

Commercial Hotel,
Altus, Oklahoma,
March 10, 1926.

Mr. Wm. L. Evans,
Fort Worth, Texas.

Dear William:

I appreciate your invitation to come to the Ft. for Semicentennial of the Cattle Association. I had intended attending, but a letter told me that my tenant had failed to get a Tractor, was behind with work and had to have help, or to abandon part of land. It was late in the season so I came up here. Have helped him to buy tractor, and will remain only a few days, after helping with fence work and seeing plowing well under way.

I have gone over published names of cattlemen at the meeting, a great many of them are known to me by name -- as of a later generation -- though but few are left of my old friends and associates.

Fifty-five years ago as a member of State Democratic Executive Committee for Palo Pinto County I called a meeting to select a delegate to a State Constitutional Convention, and helped to elect Uncle Kit Carter as delegate, then rode fifteen to eighteen miles to his farm to notify him.

It was five years later that he was made First President of North Texas Cattle Association.

In 1881 I helped to organize the Pan Handle Cattle Association (at Ft. Elliot, Mobeta). A young lawyer (Lewis) and I wrote the Constitution and by-laws.

We went a long length ahead of the N.W. Texas Association: they only offered rewards for protection of horses of members. The Pan Handle Association offered rewards to protect all live stock of members of the Association. We were pioneers in Texas in the protection of cattle.

A great many leading cattlemen predicted that it could not be enforced and that an attempt would result in bloodshed. I was made President of the Association to try out the resolution that I had written.

A year later at Ft. Worth I was elected a member of N. West Texas Association's Executive Committee of twelve, serving in both Associations -- in the Pan Handle Association's Executive and Detective Committee with Goodnight, Creswell, and Nick Eaton. In the N.W. Texas Executive Committee with C. C. Slaughter, Burk Burnett, John N. Simpson, Harrold, Britton and others (Jim Loving, Secretary of Association and of the Committee). These Committees were selected from the most prominent cattlemen of the large territory covered and I the youngest man in either committee.

One cannot today realize the reckless methods that prevailed in branding and appropriating cattle. When the Civil

War opened the prairie counties were devoted to grazing with not a fence, except around small and widely separated farms. The farming interest was nominal, and their market limited to local demand. Grass was furnished for feed for stock, and stake rope, or hobbles hung from horn, or cattle of every saddle. Cows were only milked during Spring and Summer, and calves and colts were branded and turned on the range until aged for market.

Markets were distant: The only Railroad in Texas was ninety miles from Houston to Milliken. Houston and Jefferson were the principal ports. Most of the active men in Texas on the opening of the Civil War, entered the Confederate Army. Then conscription swept the country clean of those fit for service, from seventeen to forty-five years of age. For four years cattle multiplied by thousands, and unbranded except by a few stay-at-homes, who plied their irons, and laid foundations for fortunes.

At the close of the War (in 1865) those who returned formed squads of a half dozen or so and took to the range with rope and branding iron. They ranged the country far and wide, rounding up and branding wherever cattle were found. Their brands were scattered for hundreds of miles. And no man said nay.

Under other conditions it would have been a revelry of crime.

For years the country lived on veal and no man ate his own.

By Legislative act it was made lawful to brand an unmarked calf of the previous year after March the 1st. And to drive and sell any cattle, so that a tally of marks and brands was filed at County Seat. It's easy to realize the disregard for property rights that this condition bred. After a run of fifteen years to check it seemed impossible in Texas proper.

But the Pan Handle cleared of Indians, cattlemen from the North came South, and Texans moved North. Their ranches intermixed, their ideas clashed.

So it was in March 1881, when the Pan Handle Cattle Association was formed, and I wrote into the by-laws a clause offering a reward of \$250.00 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person, or persons, for illegally using any live stock belonging to any member of the Pan Handle Cattle Association. It proposed an abrupt and most radical change, fraught with danger of bloodshed and revolution.

It elected me president of the Association, and I was given an excellent detective committee, of which I was chairman. In the face of the bitterest opposition we hewed to the line, respecting no violators' standing or wealth. For a time the sky was lurid but we won out for Texas.

I freely admit that success was due to the loyal support of the Executive Committee -- Chas. Goodnight, Hank Cresswell, and Nick Eaton -- all strong brainy men, and to the splendid membership that stood by the committee. This may be of small interest to you, but it's a part of the history of the greatest industry in Texas, in its revolutionary stages, when the personality of men counted. I was young then, but those with whom your father associated were men.

Your Papa,

J. F. Evans