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BUNCH—GRASS BEEF

Ranching in the Kamloops District



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by Mary Balf, Kamloops Museum, 1978

Land utilization is dependent on many factors, but two absolute basics are soil and climate. In the Thompson River drainage basin the soil in most areas is very fertile, although the high proportion of glacial silt on the bench-lands means poor water retention, and bare rock outcrops are common in parts of the higher regions.

Winter temperature is very variable, being often very mild, but in some years falling to around 25°C below zero. It was this occasional hard weather that spelt eventual death to most of the fruit-growing enterprises of the district. More serious is the low precipitation in all but the mountains and the Shuswap district, since 9 to 12 inches a year limits natural vegetation, particularly as summers are hot, and the brief spring run-off is often followed by parched desert in July and August. In 1973, for instance, the growing season was painfully short, so that wild grass attained only half its normal height. Range land in the interior is therefore a very fragile resource, where every drop of water is a valuable asset. In rare generous years, like 1976, growth is profuse, but this naturally applies to weeds as well as to good fodder, and the dampness renders hay-harvesting very precarious.

The nomadic Interior Salish Indians did not cultivate the soil, since they obtained sufficient quantities of fish, game and wild plants. The only domestic animal they kept was a squat, tufty-eared dog, now sadly extinct; it served as a beast of burden and, in emergencies when starvation threatened, as food. But the white man's earliest evolution in the area is fairly summed up in the historical marker at Kamloops Look-out - "Fur, Gold, Cattle". There is, of course, a considerable overlap of these periods, but a study of ranching involves all three.

THE FUR TRADE

Grazing potential was recognized very early, since huge horse brigades were needed for the transport of furs, both from Thompson's River Post (Kamloops) and from Fort Alexandria in the New Caledonia District. Very satisfactory breeding and wintering grounds were soon found, particularly in Grande Prairie (Westwold) and in the Lac Le Bois area. But in the period 1812 to 1835 the white traders lived very much as did the Indians, with the sockeye salmon as their staple diet. The standard ration was three dried salmon per man per day,

ameliorated by occasional venison, geese or berries traded from the Indians, and potatoes which they grew themselves. Gradually, especially under Samuel Black, the garden was extended to include delicacies like onions and turnips. Christmas, New Year and the annual arrival of the New Caledonian Brigade were celebrated by the slaughter of an effete horse, which was greatly relished. A little tea, sugar, salt and spirits were imported for such "regales".

The date of arrival of the first cattle is uncertain; it is known that John McLeod and James Douglas brought in some calves to the lower Columbia in 1826, and that by 1840 there were certainly a few at the post here, probably kept mainly for milk. By the 1850's, however, real beef appeared on the festival menus, since the cattle herd was now a little larger. Paul Fraser, in charge at this period, frequently confided to his journal his fears that cattle would be stolen by starving Indians, but they nobly refrained. On one occasion this harsh and bitter man became generous: - "Found a Bull with his leg Broak - the Meat was not eatable, so gave it to the Indians."

THE GOLD ERA

The discovery of gold was a sad event for the H.B.C., since they realized that the disruption of their old way of life by huge numbers of miners would spell eventual doom for the fur trade. But in Kamloops, Chief Trader Donald McLean reacted promptly by bringing in miners' supplies and by increasing farming. In 1860 an experimental farm, under William Manson, was attempted several miles up the west side of the North Thompson, named the Calumet, strangely the designation for a Plains Indian peace pipe. Grain and vegetables, except potatoes, did very poorly, as they made a late start and the weather was unusually cool and damp. But the adjacent dairy was a real success, still remembered as Dairy Creek. Here Donald McAulay made the district's first butter. Beef became increasingly important; the H.B.C. herds were considerably enlarged, while McLean and his sons also managed to amass their own stock. Passing miners provided a ready market for fresh meat and milk.

At this period, too, hay-making first became a vital chore for the H.B.C. on the riverside meadows at Tranquille and Mission Flats. The brigade horses had mostly been left to forage for themselves in winter, but cattle hooves are less adept at

moving snow cover, so that some supplement was found necessary in most years. Even so, there was considerable winter kill in those years with prolonged deep snow.

