

THE CHISHOLM TRAIL HERITAGE MUSEUM

CUERO
TEXAS

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1930s RODEO PHOTOGRAPHS COME TO CUERO



Katie Doell enjoys photos of her wilder days.

The rodeo—that most uniquely American spectacle—began in the late 1800s as an entertaining way of displaying the skill and daring of cowboys. ***This Contest is for Real Hands: Rodeo Photographs of the 1930s***, which was on display at Cuero State Bank this spring, captured the drama and color of an old-time western rodeo, complete with bucking broncos, wild steers, trick riders, calf ropers, and parades down Main Street.

The thirty black-and-white photographs in this exhibition, modern restrikes from vintage negatives, were taken in the 1930s by Otho Hartley (1895–1964). Many of his rodeo photographs were made inside the arena itself, a situation that often put the pho-

tographer in grave danger. Somehow, amid the contorting broncos and half-crazed steers, he managed to keep the action within the viewfinder and in focus. The results are some of the best images of this tradition, one that Hartley captured in all its varied and unique aspects.

The exhibit included photographs, artifacts, and biographical material on **Katherine M. Doell**, a Cuero resident who competed in bare bronc and bull riding rodeo events of the 1950s. Katie performed in rodeos throughout the southern part of the United States and as far north as Indiana and North Carolina. Together with Lucyle Cowey, a friend and fellow rodeo participant who taught Katie trick riding, they performed as

guests of the Cuban government and provided entertainment as trick riders at an “expo” in the 1950s. She later returned to Cuba for a rodeo and Wild West Show with “fifteen cowboys and cowgirls, our horses, one Brahma bull, and one jack ass.”

This Contest is for Real Hands: Rodeo Photographs of the 1930s was brought to Cuero by the Chisholm Trail Heritage Museum. The exhibition was organized by the Powell County Museum and Arts Foundation in Deer Lodge, Montana and toured by ExhibitsUSA, Kansas City, Missouri. The purpose of ExhibitsUSA is to create access to an array of arts and humanities exhibitions, nurture the development and understanding of



Katie Doell performing the “Roman Stand trick.”



Katie Doell in country and western costume.



UP THE TRAIL:

Crockett Cardwell & Thornton Chisholm's Legendary Cattle Drive of 1866

Crockett Cardwell, born January 20, 1812 in Mercer County, Kentucky, came to Texas in 1833 and joined the Green DeWitt's colonists who settled primarily in what would become Gonzales and DeWitt counties.

In July of 1846, Cardwell was elected to serve as one of the first DeWitt County commissioners. Additionally, Cardwell owned and operated several general merchandise stores and is known as one of the earliest merchants in Texas. The locations of these stores were Old Indianola, Port Lavaca, Hallettsville and the home store north of Cuero.

The ownership and operation of the store chain covered a long and interesting period in the life of Crockett Cardwell. He made regular trips to New York, Cincinnati and other eastern markets to buy merchandise and goods for resale. Cardwell saw a definite need for meat in the north and was fully aware of the abundance of cattle in South Texas. This supply and demand idea sparked a keen interest for Cardwell, which began his pursuit for a northern market for Texas beefs, and a man who could help fulfill his entrepreneurial spirit. This man was **Thornton Chisholm**.

On April 1, 1866, Chisholm and thirty men drove Cardwell's 1800 head of cattle north from Cardwell Flats to St. Joseph, Missouri. These hardy Texas cowboys were some of the first drovers who helped to bring DeWitt County out of its post-Civil War economic crisis.

To learn more about Crockett Cardwell and Thornton Chisholm's 1866 cattle drive, and to see a map of Thornton Chisholm's route from Cuero to Missouri, visit the museum online at www.chisholmtrailmuseum.org ✧

diverse art forms and cultures, and encourage the expanding depth and breadth of cultural life in local communities.

