

# He Brought the First Bunch of Cattle to Kansas City

HERE are not many of them left—the good old scouts of the plains, who trailed cattle on the grand lands in the old days when cowpunchers and Indian fighters as well. They had to keep guards day and night to keep the cattle in line and to ride with the cowpunchers bad to ride and round the herd and slag the legs to sleep—sing ribald words to keep the herd in line, until the restless cattle were lulled into security enough to bed down for the night.

There are not many of them left. Once a while a few of the old cattlemen gather in an office at the stock yards and tell stories of the days when there were just a few stock yards in Kansas City when they sent their cattle on to St. Louis or Chicago.

But at that, the first cattlemen's convention ever held in the world was held in Kansas City in 1873. L. A. Allen, who was one of the founders of the stock yards here, organized the convention for its purpose of starting a stock market. He had just come in from the plains, where he had been a cattle raiser for years. He wrote letters to every cattlemen in the West, Southwest and Northwest. He knew every one of them. He had grabbed and bunked with half them and fought Indians and outlaws the other half.

They got together a convention of five hundred cattlemen and bankers—a convention that naturally works together, they came from every section of the country and they held their meetings in the old Franklin Hall at Fifteenth and Main streets, at that time the vital business center of the city.

BOUGHT THE FIRST CATTLE HERE. Chicago and St. Louis had representatives to fight the starting of the Kansas City stock market. Mr. Allen opened a game by standing on the platform making a rousing speech for Kansas City. He had walked through the plains and he had seen the cattle on the Westport Road and when he was out of 16, walking from Shelby County, Kentucky, to the Rocky Mountains.

He wasn't walking for a fad, either. He was starting out to make his fortune and he had a bunch of cattle for Sol Young out to the plains. He bought the first bunch of cattle into Kansas City later on. He knew what he was talking about. He had a broad vision of a big market for the Western world in Kansas City. He knew that the world would afford a ready transportation for the big herds that fed on the Western plains.

That meeting at Frank's Hall was the beginning of the stock yards. It was the beginning of the convention. They held them every year after that and L. A. Allen was on every program. From Texas to Montana he spoke for the better order of things. He advocated the grading of the cattle. He was the first to experiment with dehorning cattle. The big horned cattle of the South and West were a nuisance. They did not do well in the cars and they did not do well on the trail. The cattlemen began to dehorn their cattle.

"Laugh, dog, come on, laugh," he said. "I got the best and the last laugh coming."

He took a little bunch of cattle in a herd at the stock yards and experimentally he dehorned off the horns of the older ones and took on the horns of the younger ones. He got the last laugh, all right. The long horned cattle of early days are a back number now. A cow with horns is getting to be a curiosity.

"Fifty years in the cattle business makes a lot of time," says Mr. Allen. "I was trying to think of the men I used to know thirty and forty and fifty years ago and by golly, there isn't any left. A man feels pretty lonely when he looks back at the men he worked with for years and realizes that there isn't a one left in the stock yards."

I walked through Kansas City when I was an old, I came here to buy and sell cattle when there wasn't any market. We started one and one or two commission houses were able to take care of all the work. We got two or three carloads a week. Last year we received here in cattle and horses alone, \$1,577,670. Some progress, huh?"

A COWBOY AT 18.

Mr. Allen is not yet 70 years old. There are older men than he is at the yards. But there is no man who has lived so many incidents into one life as he has. He has lived the life of three men and then some. In 1847, at the age of 16, across the plains with seven hundred cattle, flouting every step of the way. The herd belonged to Col. Sol Young of Jackson County, Missouri.

Young Allen's part was to drive the cattle west—a broad, shallow, frame-work on an ordinary wagon bed in which was placed the young calves too tired to walk on the long, slow grazing journey. The wagon was drawn by a mule and the boy followed on a foot plodding along the dusty trail, his eyes ever on the search for the red Indians of whom he had heard so much.

There were one hundred thousand of them roaming the plains at that time and sooner or later he fell in with a tribe. He knew the Cheyennes, the Arapahoes, the Kiowas, the Comanches and the Sioux. He learned enough of their language to talk with them all. He was the only man in the stock yards today who can talk several Indian dialects, use the sign language and converse in Mexican as well as he can in English.

He saw buffaloes disputing the plains with the cattle. He killed dogs and venison for food and wolves that sought to lessen the herd by killing the calves and bellies.

Often at night he would have from thirty to thirty of the tired, howling calves in his wagon. It was in winter time and when they were not fighting Indians they were complaining to wandering bands of guerrillas and outlaws that the cattle were not intended for free distribution. The outlaws bothered them, as much as the Indians did. It was with a great deal of trouble that he got a permit for a 16-year-old boy. At an age when boys of that age today are to be seen at a prize in a tennis tournament, he worked and fought day and did with an average of

four hours' sleep at night. He ate jerked beef and sour dough and coffee for every meal and when he did not eat at all he drank more water and tightened up his belt to forget he was hungry. He was a diligent pupil in the school of hard knocks and he graduated with honors—and experience.

