

THE TXT & FLYING W RANCH

1885 - 1945

The ranch was located three and one half miles northeast of Felt, Oklahoma. The following information about the ranch has been furnished and verified by: Ed Selders, Lamar, Colorado; Gid Nobles, Gruver, Texas; Lee Thaxton, Boise City, Oklahoma; and Burton Ikard, Boise City, Oklahoma.

Selders, Nobles, and Thaxton knew of the ranch and were present near Felt as far back as 1905. Burton Ikard was present on and near the ranch from 1912 to 1945.

The location of the ranch buildings was near the Beaver (North Canadian) River on the south side of what has been for many years a running stream of fresh water. This water has not been so plentiful since a flood in 1914.

The first inhabitants near this fresh water were Indians. On the north side of the river and about a quarter of a mile east was an old Indian camp ground. Up until the blowing time in the 1930's, it was easy to see where campfires had burned for many years, as the ground was black in many places. Arrowheads and other Indian articles were found here.

About the time the railroad came to Clayton, New Mexico, a man by the name of East hired Pete Martinez, Sr., as foreman of the ranch to run sheep for him in the area.

The first improvement was a dugout in the side of a hill just west of the house as it is today, Later, perhaps in the first of the 1890's, a three room adobe house was constructed nearby. Then a few years later, a large two room adobe was constructed near the other house. Later they were joined together.

At first there were no barns or corrals, just sheep pens in various places across the range.

Two wells with windmills were put into operation north of the river for additional water. The first of these wells, called the Mailey Mill, was dug in the later part of the 1880's. The other well was called the North Mill.

Mr. East acquired a partner, J. D. Shufford of Amarillo, Texas. Mr. Shufford was the General Livestock Agent for the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad. They formed an organization designated as Shufford and East, and they maintained an office in Texline, Texas.

At first all of this country was open range. There were no fences except the XIT fence on the Texas border. These sheep, of course, were cared for by shepherders and fences were not necessary.

This ranch site and watering place was also used by traildrivers following a branch of the Western Trail from Texas to Wyoming and Montana. After the Texas cattle were quarantined and not allowed into Colorado or Kansas, a corridor ten miles wide was established near the Colorado-Kansas state line for the cattle to go on north. This site was sometimes called Middle Water, as it was nearly halfway between Buffalo Springs to the south and the Cimarron River and its creeks to the north.

Sometime around the turn of the century, Shufford and East went out of the sheep business and stocked the range with cattle. There were no fences when they first stocked the area with cattle. Line camps were established on the north side to keep the cattle away from the Cimarron River. On the south side of the ranch was the XIT fence.

After the cattle were put on the range, Johnny Jones was foreman until 1912. At one particular time around 1910, they shipped fifteen trainloads of cattle from Texas and unloaded them at Texline and

trailed them to the ranch -- they were yearlings and two-year-old steers. The place was fenced soon after 1900, as there were other people in the area by that time and fences were necessary. In the spring of 1912, Johnny Jones resigned as foreman to establish a ranch of his own along the Cimarron River above Kenton.

My father, R. E. (Bob) Ikard, was hired by Mr. Shufford to run the ranch. Mr. Shufford had bought out Mr. East and he was the sole owner at the time. My father, mother, and I arrived at Texline on the train. We were transported to the ranch in a Model T Ford driven by Mr. Swanson of Texline. In other words, we did not come in a covered wagon -- we came in style. We were directly or indirectly connected with the ranch until 1945 when it was sold and divided.

As we drove to the ranch, we came through the FDW and Buffalo Springs ranches. As we came through, we noticed a white streak along the north side of the east-west fences that looked like a snow bank. It turned out to be bones from the cattle that had died the winter before. The winter of 1911-1912 was one of the worst ever recorded.

Most of the steers mentioned before were still on the ranch. They were three and four years old and stood the hard winter better than some of the others. For protection, they had holed up in the breaks of the Beaver (North Canadian) River. They had also been fed cottonseed cake beginning in the fall of 1911. They had fed some cake at the ranch for several years. Mr. Shufford was aware of possible weather conditions and he tried to be ready for whatever might come.