During 1860 three H.B.C. servants decided to retire from the Company to start their own farms - the first independent settlers in the immediate Kamloops area. Donald McAulay took up land near the mouth of Cherry Creek, and was soon joined as neighbour by John McIver, while John Leonard settled at Campbell Creek. In a small way all ran cattle, raised hogs, and cultivated barley, wheat and potatoes, and at times went off on brief prospecting trips, or augmented their somewhat skimpy incomes by hay-making contracts for the H.B.C. Later in the year McLean himself left the Company to settle at the Bonaparte-Hat Creek junction with his large family and livestock. Here he developed a ranch and ran "McLean's Restaurant" for the sustenance of Cariboo travellers, as well as prospecting various mineral claims. He seems to have had considerable success in these enterprises until 1864, when he was killed in the Chilcotin "War".

In the early 1860's huge numbers of cattle were coming through this country on the long drive from the States to the hungry miners of the north. Most followed the old fur-trade route through the Okanagan valley and Kamloops; the Jeffreys and Ben Snipes drives were massive undertakings, while Jerome and Thaddeus Harper made several trips.

CATTLE - FIRST RANCHES

The success of the H.B.C. men and the good feed for the big cattle drives led logically to the establishment of farms specifically for raising cattle somewhat nearer the butchers of Barkerville. For instance the Harper brothers, enterprising Virginians, soon recognized the potential of the Thompson valley, and in 1862 started their Kamloops ranch for breeding as well as for wintering livestock en route to the goldfields. John Wilson and Lewis Campbell wintered cattle on the South Thompson in the same year; the latter settled here at the mouth of the creek now bearing his name and married Leonard's daughter, while Wilson later took up land around Savona and at Grande Prairie. Similarly, when Cariboo sales were dwindling, J.B. Greaves very successfully wintered cattle near Walhachin, but a few years later moved to the upper Nicola, and in 1884 became first manager of the Douglas Lake Cattle Company.

By far the most popular area in these early days was that around Cache Creek. As early as 1859 Lieutenant R.C. Mayne on his survey of the interior by pack-horse had noted: "There is much good land along the Buonaparte; the whole being clothed with long grass, of which the horses seemed very fond." The vast majority of horses, mules and, later, oxen used to pack and haul freight to the Cariboo were wintered in this area, and soon many others followed Donald McLean's example in cattle raising. Among the first notables were Captain Cavendish Venables, Aschal S. Bates, Clement F. and Henry P. Cornwall, Philip Parke, Charles A. Semlin, Michael and John Veasy, Charles Pennie, William H. Sanford, Thomas Morgan, George Dunne, J.C. Barnes, James Campbell and E.G. Perry.

BUNCH GRASS

It was in the early 1860's that the virtues of blue bunch grass (*Agropyron spicata*) as prime fodder became recognized. At the end of August, 1863 our first tourists, Dr. Cheadle and Lord Milton, arrived in Kamloops after their arduous trip from Tete Jaune Cache. Cheadle went into ecstasies over a fine meal of roast beef, and noted: "Great nutritiousness of pasturage about Kamloops. Bunch grass. Cattle brought from all around to winter. Get fat in very short time." Later he added, "In the afternoon a Mr. Jerome Harper arrived on horseback. He was bringing in a drove of 500 cattle from Oregon." And a few days later, on route to Cache Creek, he found, "Fine hills running close to the lake.....sparsely timbered, yellow with bunch grass."

At this early period 160 acres were available for pre-emption, but in 1870 this was recognized as inadequate in the dry interior, and was doubled. It is sadly ironic that at the same time the British Columbian government regarded 10 acres as ample land allowance for each Indian family to farm, while their supposedly superior white brethren needed 320 acres. It is small wonder that they believed that greedy settlers were grabbing their land, while they themselves were herded onto tiny Reserves.

During the 1860s virtually all good land had been taken up by ranchers in the Cache Creek-Savona area, and the Kamloops-South Thompson district was also fairly well - populated. The Nicola Valley realized its cattle potential a little later, but was

almost completely occupied by the early 1880s, as was the lower North Thompson basin.