HE WAS STOPPED EVERY DAY BY KANSAS SOLDIERS," says Mr. Allen. "They didn't have a high regard for anything that came from Missouri. We weren't using any of this 'show me' slogan in those days, you bet. Sol Young had provided his foremen with proper passports from the commanding officer at Fort Leavenworth, so we got through all right. There wasn't a settlement west of Council Grove—just four hundred miles of straight walk to the mountains. We were disputed all along the trail by Indians, and other wild animals, like wolves, rattlesnakes and prairie dogs, that undermined the ground with their tunnels and caused many a broken leg for the horse or cow that stepped into them in a hurry. All the settlements were clustered closely around the foothills of Colorado and New Mexico."

"He was in seven Indian fights, and helped many a redskin to get quick transportation to the happy hunting grounds. He has killed twenty-five buffalo in a day for the hides and meat, which they made into 'jerked,' or dried meat.

"We used to tear the meat up and mix it with tallow and roll it into a ball and let it dry. Then we'd fill our saddle bags with these balls of dried meat and consider ourselves well provisioned. We could cook them or gnaw them raw in an emergency.

"He wandered over that entire country since divided into states. As a boy of 16 he knew every detail of Indian warfare. He had been taught by Kit Carson, who whose home he had lived at Taos, N. M. He knew that they fought most in the fall of the moon, just before daylight. He knew the sign language. The knowledge of their customs saved his life more than once. At one time, he was surrounded by a band of ten Indians in war paint on the trail. He had been in many a tight pinch, but this pinch fit him uncomfortably close.

"HE WAS ONLY ONE CHANCE FOR ME," he relates. "I knew the village was near and I made a detour and dashed right into the village. They did not look for me to do that, of course, and I beat them in by fifteen minutes. I made straight for the chief's tepee, which is always larger and made of gaudy, painted skins. The old chief was sitting in a chair in his tepee and when he saw me come rolling in he jumped and grabbed for his gun. I put my hand over my heart, which is an Indian sign of peace and friendship. He could talk a little Mexican and I knew a little sign language. I told him I was lost and wanted to get back to my camp and threw my rifle on his protection. I asked for food with salt and it was given to me, which signified that my life was safe.

"Soon the band came hiking into camp in search of me. They were more than enough to scalp me on the spot; but the chief rather enjoyed the novelty of the situation and forbade them to come near. He ordered out a guard of six warriors and gave them to me for an escort to my camp. I rode out of camp very upright and dignified—and inwardly giving thanks to Kit Carson, who had taught me this trick to be used only in cases of where it was the last chance."

Not many years later he had a cow camp in the mountains of Mexico. Rumors of Indians on the war path frightened away his Mexican cow punchers

and he was left alone with a bunch of seven hundred cattle to winter. He stuck by the camp and maintained a solitary guard every day on a high cliff which commanded a view of the trail for miles. For months he lived here alone, sleeping on his saddle each night, with arms wide as sentry.

"I was only a kid," he says, "and even in the face of such a situation, I couldn't resist having some fun with a little band of Indians that came along the trail one day. I had strung out my horses in little bunches along the coulee hobbling one horse in each bunch for a leader. This way I hoped that if the Indians did come, they would only run off one bunch, thinking that was all there was. Well, one day I was hiding on the top of the cliff of the lookout when I saw the Indians coming. I was on what they called the cap rock and when they came underneath, I just rolled down two big boulders on their heads. I did not make a sound. The Indians were so scared at these rocks coming down on them with nobody within a hundred miles as far as they knew, that they put out and down the trail in a hurry. I slipped around a curve cross into and came on them a few miles further, still running. They stopped for a conference and I let them see a few more good sized rocks. Well, sir, they lashed their ponies into a run and they may be running yet, as far as I know. I found out afterwards that they said the mountains were haunted and many another Indian bothered me there that winter."

THE FIRST SHERIFF OF COLORADO. When the Indians went, desperadoes and bandits came in. Allen became sheriff of Southeast Colorado, being the first sheriff ever elected there. He was also captain of a company of rangers that did much to clear the country of the "bad men" that infested it.