The Hands-on Experiential Learning Project (HELP), is a four-year project specifically designed to assist small and mid-sized museums in Texas with professional development. The Chisholm Trail Heritage Museum was selected in the spring of 2002 as one of 18 museums to participate in the program, and will host a traveling exhibit each of the four

years. HELP, a program of ExhibitsUSA in partnership with the Texas Association of Museums, is made possible through the combined vision and generosity of Houston Endowment, Inc., The Brown Foundation, The Meadows Foundation, the Don and Sybil Harrington Foundation, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency that fosters innovation, leadership and a lifetime of learning. ✧



Katie Doell performing the "Kossack Drag" trick.

FROM THE CIVIL WAR INTO THE GREAT CATTLE DRIVE ERA

Mr. Joe Sheppard, a native resident of Cuero, graduated from Cuero High School, then obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Texas at Austin, later attending the University of Texas Law School. Married to Rosemary Blackwell Sheppard, they have two children, Joe Sheppard, Jr. and Mary Margaret Sheppard. Sheppard claims that his interest in Texas and American history took root when taking an undergraduate class taught by Dr. Walter Prescott Webb. Sheppard gave the following speech at the Texas Historical Commission's Chisholm Trail brochure launch held in Cuero, November 11, 2002.

It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning to assist in the recognition of DeWitt County and the surrounding area's contribution to the great cattle trails—The Chisholm Trail and the founding of the cattle industry in Texas. The inclusion of Cuero and the DeWitt area in the Chisholm Trail brochure is justified recognition of our area's importance to the great trail drives. If we were not present at the beginning, we were certainly a part of the great cattle movement within minutes. Following the Civil War, the states of the Old Confederacy were left prostrate and poverty stricken. An agricultural economy had been destroyed by famine, years of war, and neglect. The economy was bankrupt; there was no hard money; most plantations were bereft of labor; the transportation system was destroyed and commerce had virtually ceased. To many it seemed an impossible task to reconnect the once-prosperous states of the Confederacy.

Texas had, however, a great natural resource—unavailable to the rest of the southern states—in cattle. According to Dr. Walter Prescott Webb, there were in Texas in 1860 3,358,786 head of cattle. One observer judged in 1880 that the number for 1860 should have been 4,768,400 head. In any event, they multiplied rapidly during the war and represented the economic salvation for Texas

if Texas beef could only join up with Yankee dollars. As an added benefit to DeWitt County, the great bulk of this enormous herd of cattle was located in South Texas—easily accessible to DeWitt County. Again according to Dr. Webb, steers could be purchased in Texas for \$2, \$3, \$4, and \$5 dollars a head. Delivered at the northern railheads, these cattle could bring as much as \$40 per head.

There had been attempts at marketing Texas cattle before the War Between the States, although the greatest utilization of cattle had been for their hides and tallow. The marketing of cattle had consisted mainly of delivery of small herds to Indianola and Galveston for shipment by gulf steamers to Cuba and New Orleans. A few Texas cattlemen had driven herds to St. Louis and an even smaller group had driven herds as far as California and Illinois. It was obvious, however, to the farsighted cattlemen and traders that the real bonanza lay in trailing cattle to the railheads in Missouri and later Kansas for sale in the industrial North. Tough and unsavory the beef might be, but the worst of it was good enough for factory workers and the pick and shovel men of the railroads, as well as the reservation Indians that were now wards of the government. The only question then: how to affect the union of Texas beef and northern appetites.

In the spring of 1866 **Crockett Cardwell**, a DeWitt County rancher and



Joe Sheppard speaking at the Chisholm Trail Brochure Launch, November 11, 2002.

merchant, decided that the way to affect this union was by driving a herd of cattle overland to St. Joseph, Missouri. Cardwell came to Texas in 1833 at the age of 21 years and joined Green DeWitt's colony. His father, Major Jack Cardwell, was a veteran of the War of 1812 and fought in New Orleans under Andrew Jackson. Cardwell was a leading Texas merchant as he had stores in Hallettsville, Port Lavaca, and Indianola. Following that, he bought the Daniel Boone Friar store in the Cuero Creek area at the junction of the La Grange and La Bahia and Victoria/Gonzales roads. For 25 years, the first post office in the area, a tavern and stagecoach stop, a plantation and ranch were maintained here.