The delicate position of bunch grass in the dry belt was soon acknowledged, as over-grazing caused its reduction in favor of our native "increasers" - sage brush, rabbit brush, cactus and various inferior grasses. In 1873 the Rev. George M. Grant journeyed across the prairies, through the Rockies, down the North Thompson and through to the coast as "Secretary" to Chief Engineer Sandford Fleming's railway planning expedition. At Kamloops on September 29 he waxed eulogistic: "Turtle soup out of a gold spoon is meagre fare compared to Kamloops beef. After a few samples at breakfast, we were willing to subscribe to all that has ever been said in favour of bunch grass as feed for the cattle of kings..... The hills in the neighbourhood have the clean cultivated park-like appearance that we noted yesterday; and several farms on the flats, at the junction of the two branches, gave look of life and field work to which, as well as the universal soft mellow colouring imparted by the bunch grass, our eyes had long been unaccustomed."

But at Ashcroft two days later Grant noticed a great deterioration: "It is little better than a vast sand and gravel pit, bounded by broken hills, bald and arid except on a few summits that support a scanty growth of scrub pines. The cattle have eaten off all the bunch grass within three or four miles of the road, and a poor substitute for it chiefly in the shape of a bluish weed or shrub, called sage grass or sage bush, has taken its place."

In 1875 the botanist Professor John Macoun studied the flora around Cache Creek, and commented in part: "The benches near the river are altogether bare, except for a few bunches of grass and the *Artemisia frigida* (sage brush), which on all the interior plainsreplaces bunch grass when it has been eaten down. The extreme bareness of the lower benches near the road arises, I believe, from the fact of the grass having been completely killed out by the travelling stock."

The delightful Lady Dufferin accompanied her husband, the Governor-General, on a trip through the interior in 1876. At Ashcroft she noted in her inimitable fashion: "One carries away from this district the idea of a great sandhill of a yellowish

tinge.....the only crop is bunch-grass. Though it produces such good beef, I can't tell you how many acres it requires to feed one cow, and the animal has quite a walk to take between one tuft of grass and another."

In 1881 the editor of the British Colonist paid tribute to the fine roast beef from the interior: "These vast rolling plains intersected by wooded heights are covered with the most nutritious of all known grasses which grows in tufts and hence its name as bunch grass..... It has been found, however, that constant feeding summer and winter wear it out Hence it is that some portions of the great Interior, such as the Cache Creek section for instance, the magnificent bunch-grass which 15 or 20 years ago grew two or three feet high is now nearly exterminated."

It is obvious from these quotations that the evils of overgrazing were fully recognized very early; it is a sad comment on ranchers and government alike that no concerted attempt was made to correct the deterioration. Instead, indeed, the Cache Creek malpractice spread to Kamloops, the Nicola Valley and the Cariboo, and new areas of sage brush desert were created, although where the rainfall was higher results were less disastrous. At intervals the cattlemen, not very convincingly, tried to push the blame onto the few sheep farmers, starting in 1879 when the Cornwall brothers headed a mass indignation meeting at Cache Creek in an effort to oust the Van Volkenburg brothers' sheep from Hat Creek pasturage.

TROUBLED TIMES

The initial boundless optimism of the cattlemen was seriously dampened as gold fever abated in the Cariboo and other mining centres; it was unrewarding to raise fine beef if there was no market for it. Thaddeus Harper, who had originally brought in cattle from the States, attempted to reverse the traffic in 1876 by planning a huge drive to Chicago, but a falling market caused him to change his mind when they had already reached Montana, so that he eventually diverted them to San Francisco for very poor returns.

There were some sales to C.P.K. survey parties during the period 1872 to 1876, but not enough to create a reasonable substitute for the mining hordes. And then ranchers suffered a very bad winter; snow started in November of 1879 and

remained deep until the following March, with unpleasantly low temperatures. Although most cattlemen were in the habit of cutting a certain amount of wild hay for winter use, very few had adequate supplies to meet this emergency, and consequently cattle losses were shocking. Some of the smaller farmers, particularly in the Nicola Valley, were so discouraged that they were eager to sell out to the big ranchers that were emerging at this time. By far the biggest locally was the Douglas Lake Cattle Company, formed in 1884 under the management of Joseph B. Greaves, which eventually absorbed virtually all the farmers of that area. In addition John Wilson of Savona, the Guichon and Moore families of the Nicola Valley, William J. Roper of Cherry Creek and several others expanded their initial small beginnings into sizeable spreads.

