

DON MILTON

Milton Faver, the Big Bend's First American Cattle King

Milton Faver collected his original herd of cattle in San Pablo, Chihuahua, Mexico, in 1849, in exchange from the Indians for peoncillos, sweet potatoes and other commodities.

In the early fifties he moved to the American side of the Rio Grande, locating his headquarters ranch at the south east end of the Chinati Range on Cibolo Creek. Here, where all the land was asking for some body to claim it, Faver turned his small herd of cattle loose to multiply and wax great.

By 1857 he had a nice bunch of cattle, but that year a concerted drive of the Indians through his range, resulted in their driving off all his stock except thirty-two head of calves that he had in a fortified corral at Cibilo.

Faver was a man of diversified abilities, ranging from farming and fruit-raising at his ranch house to freighting on the Chihuahua Trail; by plow-share and wagon, he accumulated great wealth.

From the small herd left him by the Indians in 1857 and by ability in cattle trades, Faver's herd grew rapidly. He was a man with a big heart—a big home always open to the traveler and a big larder always filled to overflowing. Perhaps the pride of his larder was peach brandy, made from his abundance of peaches; this was dispensed freely to all who came to Cibolo.

For twenty years after the Indian raid, Don Faver could claim, "I am monarch of all I survey. My rights there are none to dispute," for from the peaks of the Chinati Mountains in Presidio County north, south, east, and west, all that he saw was his own.

But Faver was far-sighted enough to see that such a condition could not long continue. New comers were coming into the Big Bend, men with shrewd eyes for advantageous locations. In April, 1851, Bounty script was issued to William Hadden for this section. August 28th this same year the script was transferred to William Hardeman. January 29,

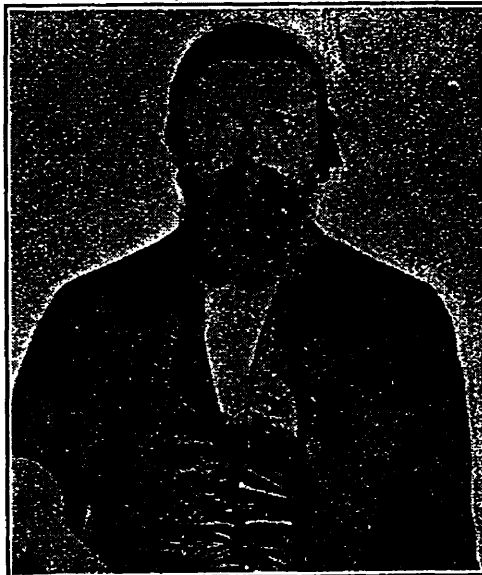
1858 Milton Faver recorded his deed.

The spring land was described as follows: One hundred and sixty acres on the waters of the Cibilo, a tributary of the Rio Grande (about 22 miles from Presidio del Norte). The survey was known as survey 18 by virtue of Bounty Warrent No. 801. The other survey was 17, and on it was located the Rancho Viego, and the all important spring. This spring furnished ample water for the peach orchard, the field, and live stock. Old Mexicans claim that Rancho Viego was first put into cultivation by the Indians and no one can even estimate its age.

This gushing spring had probably been a gushing spring since man was man, for the oldest Indian knew that their fore fathers used it in cultivation, but Faver was the first white man to utilize its bounty.

The same wisdom and foresight governed him later when he took up the Cienega and Las Moras, as they too were boldly gushing springs in marvelous location. Then given water, he wanted protection and built fort like houses at each place. The Moras was not so large as Cienega and Cibilo, but it was well protected. He converted all tillable land into orchards and field at these two places just as he had at Cibilo. And now the bounty of his larder came into play. The Indians had likely horses and cattle. Presto! exchange and all were satisfied of barter. The conditions were ideal and his system of barter fair

enough for that time. He did not need to buy the land, and the Indians were willing to stock it for him. And the herds multiplied and became many. Not only did they spread over the land, but they gradually made trails through the canyons covered with grass, trees, and brush, so thick that a man on horse back could hardly ride through. Following these trail-makers, Faver made a wagon road down to Cienega. Nature did the rest through erosion. Hard rains and rushing water soon cut away the soil until from Cibilo to Shafter, a distance of five miles, the canyon is now



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When He Dominated the Big Bend