Mrs. Cardwell was an even earlier Texan than her husband. As the middle child of five siblings, she started her journey to Texas in 1829 with her parents, **Thomas and Diana Wilkerson**

White. Sadly, her father died en route and was buried in Alabama. The mother with her five children continued and were joined by Austin's colony at Washington-on-the-Brazos. In 1846, she married Crockett Cardwell. She died quietly at her son-in-law's home in Cuero in 1914 and is buried in Hillside Cemetery. Crockett Cardwell died in 1891 and is buried four miles north of Cuero near the railroad overpass.

For the drive overland he assembled a herd of 1,800 Longhorn steers on Cardwell Flats, four miles north of present-day Cuero. This herd was selected not for conformation or beauty but for stamina—it is a long walk from South Texas to St. Joseph, Missouri! There were reds, whites, roans, duns, blue grays, blacks and whites; some with a great spread of dagger-pointed horns. Cardwell selected **Thornton Chisholm**, a respected and capable cattleman from Clinton, as his trail boss. The cattle were divided into two groups of 900 head each with **Frank White** and **Dave Augustine** as herd bosses. Each herd had a crew of 15 men. **Peas Smith**, a Negro, was the cook for the trip and evidently a good one because he made seven more trips up the trail. Some of the men on the first drive were **Jack Low**, **Claude** and **Gene Guilminot**, **Leo** and **Eli Newman**, **Dock Augustine**, **G. H. (Tip) Alexander**, **Jim Hickey**, **Bigham White**, **Daly Davis**, **A. Kuykendall**, **Scrap Taylor**, **John Tumlinson**, **James Mills**, **Green Alexander** and a **Mr. Cruse**.

On April 1, 1866, the first herd out of



In all, some 5,000,000 Texas cattle walked to the railroad in Missouri or Kansas or to the ranges of Wyoming and Montana. Texans returning with hard cash helped the state back on its feet and had as large an economic impact on the state as the discovery of oil would have in the early 1900s.



DeWitt County, and probably the first herd out of South Texas was started for the railroad in Missouri. As nearly as can be determined, they went by the present day towns of Gonzales, San Marcos, Austin, Round Rock, Glen Rose, Mineral Wells, Graham, Olney, Seymour, and Vernon, where they crossed the Red River at what was later to be known as Doan's Crossing. After leaving the Red River, their route went by the way of the present-day Oklahoma towns of Frederick, Norman, Oklahoma City, Chandler, Bristow, Tulsa, Collinsville and

Tolala. From here they crossed into Kansas and headed north-east to St. Joseph, Missouri where the herd was sold. The drive had taken seven months and ten days. South Texas cattlemen now knew that they could get their

herds to market. In a year or two the trail turned west to Kansas. In all, some 5,000,000 Texas cattle walked to the railroad in Missouri or Kansas or to the ranges of Wyoming and Montana. Texans returning with hard cash helped the state back on its feet, and had as large an economic impact on the state as the discovery of oil would have in the early 1900s. The trail was the Spindletop of the 1860s and 70s.

The movement of cattle to northern market became a major industry for DeWitt County well into the 1880s. Some of the great brands registered in the DeWitt County brand book in the late 1870s and early 1880s were those of **H. P. Eckhard** and **H. E. Dahlman**, **C. E. Eckhardt** and sons, **James Hickey**, **D. G. Hugo**, **R. A. Houston**, **John H. King**, **Marcos and McCutcheon**, **Pay May** et al, **Rutledge**, **Hooper** and **Roeder**, **F. E. Rockfellow**, **Mollie Taylor**, **John T. Wofford**, and **Wofford and Stevens**. The registration of these brands is certainly indicative of an active trade. **Arthur Burns**, son-in-law of Crockett Cardwell, took seven herds up the trail in the 1880s.

