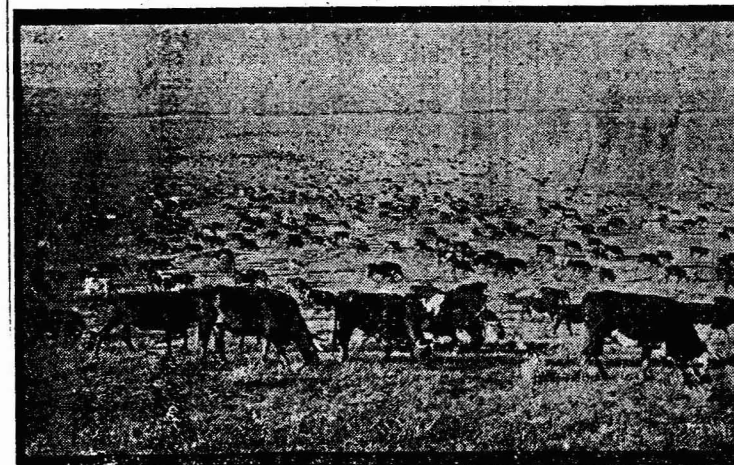
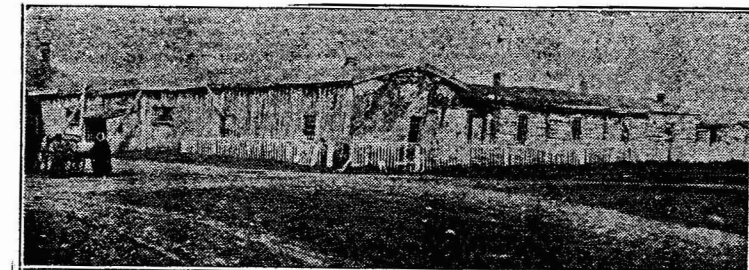


"Life on the Plains," by Horace DeWitte Brewster

Cattle on the Range



Cattle grazing in the foothills of the Bear's Paw mountains south of Chinook.



It was a building similar to the above that housed the first Indian school at Poplar back in the eighties and nineties.

3/2/53

By A. L. JORDAN
Tribune Historical Writer

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I WAS greatly amused as the growth of Helena. We unloaded our freight, rested for a few days and were ready to start back to Carroll bottom. We had no cargo except our rations. But there was a delay. Dixie, our wagon boss, got drunk. We could not get him sobered up, so a fellow by the name of Bob Taylor took charge of the outfit. He hired a fellow by the name of Wallace Bell for night herder. He took all animals in charge on the Horace Brewster prairie to feed from the time we made camp until we were ready to break camp the next day.



There was, as a rule, little whisky on these trips and never a man was drunk while enroute. When we would get into place with our freight, it was hard to keep enough men sober to look after the outfit. Many people presumed we were a drunken, lawless and immoral bunch all the time, which is a mistaken idea. Bob Taylor got the outfit started for Carroll bottom and we camped for dinner at the Missouri river crossing. While eating, a fellow rode up, leading a pretty sorrel horse. He said he would sell it for \$40. Taylor was stuck on the horse. "I'll take it if I can find anybody to break it to ride. But there is no one in this outfit I know of who can ride."

"Well, Taylor, I'd ride him if I had a saddle," I said. "Borrow Wallace Bell's saddle. That's the only thing you can call a saddle round here and that's a good one," one of the bullwhackers suggested.

Borrows a Saddle
"Wallace is asleep over there in that wagon box, you get the saddle from him, Taylor, and I'll ride the horse," I said.

Bell was a good rider. He had broken broncos for the Terrans, who ran a livery barn at Helena. They often drove in a bunch of broncos from California and it was Wallace Bell's job to ride them out.

Taylor went over to the wagon box and asked Bell about the saddle. Bell got up and looked the horse over.

"I don't like to let the boy have the saddle. That horse will throw him across the river," he said.

"Taylor, I'll take a chance on the horse. If you'll go good for the damage done to the saddle," I replied. It was agreed. While the men stood around eager for excitement, I saddled the horse. I had nothing but a curved bit, there was no snaffle nor hackamore in the outfit, but I said I'd ride him any way I got. Bell let me have his spurs, which I adjusted and took up the stirrups. For a blind I used a bandana handkerchief.