Johnny Jones showed by father how to feed cake to a large bunch. My father had fed cake the winter before at Panhandle, Texas, but the cattle had been scattered and could be fed in small bunches. These

steers were all in one pasture and supposed to be scattered out. But when one of them saw the feed wagon coming, he would come in a run and perhaps bawl a time or two, signalling the good news to the others. Before you knew it, there would be four or five hundred cattle crowded around the wagon. The feed had to be scattered and put out in a hurry, if all the animals were to get some.

When the wagon left the ranch, the cake was emptied out of sacks into the wagon bed. Generally, the wagon had four mules hooked to it. Then they started to put out the cake, the rear endgate was pried up and propped. Then the mules were put into a lope, and then a run, and the bouncing wagon scattered the cake in a hurry. A man would stand in the wagon and scoop the feed back as it became necessary. When the desired amount had been scattered, the team was stopped and the endgate replaced.

In 1914, there was a flood on the Beaver (North Canadian) and Cimarron Rivers due to excessive rainfall in New Mexico. All of the barns, sheds, and corrals were washed into the river and destroyed, along with the dipping vat. The next year they were rebuilt.

Shufford and East used the TXT for their brand, hence the ranch was known as the TXT.

In the latter part of 1916, Shufford sold the ranch to Bob Lane of Trinidad, Colorado. Lane was an early day cowboy in the area. He worked with ranches in Colorado in the days of the open range. Cattle from Colorado would stray into the Oklahoma Panhandle in the winter, drifting with the snowstorms. After the XIT fence was built, it held them out of Texas.

Lane told the story of making a roundup at the Wilkins Lake in the days of the open range. In the roundup were four buffalo cows and a yearling. This lake is some fifteen miles southwest of Boise City.

The ranch house as it stands today was built by Lane. It has eight rooms and a porch all the way around it. Mr. and Mrs. Carl Myers own the place and live there today.

In 1917, Lane sold the ranch to Raymond Thatcher of Pueblo, Colorado. In 1916, Lane stocked the ranch with cows -- always before only steers were on the range. Thatcher bought a part of these cows and shipped more to the ranch in the fall of 1918. These cattle came from a dried out ranch near Quanah, Texas. They were in bad shape, weak, and poor.

The winter of 1918-1919 was one of the worst on record. The snow was a foot deep for ninety days -- November, December, and January. Then a big storm that came on the ninth of April finished things up. Mr. Thatcher sold over two thousand cow hides to Otto-Johnson Mercantile Company in Clayton that winter, and not all were skinned. This was quite a blow for the whole country. It was also discouraging for Mr. Thatcher. He tried to dispose of the ranch and quit the business. A number of local people had an option on the place for over a year. They had planned to re-sell it, but financial breakdown over the country prevented any possible sale.

In the spring of 1920, Thatcher started again in the cattle business. He hired Bob Ikard as foreman. My father, mother, and I again moved to the ranch and stayed twenty-five years until it was sold and divided in 1945. This time we moved to the ranch with a wagon and team; cars were scarce. Later a Model T pickup was supplied. More cows were bought and more land was leased. At one time, the Wilson ranch that joined on the west was leased, two of the Lujan places, and Will May's place were also leased which extended the west boundary into New Mexico. The Joe Brown place and the OTO ranch where Charles Moore lived were also leased. Also in the immediate area, but in Texas, the Buffalo Springs and the FDW

ranch were included.

When the drought of the 1930's hit, there were over ten thousand cows, plus yearlings and calves, in the area.

As the range became grazed out and no more rain fell, the cattle had to be moved beginning in 1933. In the fall of 1933, Bob bought over a million bundles of feed from farmers in the area. This was the last crop raised for several years. The cattle that could not be moved were sold to the government and shot on the ranch. Most of the cattle went to Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The operation of raising cattle continued although under trying conditions.