Branding had been practised by the H.B.C. and a few of the settlers of the 1860s, and the official register of brands was started in 1873, although the majority of owners failed to take advantage of this promptly. Summer grazing leases and open rangeland were perhaps an invitation to the black-hearted, and even a brand offered scant protection. Cattle changed hands frequently, and the infant police force was spread far too thinly to be of any effect. Consequently rustling, always endemic in the district, probably achieved its peak in the 1880s, and there are many stories of various nefarious activities. Very few cases reached the courts; lawyers were expensive, and cases tended to be dismissed for lack of firm proof. But sometimes a rough and ready justice was meted out by the stockbreeders themselves, since they usually had an accurate knowledge of the culprit, even although they could not prove it to the satisfaction of a court of law.

One such story handed down by word of mouth has the ring of truth. Nicholas Hare, father of the notorious Alex who partnered the McLean outlaws, came to Cherry Creek about 1863, and the earlier settlers here, Donald McAulay and John McIver, lost so many cattle that a few years later they decided to start anew in the present Westsyde area. Hare prospered in his unrighteousness for many years, but finally in 1882 William Roper, with the support of the newer settlers of the neighbourhood, approached him with stern advice to sell out "or else....." Hare wisely departed in haste for parts unknown, after Roper had bought his holdings at a sort of forced sale.

Small ranchers often considered the big concerns fair game, and the Douglas Lake Cattle Company suffered frequent depredations, but later became powerful enough to police their own operations fairly effectively. Around Cache Creek in the early 1880s there seemed to be an epidemic of settlers grabbing each other's cattle. Much of Magistrate Henry Cornwall's time was occupied in trying to sort out whether John Veasy had re-branded W.H. Sanford's steer, whether Sanford had purloined Michael Veasy's favorite cow, or how many times Walter Langley had destroyed "Oregon Jack" Dowling's dam in order to irrigate his own hayfields. In most cases guilt was obvious, and the motive seemed to be a personal squabble or retaliation rather than real profit by theft.

In 1896 ranching security was much improved by the establishment of Cattle Overseers, responsible ranchers elected annually in open meeting to arbitrate or prevent arguments and ill-feeling. In addition they took charge of the massive district round-ups each fall, when brands were checked and cattle driven home off the open range by their owners for wintering. One of these sessions near Jacko Lake, under James Mellors, is illustrated on the cover; it was a social as well as a working occasion.

THE RAILWAY ERA

Railway construction camps in the early 1880s provided a ready market for beef, and was thus the salvation of many ranchers. The completed line permitted easy, but very expensive, shipping. The first rail shipments to the coast were sent by J.B. Greaves and Uriah Nelson from Spences Bridge in February, 1884, before the line had been extended through the Rockies.

But for some cattlemen the C.P.R. right-of-way spelt tragedy, since property was divided by it, and sometimes water supplies were cut off from part of the land. Alex McBryan of Shuswap was virtually ruined by this, and several others lost quite heavily. Many sought compensation from the railway, but Lewis Campbell's seems to have been the only successful case locally, perhaps because he was one of the few rich enough to be able to afford a good lawyer.

Because freight rates were high, small operators mostly sold their cattle to the larger concerns, or banded together in small groups to continue drives to the coast. In 1892 John T. Edwards of Heffley Creek and James Woodland, Kamloops butcher and

Campbell Range rancher, both acting as agents for several others, started Kamloops Cattle Company, which was, in effect, an early co-operative. They opened two butcher stores in Vancouver in an attempt to eliminate the big profits of middlemen, but eventually failed for lack of sufficient capital. Hull brothers were much more successful, by establishing in two areas; John remained in Kamloops with a ranch and butcher's shop, while William moved to Calgary in 1886 for a similar operation there. At this stage the massive Alberta foothills ranches, then part of the North-West Territories, were beginning to develop, and there was a better market there for good stock than could be found on the Pacific slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

Small stockyards were established at Shuswap, Kamloops, Ashcroft and Spences Bridge, and at times these were expanded into something approaching the modern feed-lot. For instance, in 1893 and again a decade later hard Nicola winters ran hay supplies perilously short, and cattle were driven to Mission Flats just west of town, to be fed on hay brought by the C.P.R. from the prairies. Joe Bulman handled up to 3500 head on this feed-lot for the Douglas Lake Cattle Company and a host of smaller owners.

