

Section

1

Early Cattle Ranching

Main Ideas

1. The Texas cattle industry grew from the ranchos established by the Spanish in the 1700s.
2. The longhorn was uniquely suited for the hot, dry Texas climate.
3. The Civil War increased demand for Texas cattle.

Why It Matters Today

People have been ranching in Texas for about 300 years. Use current events sources to learn more about the modern-day livestock industry.



TEKS: 1B, 5B, 6B, 9C, 10B, 13A, 13B, 21A, 21B, 21C, 22A

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on early cattle ranching in Texas.



VIDEO

Cattle Ranching

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Key Terms

- brands
- cattle drives
- rustlers
- longhorn
- Texas fever

The Story Continues

In the late 1870s brothers James and Bob Cator moved to the Panhandle and bought a herd of cattle. There were already many ranches in the area, and cattle herds often intermingled. To keep their animals separated, many ranchers built fences. When heavy blizzards struck the Panhandle in 1885, though, these fences kept the herds from moving south to escape the weather. Thousands of cattle—entire herds—died in an event known as the Big Die-Up. The Cator brothers and many other ranchers suffered huge losses.



Spanish Beginnings

Ranching had been established in Texas long before the 1870s. The Spanish had established cattle ranchos, or ranches, in Mexico in the 1500s. By the early 1700s the Spanish were moving herds and flocks north onto pastures in the San Antonio and Guadalupe River valleys. These regions had a good climate and water supply, as well as plentiful grasses. Beginning in the 1750s a new ranching frontier was opened along the lower Rio Grande valley. Tomás Sánchez de la Berrera y Garza owned one of the largest ranches, which was located near Laredo. Martín de León owned another huge cattle ranch in present-day Victoria County. Rosa María Hinojosa de Ballí, who was the first cattle queen of Texas, controlled more than one million acres at the time of her death in 1803.



As the number of cattle ranches grew, disputes sometimes arose when ranchers lost track of which cattle they owned. The Spanish government began ordering cattle owners to put **brands**, or identification marks made with hot metal, on their cattle. For example, Martín de León's brand was EJ, which stood for Espíritu de Jesús, or "Spirit of Jesus." Tejano ranchers staged the first **cattle drives** in Texas, herding groups of cattle south of the Rio Grande to supply beef to Spanish military outposts. During the Revolutionary War, cattle from Texas supported Spanish and American armies in the Mississippi River valley and Gulf regions. Cattle ranching soon became an important part of the region's economy.

As U.S. settlers arrived in the early 1800s, ranching spread to other areas. Each region had its advantages. East Texas was relatively close to the cattle markets in New Orleans, while Central and South Texas had rich prairie grasses and moderate climates. After seeing the lush prairies, some U.S. settlers decided to become ranchers rather than farmers.

The Texas cattle industry slowly expanded in the 1840s. For example, Aaron Ashworth of Jefferson County had ranch holdings worth more than \$30,000, or about \$700,000 in today's dollars. Some Texans began driving cattle to out-of-state markets. James Taylor White began to drive cattle from Liberty County to market in New Orleans, and in 1846 Edward Piper took a herd of Texas cattle to Ohio. After gold was discovered in California, some Texans drove a number of cattle west to help feed the growing population of miners.

Despite the growth of the cattle industry, ranchers faced several challenges. Cattle **rustlers**, or thieves, threatened the herds. A bigger hurdle was access to markets. The demand for cattle within Texas was limited because of the region's fairly small population. Ranchers could herd their stock to sell outside of Texas, but it was a difficult and often dangerous process.

Reading Check Sequencing Describe in order the development of the cattle industry in Texas from its Spanish beginnings.

Interpreting Visuals

Ranch life. Ranchers had to protect their herds from dangerous animals such as bears. **What tools and techniques are these vaqueros using?**



Vaqueros and Cowboys

Vaqueros were the first cowboys in Texas. Most were skilled ropers and riders. Over time, Spanish practices combined with the practices of U.S. settlers to create a Texas cowboy tradition. It's not uncommon to see Texans wearing cowboy fashions, particularly boots and hats. Museums and events around the state celebrate vaqueros and cowboys. For example, the Texas Cowboy Reunion in Stamford features wild-horse races. **How have cowboys influenced the culture of Texas?**



The Longhorn

During the 1800s longhorn beef fed thousands of Texans. Cowboys munched on jerky, or beef that has been dried in the sunshine. Other Texans ate beefsteaks fried in tallow, or grease. A poem described the longhorn's role in Texas history.

"Other states are carved or born;

Texas grew from hide and horn.

Other states are long or wide;

Texas is a shaggy hide."

How did Texas grow "from hide and horn"?

The Texas Longhorns

During the mid-1800s the **longhorn** appeared in Texas. This new breed of cattle developed as Spanish breeds mixed with English cattle brought by U.S. settlers. The longhorns were well suited to life in Texas, thriving on its native grasses. These lean strong animals could endure hot weather as well as cold. They even ate prickly pear cacti during droughts and could survive on little water. In addition, longhorns were resistant to the cattle disease commonly called **Texas fever**.

While older longhorns weighed up to 1,600 pounds, some people said the longhorn had too little meat. They called it "8 pounds of hamburger on 800 pounds of bone and horn." However, long legs allowed longhorns to travel great distances, and their horns protected them from mountain lions, wolves, and other predators. Mature animals had enormous pointed horns—some were five or more feet across. Early Texas settlers displayed these horns on their walls. They made buttons, cups, decorations, furniture, and household utensils from the horns. They even stored gunpowder in hollowed-out horns. Few animals were as useful to people on the Texas frontier as the longhorn was.

The longhorns became more valuable as cattle ranching grew in the late 1850s. When the Civil War broke out, the demand for Texas beef increased rapidly. The Confederate army needed to feed the troops. However, as the war dragged on, Texans found it difficult to move their cattle to the front. By 1863 the Union army had blocked trade from Confederate states, including Texas. As a result, the number of cattle in Texas grew rapidly. By the end of the Civil War, about 5 million cattle roamed the state. Many of these animals were mavericks, or unclaimed cattle. After the war, Texans looked for new markets to sell their cattle.

Reading Check Finding the Main Idea Why were longhorn cattle important to the Texas cattle industry?



Section 1 Review



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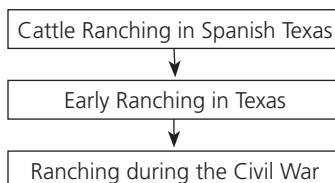
ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

- brands
- cattle drives
- rustlers
- longhorn
- Texas fever

2. Analyzing Information

Use a chart to explain how the Texas cattle industry developed from its beginnings through the Civil War.



3. Finding the Main Idea

- a. How did physical factors influence the development of cattle ranching in Texas?
- b. How did the migration of U.S. settlers to Texas affect the cattle industry?

4. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Drawing Inferences and Conclusions Imagine that you are an economist. Explain how free enterprise affected the Texas cattle industry.

Consider the following:

- demand for cattle
- supply of cattle