

FROM LONGHORN TO HEREFORDS

A History Of Cattle Raising in Trans-Pecos Texas

By Henry T. Fletcher

GEOGRAPHY

A study of the map of Trans-Pecos Texas shows a remarkable parallelism in the courses of the Rio Grande, the Pecos and the various mountain ranges that traverse the region from New Mexico on the north and far southward into the Republic of Mexico. Their courses are northwest-southeast and the parallelism continues to the most southerly point of the Big Bend, where the Rio Grande turns abruptly to the northeast, cutting deep and narrow canyons through the mountain ranges that rise athwart its course. While other canyons are longer and deeper, those of the Rio Grande are sheerer and more tortuous than any others in America.

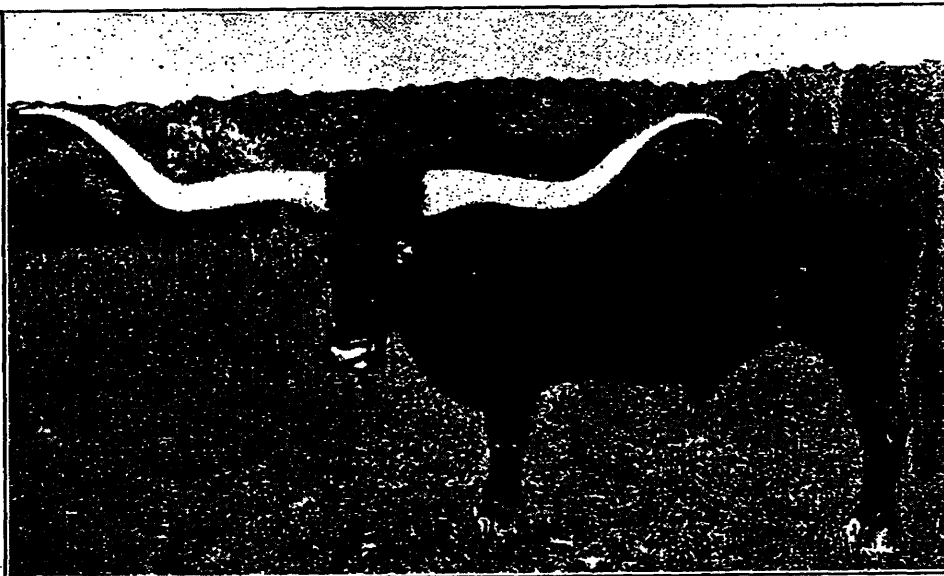
The greatest of the Trans-Pecos ranges is the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. It is represented near the New Mexico border by the Guadalupe Mountains, whose El Capitan Peak is the highest point in Texas, being only a little under ten thousand feet above sea level. Farther southward, the Front Range is represented by the huge uplift of the Davis Mountains and, southward to the Rio Grande and far into Mexico, by the Santiago and Carmen Ranges.

In mountainous country, rivers and smaller valleys and mountain passes determine the routes of travel and influence the places of settlement of both savage and civilized races. Nowhere, is this better demonstrated than in Trans-Pecos Texas. The whole region is traversed by trails used long ago by In-

dians before the coming of white people. These trails invariably followed waterways and passed from one to another through gaps in the mountains. Though the trails often turned aside to some spring or water hole, they are, on the whole, about as direct routes as could be found. And it is along or near these trails that the commerce of the succeeding years has passed and is passing.

It is generally accepted by historians that Cabeza de Vaca, with three companions, the first Europeans to cross Texas, traversed this region about 1534, following one of the well used Indian trails. It is known that he reached the Rio Grande near Presidio del Norte and followed up its valley to the neighborhood of El Paso. These same trails were later followed by several Spanish explorers of New Mexico both to and from the Spanish settlements in Mexico. These include Rodriguez, Espejo, Sosa and others who made entradas into New Mexico, and Mendoza who, starting from El Paso, descended the Rio Grande to Presidio and explored Central Texas.

Later, the Indian trails determined the routes of wagon roads for the use of the United States-Mexican Boundary Survey, the California gold seekers, the several mail routes, the Chihuahua freighters, and troops engaged in protecting the settlers from marauding Indians. Still later, in the 1880s, these trails and mountain passes became the routes of the Southern Pacific and the Texas Pacific railways,



THE VANISHED LONGHORN

Of Spanish ancestry who became a Texan and died a Texan.