In the Calgary district completion of the C.P.R. led to the establishment of many large company ranches, financed in eastern Canada or Britain. By contrast, in B.C. most of the available land had already been taken up, often by Americans, and the absentee financier landlord was very rare here. An exception was the Western Canada Ranching Company which bought up the massive Harper holdings in 1889, when Thaddeus, the surviving brother, went bankrupt.

"Gentlemen farmers" were also few and far between, although the Cornwalls could perhaps be so classed, since, unlike most of their contemporaries, they could hire laborers, and had sufficient political and social influence to enable them to take over land designated as Indian Reserve. But they themselves were hard workers and good managers, despite much time and energy spent chasing coyotes with a pack of fox-hounds in the style of the English gentry. And Hewitt Bostock bought out Jacob Duck at Monte Creek in 1888 as an English investment, planning to run it on the strength of occasional visits. But he

and his young bride soon succumbed to the charms of this district - and its budding political life - and decided to become very active residents themselves, much involved in mining interests, downtown commercial blocks, and fine general promotion of the district to attract settlers.

At this period the fashionable colonial enterprise for English gentry was fruit-farming in the Okanagan, following the lead of Lord Aberdeen, Governor-General. Kamloops cattlemen were altogether a rougher and tougher breed, and of a very varied ancestry. Most of them had started as cow-hands themselves and were used to hard work and no pretensions; there were only a few "remittance men" in this area. Most of these, like Ernest Brocklehurst, eventually decided the social amenities were not adequate for their tastes, and moved away.

BREEDS

To the fur-traders cattle were just cattle, with no hint of their ancestry. And those driven up from the States during the gold era were probably a very mixed bunch, ranging from Texas longhorns and others of Spanish origin to a wide variety of shorthorns; there seems to have been no planned breeding. During the 1870s a few pure-bred Durham shorthorn bulls were imported into the interior, and local photographs around 1890 show mainly shorthorns of various colors, with just a sprinkling of the first few stalwart Herefords. Because of their ability to withstand hard weather and their good beef production these gradually became the dominant breed, partly owing to the example and advice of W.J. Roper and the Agricultural Association. It is only during the last twenty years that the Aberdeen-Angus has been introduced on a large scale for cross-breeding, and Charolais and various other European breeds are a still more recent experiment. Herefords continue to be by far the most numerous. Oddly, they are here usually pronounced "Herford" instead of the three-syllable "Hereford" of their English county of origin.

FODDER

As winter feeding became generally recognized as essential in most years, natural bunch grass was cut but, particularly in dry areas which had suffered from over-grazing, the crop was quite pathetically small. Even after the disastrous experience of the winter of 1879 most ranchers seemed eager to raise as many head

as possible, relying on the good luck of a mild winter in their gamble. Some kind of cultivated hay was required, and with this, in most parts of the district, the need for irrigation.

As early as 1862 Henry Cornwall planted some alfalfa at Ashcroft, but it seems not to have been a success; perhaps this too was over-grazed. In 1876 J.T. Edwards tried it at Heffley Creek, and it did very well for a few years and then died from neglect. And in 1906 W.R. McDonald at Napier Lake actually harvested seed from his crop, and gradually thereafter this prime fodder became recognized as the best, at first usually under its European name of lucerne.

In the 1890s sainfoin was quite widely used, mostly grown from seed raised at Spences Bridge by Peter Moren. Unfortunately this is not as deep-rooted as alfalfa, and so more readily suffered in very dry or very cold years, so that it was gradually abandoned - although the gay pink flower spikes can still be found naturalized along roadsides.

Undoubtedly, at least until the 1920s, the most popular fodder crop on irrigated flats was Timothy grass, and the price of this hay was the highest. But, sadly, with the introduction of this and other seeds came impurities, and some of these alien species found the terrain to their liking, and have become serious weeds. Russian thistle (tumbleweed) was one of the first and most widespread in the dry belt, while in some parts sun spurge and various species of mustard have become a nuisance. Perhaps the worst is a relatively recent one; knapweed can tolerate very dry conditions and competes all too successfully with native grass, and so has spread alarmingly along the north side of the South Thompson and in the Savona area particularly, and is still increasing. There was real hope that this would be biologically controlled by use of an insect, but in 1977 the use of Tordon 22K was announced. Hopefully this has been very thoroughly tested for side-effects, and will not wreak havoc among wild life and even humans, as has happened with many herbicides and pesticides.