Bell was curious as to the outcome of the ride and watched every thing I did. When I was ready I led the horse out from the wagon and asked Taylor to have. I pulled the handkerchief off. Up we went time and time again. The horse was a high jumper. Bell was satisfied I could ride.

"You can have any of my outfit any time, kid. You must be a Mormon boy. Most of 'em are good riders," Bell said. I made no reply.

Left With Steers
We worked on down to Carroll bottom and loaded our wagons for the return trip to Helena. We had no trouble except the usual ordeals.

We left Helena this time with a bunch of beef steers, part of an order for the Indian agency at Fort Peck on the Fort Peck Indian reservation. Sam Pepin was in charge of the cattle. He had no outfit. So he camped and boarded with us.

One warm evening we were camped on a flat about seven miles from You Bett gap (now spelled Ubat). The sky was clear and not a thing could be seen except the mountains about a mile away. We unhitched our teams and the herders took the horses over a sharp ridge to the springs to water and left them to graze on the flat below.

There were three horses tied to the wagons, Sam Pepin's and the other two day riders. Moss was called and while we were eating a band of Indians slipped along under the edge of the ridge and drove all of the horses, about 20, away, leaving the outfit only three horses tied to the wagons. The Indians made for the mountains and got away with our horses all right. The outfit was left with 800 cattle and only three horses for the riders to handle them with.

I could not quite understand why the Indians took the horses and left so many fat beef steers unmolested. The next morning we started driving the cattle as best we could.

Bought Some Horses
On Beaver creek, about 20 miles from where Lewistown now stands, we met some trappers. Pepin bought four horses from them and soon afterwards he got a fifth from another trapper. We got along pretty well with this addition of horse flesh.

When we reached Carroll bottom, we learned that the boss could not get up the river because of low water and we would have to make the trip to Fort Peck to get our freight. This was not a grave disappointment, for

cross the river; a rope was stretched in two and badly scattered. We got across the river to guide the moccasins as a ferry and the wagons were day turned them over to the Indian taken over. The oxen and beef cattle agent, Jack Simmonds. This looked were made to swim over. Our land-to me like the second turn in on ing was on land owned by Jake Rog-the steers.

Jim Mackins was on his way with 1,000 steers to turn in on this con-Falls.

A short distance after we passed the Little Rockies we came to the turn trip, we cut out 800 and took them back with us. We went to Milk river, now the present site of Malta, where we hit the road the soldiers used between Fort Peck and Fort Belknap. After we passed into the bad lands east of Hinsdale's present location, we camped. This was our second night out from Malta.

That night, when we were all in our bunks, the night herder accidentally discharged his rifle. We jumped up, dressed and got our rifles. There were no railroads then nor were they thought. The country corrall the night before in case we should be attacked by Indians. Two of us went out to where the steers were; they were quiet so we concluded there must have been a false alarm. When we found the night herder, whose name was Dean, he said he shot at an Indian. The next morning we looked the ground over and found no bloodstains. If Dean did shoot at the Indian he didn't hit any. Our conclusion was that Dean got scared and wanted company.

Not From Missouri
The next day we came down to the Milk river to Tom Campbell's house, where we found Jim Scott, Mike Walsh and Henry Brooks. During the night, Frank Canique, their night herder, who in later years, with Jack Gorman, was killed by the Indians, discovered Indians were upon them and roused the camp by a shot, which was the signal. The horses were stampeded. Henry Brooks' mule team ran to camp. The mules were tied before the Indians made their attack. The wagons were shot full of arrows and bullet holes in large numbers. But the curious thing was that, with all the shooting, not a mule was hit.

The outfit was, of course, on the lookout for Indians. When we came out of the jungles, with the bullwhackers yelling and cracking the whips, Brooks' outfit was sure another band of Indians was camped, flapping for another attack, so they remained on guard in their camp. All we were upon them. We helped them out. Henry Brooks took on some more freight and the rest was divided among other outfits hauling freight for Tom Power at Fort Benton.

Here Jim Scott told about the time he left Helena with a freight team and the wagon boss rode up along side of him and said:

"Jim, what part of Missouri were you from?"

To which Jim replied:

"I'm not from Missouri."

At that reply the wagon boss stopped the train, rode back to Helena, hired another bullwhacker and fired Jim because he was not a Missourian.