In the beginning, the herd was made up of native Herefords, plus cattle shipped in from Texas which were descendants of the JA herd developed by Charles Goodnight. Only the best bulls that could be bought in Kansas, Missouri, and Iowa were used. In 1931, thirteen hundred registered heifer calves were bought and shipped to the ranch. Most of them came from the before-mentioned states, a few came from Texas. Only range type cattle were bought; they stayed away from the short chunky type. This was perhaps one of the best herds of commercial cattle ever assembled.

The final remnant of these cattle, something over nine hundred, were shipped from Boise City in 1945. These were wet cows that averaged eleven hundred pounds each. They were sold to a man in Washington and shipped there for breeding purposes. The Flying W ranch was perhaps the last unit that used the old-fashioned chuckwagon in the operation of its program in Cimarron County. Up until the railroad came to Boise City in 1925, many herds were trailed to Elkhart, Kansas, to Guymon, Oklahoma, and to Point of Rock in Kansas. These were cattle going to market. Cattle used for restocking were trailed in from Texas and New Mexico. Texline, Texas, and Clayton, New Mexico were also used as market points.

I would like to relate an incident that happened to Jack Potter while he was traildriving. He came on the scene later than my father's uncles, and drove cattle mainly up the western trails. He went north through the Texas and Oklahoma Panhandles, New Mexico, and on into Colorado and Kansas and north into Wyoming and Montana. Most of these cattle were driven to new ranges and not to market.

The Arkansas Valley in Colorado and Kansas had been settled by farmers and ranchers who had brought their cattle from the east. Many of these were purebred English and European breeds. They were not as hardy as the Texas cattle and were subject to tick fever, a disease caused by ticks from Texas. The Texas cattle had become immune to the ticks.

Eventually these Texas cattle were quarantined and could not enter Colorado or Kansas. This worked a hardship on the seller from Texas and the buyers from the north. Then they were allowed to cross if they agreed to winter the Texas cattle up on the plains where the cold weather would kill the ticks. This took time and was costly. Finally, a corridor ten miles wide was established on the Colorado and Kansas State line for these cattle from the south to pass through into Wyoming. This was of course a great help, but it was hard to enforce. The ten mile strip was soon grazed out and the tendency to spread out beyond the strip was prevalent.

This particular incident occurred one year when Jack Potter was driving the corridor. They were coming up pretty much the same way as they had the year before, when coming up over a rise, Jack noted a sod shanty directly ahead. (He was riding point, or at the head of the herd.) The point man's job was to determine the direction the herd would take at all times. Jack could not see anyone around at first, but when he got closer a man appeared from the shanty, waving furiously. He was seemingly directing

the herd around the shanty or back the way it had come. Jack rode ahead to contact the man to see what the trouble was. As he rode up, the man flatly stated, "You cannot go through here. You will have to go around my place." This man had evidently filed on the land and it was now his, hence the stern warning. He did not have a gun and did not look too mean to Jack. He was less than six feet tall and weighed perhaps 175 pounds. Jack was six feet four and weighed well over 200, so he was not very much excited. He started by saying, "We went across here last year. Looks like it would be all right to go on now." "No sir," the man said, "See that fence? That furrow is my line." (He was calling the furrow a fence.) Jack did not say anything, but sat there on his horse. The man said, "Get down off that horse and we will settle this."

Well, Jack was no scrapper, so to speak, but he was not afraid, so he obliged the man and stepped down. Before he could properly face the man, he was hit and knocked down. Jack started to get up and was immediately floored again. He was then knocked down a third time. Finally he said, "Wait a minute. We will go around, all right. Someone may get hurt at this rate." So around they went. This incident disturbed Jack to some extent. He had never been floored faster and easier. He was not one to hunt a fight, but he had always been able to hold his own pretty well.

As they went on north through a small town, Jack inquired about the homesteader in the sod house back down the trail. He was told that he had come in a few months before from the east and had filed on the land where his house was. Not telling what had happened, Jack asked, "Well, who is he, anyway? Do you know anything about his past?" A man replied, "He used to be a prizefighter. He was John L. Sullivan's sparring mate, but one day he got mad at