"There was a fellow named Coe, who was doing considerable damage around there then," said Mr. Allen. "He had gathered a bunch of bad men in his gang and they sort of thought they owned that country, by golly. He'd made his bags that he was going to get me and was going to run off my cattle. I had a bunch of cattle of my own then—and was doing very well. I didn't seem to banker to hand 'em over to Coe. So I got together a posse of about twenty men. We decided if there was going to be any attacking an abandoned ranch and we had to get that country so quietly that not a soul heard us. I dismounted my men and left the horses with a guard quite a ways from the house. We could see the lights through the windows and from the noise they were making, the outlaws were raising Cain in there, having a good time. We crawled on our stomachs through the long grass and got between the sentinels who stood outside on guard. He must have been pretty sleepy because we had got almost to the house before he saw us. Some of the men wanted to pot him and make sure of him; but I did not want to rouse the men in the house with a shot.

"The fellow in the yard didn't take any chances, either. He made the longest jump I ever saw getting away. He never put a yip out of him, either. He was wise, all right, and he knew if he did it was him for a nice, swift little bullet that would have cut the yip in two. So we let him run. We surrounded the shack and burst in the door and bottled 'em up as nife as you ever saw. We stood 'em against the wall with the pleasant little prospect of being shot if they so much as wiggled a lip. They didn't make a move—they knew."

A FRONTIER LIVING AGE. "We took 'em out one by one. They had done a lot of damage around there and more than one wanton killing. My men showed no mercy. Those days, mercy didn't get much straining—the wench in the lump. Action had to be swift and sure, for it was your scalp against the other man's. And somehow a man gets kind of attached to his own scalp and likes the nice, secure feeling of having an undamaged head on a whole body.

"So we took 'em one by one. There was a solid old cottonwood tree in the yard and we noosed 'em up nice and tied their hands and rode out under

the tree and threw the rope over. Then we'd twist the rope once or twice around the cottonwood and ride away far enough to give the outlaws a good swim. It had to be done, you see. They were getting pretty thick out there and it was in a time when a rope and a tree was the surest kind of justice. Besides, it got kind of warmed the rest of 'em.

"We swung 'em up eleven times. It got kind of sickening towards the last and we were glad enough to ride away to get the leader, Coe, who wasn't with the bunch that night. We got him later, tied him to a horse and rode into town with him, to Pueblo, and put him in jail. He didn't fare any better, though, for that night a mob got him and swung him up—and saved the county the expense of a trial."

Mr. Allen took a leading part in riding the country of the bad men. The knowledge that Allen and his posse were out after them induced many a band of outlaws to get over into Mexico and to stay put. He was too closely associated with swift and sure bullets to make him pleasant society for outlaws.

Cattle ranches began to multiply. They were on a big scale in the early days before fences came in. Cattlemen rode hard and they lived hard and they died hard. It was all part of the game. A man could ride from the Rio Grande through Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming and to the British borders and stop at a ranch every night. The numbers of cattle ran into the millions. The cattlemen formed a class that is now gone, nor will the country ever see its like again. Hospitable, broad minded, free and easy—with customs and laws of their own, they bowed the neck to no man's yoke. Their punches looked upon a silver mounted saddle, a horse, a pair of hand made boots with high heels and a silver or rattlesnake band for a sash—no wealth—and asked no more.

A FRIEND OF KIT CARSON.

"I saw times were changing," says Mr. Allen. "We had the biggest and the grandest cattle pasture the world ever knew or ever will know. But settlers and nesters were coming in. The production of cattle ran ahead of the demand. Overstocked ranches caused heavy slumps in the market. Cattle and droughts came and owners got rid of their stock as best they could. I favored better grades and a market closer at hand. We cut down the production 50 per cent, but got better beef and better prices. The demand has more than doubled from the time when I brought the first shipment of cattle into the Kansas City yards."

Mr. Allen got in out of the rain. He established a market in Kansas City and spent his time in urging the cattlemen to grade up their herds. It made the cattle easier to care for and eliminated that pleasant sensation of seeing several thousand weak old sisters live through the winter and die in the spring because they didn't have enough strength to nibble the new green grass or to get out of the licks in the coulees. He started in with the cattle industry in the West and has helped it come through every phase.

In 1880 he married Miss Lula Breasale of Independence. They have had ten children.

"I did my share in urging the cattlemen to meet the demand for better beef," he says, "and then I did my share in producing the demand. You couldn't ask any more than that, could you, now?"

For a magazine writer Mr. Allen is a veritable mine of material. He tells the tales of the plains well, with all the vim and word painting that would make the fortune of a writer could it be reproduced as well as he tells it.

Mr. Allen was a close friend of Kit Carson and lived with him at the time he died. Mrs. Carson had been buried two weeks before, leaving six children, one of them a 2-weeks-old baby. Kit Carson, the greatest Indian fighter and scout the country has ever seen, was suffering with heart disease, the result of his long and strenuous life on the plains and only survived his wife two weeks. Mr. Allen buried them both on his ranch at Taos, New Mexico.