over on grass that was not trampled or eaten close to the ground. This meant good

² *Ibid.*

³ Ben Montgomery, "Memoirs," W. H. Wilhite Collection, Higgins, Texas.



Ruts still visible, made by the chuck wagons on the Tuttle Trail

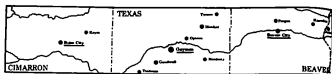
grass for their herd. By the end of the season, these trails sometimes would extend from six to ten miles wide.⁴

In Section 1149, two and one-half miles east of Follett, Texas, on the highway there is a roadside park with a marker commemorating the Tuttle Trail. In Section 172 of block 10 the trail is visible as it comes off the hill going north. It may also be seen in Section 93, Block 10 as it splits; part of the trail goes northwest to Soddy Town and part continues on north into old No Man's Land. The main herd entered No Man's Land at Section 31 Township 1 Range 28 while the wagon trail went by Soddy Town, a wild frontier place with a store and tavern located on the NE/4 of the NW/4 Section 26 Township 1 Range 27. Here the cowboys bought their supplies, liquor and the necessary articles for the trail.⁵

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Beaver County Historical Society, *History of Beaver County* (2 vols., n.p.: Beaver County Historical Society, 1970-1971), Vol. II, p. 178.

THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA



Route of the Tuttle Trail through eastern Beaver County in the Oklahoma Panhandle (Adapted from Morris, Goins and McReynolds, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, 2nd ed., Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1976, map 81)

The J. I. Lovell ranch was four miles east of Soddy Town, and Gertrude Paine stated "We lived about one-half mile from what was called the 'Tuttle Trail.' There were large herds of cattle driven from Texas up into Kansas for shipment." Recalling that "They would camp by our place on the trail, and the men would come to our house for eggs, butter and buttermilk. All the calves that were born on the night they were at our place were given to us. We got as high as eight at one time."⁶

Three miles northeast of Soddy Town, Clinton Hawk operated a blacksmith shop on the NE/4 of Section 12, Township 1, Range 27. One can still see where his dugout was located and the depression in the sod where his well had been dug. No doubt his place was a welcome haven to a wagon or stage coach driver in the hot, dry summer days when the wooden wheels had shrunk and the iron tires needed setting or a horse had lost a shoe.⁷

The trail continued on a northeasterly course keeping on high ground between Indian Creek and Camp Creek, the drivers watched the small butte called "Flat Top" and stayed west of that landmark. Should they have gone east of "Flat Top," they would have been in the Cherokee Outlet or Indian Territory.

"Flat Top" was not only a guide for the cattle coming from the south but later on for the herds coming from Fort Supply, on the National Trail going west to the Colorado line (Lost Trails of the Cimarron, Harry E. Chrisman). Later, the United States Coast And Geodetic Survey used "Flat Top" as headquarters and placed a marker of cement with a bronze marker

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 333.

⁷ W. H. Wilhite, "Diary," W. H. Wilhite Collection.

imbedded with the inscription "Flat-Top—1927." It was from this point that the true survey of the One Hundredth Meridian was made.⁸

It is not unusual to find a small, high plateau or flat tableland with steep sides on the prairie in western Oklahoma. One such hill is called "Round Top" as the mound rises to a complete circle and is as high as "Flat Top." Ten miles west are two such mounds side by side which the early pioneer watched for as guides to their claims, and they were called the Twin Mounds.

Mrs. Raymond Nine related some of her mother's memoirs on the old cattle trail. She recalled:⁹

Mae Petty's parents, George and Debrah Petty squatted on Camp Creek 1886 just one-half mile east of the crossing of the Tuttle Trail. She and her sisters would stand on a knoll west of their sod house watching the cattle pass by. Mr. Petty had built a fence on his west line and not one animal ever got onto his land. Sometimes it would take all day for the herd to pass and sometimes the cattle was bedded down between Camp Creek and the Kiowa Creek.

T. S. Judy recalled his early recollections of the Tuttle Trail:¹⁰

Herd after herd passed over this trail while I lived here. These herds were from fifteen hundred to three thousand head.