MIXED FARMING

From about 1905 until World War One there was a potent drive to attract settlers, and a great deal of nonsense was disseminated locally and in Europe about dry-belt farming. Some

of those responsible were undoubtedly sincere in their advocacy, but very ill-informed; others, it seems obvious, were real-estate rip-off artists with extremely glib tongues. In reading some of the quite outrageous promotions one would imagine that any greenhorn could settle anywhere on a small patch of hillside around Kamloops and plant wheat which would rival the best prairie product, raise a few dairy cows and poultry and a fine market garden patch, all without any irrigation - and become well-to-do in a few years. They were to find reality was a cruelly different thing.

During this period the hills around Knutsford, Long Lake, Beresford, Bestwick, Lac Le Bois, and "Strawberry Heights" between Paul and Heffley Lakes became quite densely settled, and in damp years like 1911 actually produced quite respectable crops. But for the most part it was a very dispiriting struggle to survive. Some help was provided by the existence of Kamloops and Heffley Creek Creameries, and a Farmers' Market in town from 1914 to 1919, when pressure from merchants induced the City Fathers to close it. Some settlers had departed for World War One and never returned to the arid hills; others eventually gave up in favor of city jobs. Their memorial is a tumble-down log cabin, a brave lilac bush and sometimes straggling currants or a valiant clump of rhubarb, whose deep roots permit cheerful survival even when the spring run-off has dried out. Only the real estate men grew rich.

One man attempted a short cut to prosperity. In 1911 he salted his Rose Hill poultry yard with a little coarse gold, and a perceptive Kamloops housewife discovered some in the gizzard of a duck. She and all her friends and neighbours rushed up the hill to stake claims, but the deception was soon discovered - and the farmer's conduct regarded as most ungentlemanly.

A few of the settlers eventually became successful. They perhaps had a little more water than their neighbours, or more intelligence and capacity for hard work, or were lucky enough to be able to buy adjacent land cheaply as others gave up the struggle. As their holdings expanded they concentrated on raising cattle as their most rewarding enterprise, and these scattered small-holdings reverted to the relatively large acreage necessary for ranching - the only really viable use.

Much the same happened at Walhachin. Promoters induced the "better class" of Englishmen to grow fruit on Charles Pennie's old ranch and land opposite on the Thompson River below Savona. Even the name was, to put it kindly, very misleading; it is the Shuswap word for "round rocks", an apt description of the local beaches, but the company's brochure and Kamloops propaganda translated it as "land of plenty"! The coarse textured soil had a very high water requirement, but badly designed flumes from the dammed Snohoosh Lake on Deadmans Creek lost most of their contents by leakage and evaporation, and wash-outs of large sections were frequent.

After the expenditure of huge sums on fruit trees, flumes and packing houses, using mostly Indian and Chinese labor, the project was eventually abandoned, to the sorrow of all concerned. Popular mythology attributes this to World War One casualties, but in reality it was never a viable operation, as has been shown by Nelson Riis' extensive research. Harry Ferguson, great-grandson of P.S. Ogden of fur-trade fame, later ranched most of the land, but it never recovered its former bountiful blue bunch wheat grass. Clearing and ploughing by the company with subsequent cessation of irrigation led to erosion and attack by inferior plant invaders, resulting in very inferior range land in these areas. It was a disaster for the land, as well as for the people whose high hopes of an orchard Paradise had been shattered.

ORGANIZATIONS

The Inland Agricultural Association was formed in Kamloops on January 7, 1889 with Nicola Lake rancher Samuel Moore elected president, following circulation of a letter to ranchers which expressed concern over cattle killed by the unfenced C.P.R., and over cattle rustling. And on January 12 a similar organization was formed at Ashcroft for the whole Yale-Lillooet district, with Charles Pennie as president! Perhaps partly because of an Inland Sentinel editorial deploring such diffusion of a single interest, good sense prevailed and they amalgamated, holding their first show in Ashcroft at the beginning of October. Next year it took place in Kamloops, and alternation of location and officers seemed quite satisfactory until 1894, when there was considerable squabbling. It seems Ashcroft considered itself the central location and therefore worthy of becoming the permanent home of the Fair, which was greatly resented by Kamloops

ranchers, and by its hoteliers and businessmen who would miss the visitors' trade.

