

and, in 1912, of the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway, now a part of the Santa Fe System. That some of the trails have been used from antiquity is shown by the deep paths worn in rocky terrains by the passage of countless feet of men and beasts through many centuries.

Since the Trans-Pecos mountains lie so far southward and do not rise to the snow line the region has few flowing streams except the Rio Grande and Pecos which rise far to the north in snow capped mountains. Even the larger waterways are dry the year round except during the periodical rains of summer and fall. However, springs abound in the canyons and water holes are found along the canyons, and water holes are found along the steams.

Situated in the higher reaches and foothills of the Davis Mountains is an area known as the Highland Country. It has, within its undefined bounds, some ten thousand square miles and includes parts of Brewster, Jeff Davis and Presidio Counties. The main topographic features are the Marfa Plateau, the Davis Mountains and their southeastward continuation, the Ord Range. The Marfa Plateau has an average elevation of about five thousand feet and spreads out to the southward from the Davis Mountains, which rise to the majestic height of nearly nine thousand feet.

NATURAL "COW COUNTRY"

The annual rainfall approximates sixteen inches and the whole region is carpeted with gramma and associated grasses which mature upon the ground and afford year round grazing. The mountainous nature of the country provides protection against winter winds. The Highland Country has a more equable climate than any other portion of the United States. It lies without the normal storm tracks and the sequence of weather changes is more uniform than in more northern latitudes or in the same latitude farther east. Extremes of temperature occur only during the short-lived "northers" of winter or, to a lesser degree, with the thunder showers of summer. The air is dry and bracing and exerts a tonic effect upon all life.

It is natural that this section, so bountifully supplied by nature with all the necessary elements for successful stockraising, should have early received the attention of stockmen. It was a natural "cow-country." Though, due to the roughness of its mountains, it was not a buffalo range, these animals were found plentifully from the valley of the Pecos to the eastward. The early explorers found it teeming with deer and antelope.

The first cattle were Longhorns, long of leg and long of horns. The Longhorn was a descendent of cattle brought from Spain to the West Indies and from there to Mexico by settlers who flocked to that rich country after the conquest, by Cortez, in the early years of the sixteenth century. The Longhorn readily adapted himself to the new ranges and from the small importations descended the vast herds which eventually covered the grazing lands of Mexico, and finally the plains of Texas.

It was the habit of Spanish explorers to drive

herds of cattle and sheep along with them for feeding their followers. It is quite probable that some of the entradas into New Mexico brought cattle into our region. But the foundations of Trans-Pecos herds lay not in the cattle that may have passed through in those far gone days. Many years passed before permanent settlements were made near the region, the nearest being on the upper Conchos River in Mexico, separated from the Rio Grande by a barren desert, and in the vicinity of El Paso.

FIRST SETTLERS

At the close of the Mexican War, in 1849, many hardy Americans remained in Mexico to engage in mining, trading and stockraising. About 1850, some of these men moved into Texas, journeying down the Conchos River to Presidio del Norte, and bringing with them cattle and horses from Mexico. They established ranches and farms along the Rio Grande and some of its tributaries. John Burgess built a trading post just below Presidio and John Spencer started a ranch nearby. Milton Faver settled on Cibolo Creek, near the present mining town of Shafter. William Russell and John Davis established ranches on Alamito Creek and raised livestock and irrigated small farms. The Indians were so troublesome that the ranch houses resembled forts, having thick walls built of rock or adobe and surrounded by high corrals of a like material into which their stock could be driven. Faver is said to have had a cannon mounted on top of his house.

All of these settlers were at the mercy of the wily Apaches who would swoop down from the surrounding hills and drive off the cattle and horses, killing such of the herders who were not lucky enough to reach the protection of the houses. At one time Faver had his whole herd stolen except a small number of milk calves, shut in the corral under the guns of his fort. From these calves he built up one of the largest herds of cattle in West Texas in those early days.

PASSING OF THE INDIANS

In 1854, Fort Davis was established to protect the newly opened California and Santa Fe mail routes. These routes followed Limpia Creek, a natural pass through the Davis Mountains, and through Fort Davis. The first was the Southern Trans-Continental route from St. Louis and Memphis to San Diego and San Francisco; the other from San Antonio to Santa Fe and Denver. Along both, stage stands were built and relays of horses were kept. These posts were particularly subject to Indian raids and there were many fights at or near them.

The establishment of Fort Davis was followed by that of Fort Stockton to the east and Forts Quitman and Hancock to the west in the Rio Grande valley. These military posts and the stage stands furnished a market for the beef of Faver, Davis and their neighbors, as well as for hay, corn and other products of their farms. However, the time was not yet ripe for the foundation to be laid for our cattle industry. The Civil War came on and the West