Saw 5,000 Antelopes
After leaving camp we heard a rumbling noise that sounded like a hurricane. All of a sudden, out of the brush along Milk river, came a drove of antelopes. There were so many we were guessing on the number. Some of the bullwhackers guessed there were at least 5,000. They rushed in ahead of us and nearly stampeded the steers. I then understood why the Indians had taken the horses and not the beef. Soon after the antelopes disappeared, we met Howell Harris, a brother of John Harris (John died at Fort Benton recently), who was taking freight to Fort Benton for Tom Power. He was not heavily loaded and when he was informed of the plight of Tom Campbell's cargo, he was glad to take some of it along with him to Fort Benton.

We wound our way on to Fort Peck but had to wait there a few days for the boat to arrive with our freight. I went on herd. In this part of the country there was not much wild game and the Indians were hungry. They maneuvered around the herd and killed and carried away, at different times, about 150.

The day the steers were rounded up, counted and made ready to turn in, something mysterious happened that did not come quite clear to me for some time. It worked out later, however.

The same herd was run back from Fort Peck a few miles into a coulee, where they were kept. Bill Wright was on night herd. I went out to help Bill round up the steers for the night, as it was understood we were to count them again the next day.

It was just before dark. Bill Wright went to tell Pepin where the steers were. As I was riding around the steers, I noticed three Indians riding through the middle of the herd. My horse jumped and snorted. There were more Indians back of me. I put the spurs to my horse and made it safe to the fort, found Pepin and told him what happened.

Pepin Gets Mad
Pepin was mad. "What th' hell did you leave the cattle for?" he asked. "I thought I was going to be surrounded and ran for safety," I replied. "Well, you get back there and do it now," he said. I did.

I was somewhat scared, I'll admit, for when we were at the river watering the cattle during the day one of the riders got down on the sand bar to drink and an Indian shot him. The fear was in me. This happened

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Helena was our destination; a trip of about 445 miles with oxen loaded with freight and winter upon us. There were no railroads then nor were they thought. The country was a vast wilderness, with great herds of buffaloes, antelopes, and Indians.

We met no trouble until we came to what was called Lard creek, near the location of Hinsdale. That night the night herder, Whitmore, let some of the oxen go down to a deep hole in the creek to drink and three of them slipped into the hole, which was so deep and slippery they couldn't get out. The water was so cold they froze to death and it made the boss so mad he fired Whitmore and made me herd at night and drive a wagon team till noon. Then the boss drove and I slept on the wagon. That day we made it over to what was called Medicine lodge, a big bend in the valley south of Bowdoin and about 20 miles east of Malta.

That night we had a feeling something was going to happen.

During the day Indian scouts were sighted several times off on the ridges some distance away. They came to take our freight. There were 50 or more. We were camped under the bluff and made a wagon corral. The Indians approached from the west end of the corral and acted as if they were going to attack but could not just locate where we were.

A fellow by the name of George Herondean and I were at the east end of the outfit and the rest were near the west end. Herondean and I could see the shadows of the Indians in the twilight. The way they swung around it looked like we were going to have trouble but that they would attack the west end, so Herondean and I started to crawl along the brink of the ledge, which was slightly covered with small bushes and bunch grass.

Is Nearly Shot
I was ahead of Herondean, going up the bank, when Herondean accidentally discharged his rifle. The bullet went between my legs and struck the bank about even with my head. Dirt and leaves filled my eyes so I couldn't see. I turned around and cursed him and then went on. We got up where we could see the Indians had swung off out of reach and were holding a powwow. We watched them for a few minutes and soon they disappeared. While I was on herd that night I had no trouble with them.

Having lost the oxen the night before, we had to yoke up some wild steers that morning. Among them was a long horned Texas ranger on the lead yoke that was excitable and got pretty hot during the day. Evenings and nights were quite cold and

I came upon him during the night. He was down and could not get up. I worked with him trying to make him get up to move around to warm him. He was chilled and died before morning. We yoked up the next morning, using wild steers from the herd to fill in to make up our teams.

By night we made it to where Malta now stands. That was a hard drive for the oxen, but it was cold and windy with some snow flying so we could push right along. We caught up with the Story outfit. It had been previously arranged that we would bring what freight there was for them on the belated boat into Fort