In 1895 they decided the population had grown enough to be able to support two organizations; the Inland continued at Ashcroft, while the new Kamloops Agricultural Association was formed here, with the ubiquitous Hewitt Bostock as first president, and our own first Fall Fair was duly held. These continued for a few years as very pleasant affairs until grandiose ideas prevailed, and the usual Kamloops watchword of "Bigger and Better" led to mounting debts. Even the sale in 1911 of Alexandra Park, their North Kamloops grounds and buildings, was negated in 1913 by the erection of the Agricultural Hall in Riverside Park. But they struggled on, with occasional financially successful years, eventually becoming the Exhibition Association. Later fairs were far removed from the original basic shows of cattle, horses and other livestock and produce.

A very useful organization was the Farmers' Institute, whose Kamloops branch was started in 1900 by John F. Smith. It was primarily concerned with the education of farmers, and was particularly valuable for newcomers to the dry belt in their attempts to eke out an existence on mixed dairy and arable farming. The established cattlemen were scarcely involved, but occasional talks concerning ranching helped the beginners.

In 1919 the Bull Sale was inaugurated in an attempt to improve local stock, and it was a resounding success, ensuring its continuation through the years. It is probably Kamloops' most enduring and useful organization, having made a point of involving the younger generation as well as their established elders. It has not only promoted the breeding of better cattle throughout the district but also fosters a good relationship and friendly competition between ranchers.

In 1935 a Dominion Entomological Office was opened in Kamloops, and soon afterwards the Mission Flats property was acquired, with fine laboratory facilities completed in 1938. Research into the habits and control of wood ticks, cut worms and other insect pests thus became readily available to farmers of the interior. This organization was soon joined on Mission Flats by the Kamloops Range Experimental Substation, established to research the multiple factors affecting beef production, but this was closed in 1939 with the onset of war.

Requests to resume research after the war led to the acquisition of 140 acres on the Tranquille road, and the Range Research Station was opened in 1947. Another 7000 acres at Pass Lake were added, and 70,000 acres of Tranquille Forest Reserve is managed under grazing permit in conjunction with the Tranquille Livestock Association. Major studies include the various aspects of range management, seeding and fertility, and the use and irrigation of alfalfa, corn and other forage crops.

These two organizations have not only promulgated information of long-term use to the rancher, but have also been available with advice on any specific problem or immediate difficulties. We now have attained the era of scientific farming!

TOWARDS MODERN TIMES

The pride and joy of the cowboy on the range has always been his horse, and it is still, of course, his basic tool. But the Clydesdales and Percherons and other large horses used for haying and other heavy work on the ranch were gradually replaced during the 1920s by the "horse power" of steel monsters. Mechanization on the farm took place just as surely as it did in the city, and about at the same time. During the Depression there was sadly a temporary reversal, when Old Dobbin was again pressed into service to haul a weird assortment of vehicles from which the gas-guzzling engine had been removed, and named Bennett Buggies in dubious honor of Prime Minister R.B. Bennett. When times improved the heavy horses became virtually extinct.

There was during the same period a marked tendency for ranches to become bigger. Earlier the reverse had occasionally been true; when Johnny Wilson died in 1901, for instance, his mighty empire had reverted to its original components as his family each inherited a portion. But from 1910 onwards casualties of the dry-belt farming promotion racket and of the later Depression usually sold their holdings to the well-established operations. These in consequence grew steadily larger, just as the Douglas Lake Cattle Company had batted on its smaller and less successful neighbours in the 1880s.