What did it all mean, and what were the consequences of this great animal migration? For one thing it produced a new American hero in the cowboy. Every farm boy worth his salt wanted to go up the trail and none that did ever seemed to regret it. I wonder why? Trail driving was hard and dangerous work – 16 to 18 hour days in the saddle were common. The young and inexperienced cowboys that rode drag (that is pushing the laggards up), were so covered with dust and sweat at the day's end, they were scarcely recognizable. Every day was dangerous. Cowhands were kicked, thrown, trampled by horses, gored by crazed steers. They were subject to being scalped by Indians, shot by renegades, drowned in swollen streams, and trapped in quicksand. Ninety percent of the time they were tired, cold, wet, hot, and hungry. Despite all of this, they took their \$30 or \$40 a month and were proud the rest of their lives for what they had accomplished.

Secondly and more importantly, the 5,000,000 head of cattle representing some \$100,000,000 in cash enabled Texas to generate capital locally. The

continued next page



Rhonda Hudson, Cindy Kainer and Kay Lapp.

state was not totally dependent upon Eastern capital as were other states of the Confederacy. **George Littlefield** used his profits to establish himself as the leading banker in Austin and left most of his considerable fortune to the University of Texas. Likewise, **Richard King** became a banker; and **Mifflin Kenedy** and **George West** invested in railroads across the state.

Finally, the modern ranching industry was created from the trail. Cattlemen realized that to be successful competitors, cattle had to be upgraded; consequently Texas tick fever had to be exterminated, pastures fenced, cattle controlled and the free range eliminated.



The trail drives impacted the use of public lands, affected state tax policy, brought in to the state millions in Scottish and British capital, built the state capital, and changed Texas from a cotton empire to a cattle kingdom in a twenty year period.



Actually the rewards of the trail to the State really require a study of its own. The trail drives impacted the use of public lands, affected state tax policy, brought in to the state millions in Scottish and British capital, built the state capital, and changed Texas from a cotton empire to a cattle kingdom in a twenty year period. The end of the great cattle trail was in sight in 1884 when an item in the Cuero paper stated, "John T. Wofford having quit the trail is now busy breaking out and putting into cultivation some of his lands in the Lindenau area."

By 1890 the trail days were over. Railroads and barbed wire had done what Indians, outlaws, and nature could not put an end to; trail driving. But the



The crowd gathers to hear Dr. Sheppard's "tale of the trail" at the Texas Historical Commission's November 2002 event promoting the CTHM.

trail will live forever in legend and in the hearts and minds of those of us who cherish freedom and American ingenuity.

The end of the trail days is illustrated by a comment in Miss Nellie Murphree's **History of DeWitt County**. She relates that John T. Wofford and Jim Bell each had a herd of 3,500 head outside Abilene, Kansas in the fall of 1882. Because of a severe drop in the market, Wofford decided to hold his cattle over until spring. Bell, anxious to return home, sold his herd to Wofford at the

depressed price and left for home. The winter of 1882-83 was the most severe ever experienced on the plains, and in the spring of 1883, Wofford marketed 600 of the original 7,000 head. ✧

Other sources:

- Gard, *The Chisholm Trail*, University of Oklahoma Press
- Flannagan, Sue; *Trailing the Longhorns*, Madrona Press
- Webb, Walter Prescott; *The Great Plains*, Sima & Co.
- Saunders, George W.; *The Trail Drivers of Texas*



State Senator Kenneth Armbruster and Cuero Chamber of Commerce President, Shay Lacoconelli address the crowd.

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We'd like to extend our appreciation to all those who have come together in such strong support of the Museum this year.—The Board of Directors

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The Chisholm Trail Heritage Museum's mission is to preserve the ranching and western culture of South Central Texas through interpretive exhibits, research, and educational programs.

ChisholmTrailMuseum.org

TASTE OF THE TRAIL II

SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER 13, 2004
4:00 PM

EATWELL FARM, HOCHHEIM
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*home of David & Diana Burrow
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