The boss of one of the larger herds told me that they had too many, that the herd was hard to handle at the water holes. I watched this particular herd water at Kiowa Creek. The cattle were stopped and held up about a mile south of the creek and then shoved forward in small bunches, each bunch brought to the creek just a little above the other and just a little later, thus giving each group a drink of water not riled and muddied as would have been the case if the cattle all reached the stream at the same time. The last group reached the river about a half mile above the leaders.

The chuck wagon had come on ahead and the cowboys had their noon meal while the cattle were milling along the stream. There were eight men handling the cattle, two horse wranglers and one cook. The horses were good ones and each man had six in his mount. A rope corral was made by fastening one rope to the front wheel and one to the back wheel of the chuck wagon and then hand stretching the ropes out and around the bunch of horses where they were held until each man caught the particular horse he was to ride. As the men worked and ate in relays it took some time to get dinner over.

I found out that the cook kept stocked with dry wood and fuel by having

⁸ Beaver County Historical Society, *History of Beaver County*, Vol. II, p. 197.

⁹ Mae Petty Slaven, "Memoirs," Beula Nine Collection, Laverne, Oklahoma.

¹⁰ Beaver County Historical Society, *History of Beaver County*, Vol. II, p. 442.

THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

a cow hide strung under the chuck wagon and picking up wood as he drove along placing it in this hide.

The cattle were not pushed away from the creek but were allowed to stand around in the water until they left of their own accord and began to graze. When that happened, the boss drove on ahead for about three miles and selected a camping place for the night and the cattle were grazed slowly forward to that place, arriving about sun down. They had their fill of grass and water and were bedded down for the night less than a quarter of a mile from camp. Two men went on guard and stayed on duty for two hours, then they were relieved by two others and so on through the night.

The cowboys would rest the cattle at Round Timber on the Beaver Riv repeating the same procedure as Mr. Judy had witnessed on the Kioy Creek. They crossed the Cimarron River at the mouth of Horse Cree From there the herders would go to Neutral City, two miles west of Gal to replenish their supplies.

The Tuttle Trail left Beaver County one mile west of the present Harp County line and three south of Englewood, Kansas. The herds were pushed on into Clark County, Kansas. The cattle were watered at Perry's We Lakes, Five Mile Creek and again at Big Sandy Creek. The chuck wagon cook laid in fresh supplies at Cash City. According to George McKinne Englewood, Kansas, Cash City was built on the Tuttle Trail and was most supported by it. When the railroads came into existence and the trail was no longer used, Cash City became a ghost town.

The cowboys kept the cattle west of the Big Basin and Saint Jacob Well continuing north within three miles west of the present location Minneola, Kansas. The main trail was close to the Meade County, Kansas line, and during the summer season the herds were spread out over an area six to ten miles wide. It is very probable they were sometimes grazed in Meade County, Kansas.

The Tuttle Trail entered Ford County, Kansas, in section 35 continuing north, moving slowly as the watering places were farther apart. The first real drink for the cattle was at Mulberry Creek. Then they were pushed on into Dodge City and into the corrals.

The last time the Tuttle Trail was used as a cattle trail was in the fall of 1919. The Theis Ranch and Cattle Company south of Englewood, Kansas, had contracted for two thousand yearling steers for delivery to the YL Ranch. The price was from forty-five to fifty dollars per head. Jim Wheat, who had leased the ranch at that time, received the cattle.

The Bowen boys, Raymond, Claude and Paul, V. M. Willis, L. W. Blair and Max Blau united their herds and drove them to a pasture west of Darrouzett, Texas, where they were penned. Later they were driven across



"Flat Top" a prominent geological feature along the Tuttle Trail

the Frass Ranch to the Young Ranch and on to the Kiowa Creek in Beaver County, Oklahoma. Here Dick Duke and Bill Wright joined the drive on to Englewood.

By 1919 most of the southern part of Beaver County had been fenced and cultivated. This last herd was kept between the fence lines, and the cattle had little to eat until they reached the Kiowa Creek. From this point they stayed as close to the old trail as possible all the way, and the cattle had plenty to eat.

Dick Duke declared on that day that "we were making history as this would probably be the last cattle drive on the Tuttle Trail." It was the end of another era.