Rehabilitation of the land is now beginning to take place where overgrazing has caused native increasers, notably sage and rabbit brush, prickly pear cactus and speargrass to replace the

less resistant blue bunch wheat grass. In some places this process has gone so far that there seem to be only two alternatives. Range land can be cleared of increasers and the invading alien species - and in extreme cases of rocks exposed by subsequent erosion - and then sown with crested wheat grass, which apparently has all the nutritional virtues of bunch grass and is somewhat more durable. Or, when water can be made available, reasonably flat areas can be used for irrigated alfalfa fields. A good example of the latter reclamation can be seen along the Trans-Canada Highway opposite Walhachin, where land had been so grossly misused that it was cropped bare and much of the topsoil lost to the four winds, leaving quite sizeable boulders. These have been cleared and pumps installed, so that now the dispiriting desert blooms with fine crops of fodder. This is certainly not what the English settlers of 1910 envisaged, but an excellent use of good land. In other places where the surface is too steep for harvesting and where natural rainfall is a little higher, seeding with grass stands a fair chance of success.

If and when land is restored to its former glory, great care will be needed to prevent a recurrence of the ills of over-grazing. It is essential to be very strict concerning grazing rights. Our early ranchers, in addition to 160 to 320 acres pre-emption which became their own with the improvements necessary for a Crown Grant, commonly leased other land and also obtained a grazing permit for a stated number of cattle on Crown Land. Over the years the tradition arose that a ranch should hold this permit as, almost, an inalienable right, continuing in force when the ranch changed hands. Consequently, as more ranches came into being, more head of cattle were added to those already grazing on the summer range, and in some cases owners surreptitiously added a few more over their official number without much risk of discovery. It has also been suggested that at times Government officials were somewhat lax in issuing new permits over-readily, even when the range was already too densely populated. The situation therefore steadily deteriorated.

As mentioned earlier, in former years the consequent range damage was popularly attributed by the cattlemen to the relatively few sheep-breeders, on the theory that their flocks chewed bunch grass to its roots. It was doubtless convenient to blame someone else, but there seems no question that the harm was mainly done by overuse of the land by cattle. In some

cases there were too many cattle for the vegetation, and in others they were allowed too long a grazing season. One of the measures of a good rancher is to know just when to move cattle onto the summer range and when to bring them home again, in order to preserve the full potential for seasonal growth of bunch grass. This is a vital skill in areas of low rainfall, where the growth period is painfully short before the parching drought of most summers.

In recent years agricultural research of different types of soil, vegetation and climate has made it possible to establish quite accurately how many cattle a given range can support, and the season at which they should be moved. There is, then, no excuse for future overgrazing.

Another hazard for ranchers is the recreational use of land. There has always been occasional trouble with careless hunters, and perpetual arguments concerning the proportional co-existence of cattle and deer on pasture, but this has been dwarfed in recent years by the introduction and extreme popularity of all-terrain vehicles. Most of us have seen in spring time the ravages of snow-mobile tracks when snow was inadequate - and quite often cut fences and scattered garbage to add insult to injury. Places such as Tunkwa and Leighton Lakes have been laid bare by children hurtling around on motor bikes in clouds of dust as they crush the few remaining grass roots. And powerful four-wheelers have torn tracks into fragile alpine meadows once reached only by back-packers. This mechanization of humans to the present high degree poses a dire new threat to summer range land. So also does the development of logging roads which make possible access to once-remote areas, even by ordinary cars and campers. Without very careful control the price paid by ranchers, as well as naturalists, will be high.

It is fair to say that cattle ranching has been our most consistently successful activity ever since its inception in 1860, but its healthy survival depends on very careful study of land use, and wise politicians to ensure implementation of our collective knowledge. Otherwise a vegetarian diet may be forced upon us in the not-too-distant future! Already huge areas of the best land have been lost to the demands of industry, residential developments and trailer parks, while the productivity of other districts has been sadly diminished by overgrazing and recreational use.

Most of the earlier mistakes were made through ignorance and through the instinct of pioneer settlements to believe that a burgeoning population is necessary for success. There was also the temptation for the individual rancher to make a quick profit, either by raising too many cattle for the land's healthy capacity, or by selling good farm land for "development" in its many forms. There has been virtually no planned concern for the future, so that now much of our rural heritage is lost, and very urgent consideration is essential to halt this trend. We can no longer plead ignorance.

Scientific farming must now be our way of life, and perhaps mass production by big ranches has become a necessary corollary. A fine example of the success of this is offered by the Douglas Lake Cattle Company; with careful and knowledgeable management it is possible for man to live in harmony with his environment and with its wild life - and to produce good beef and happy humans at the same time!

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