



## The interior of a barn on King Ranch in 1948



Photograph of the interior of a barn at the King Ranch. George Ranch Historical Park, 1948.  
Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-7871>.



## How the condition of ranch hand quarters on large ranches changed over time.

Stephens: What type of quarters did you provide for the workers?

McKamey: They had wooden houses. In the last few years we've experimented with the type houses they built on the King Ranch. We went over and inspected their houses, and they were very satisfied with their type. They were concrete blocks, and the last houses we built were concrete blocks. But the early houses were wooden houses, and most of them are now being torn down because we simply do not have the need for them. They used to come during the harvest season, and they had to have a place to stay so we housed them in every possible place, all the different houses, in all

Transcript. Hattie Bell,  
Oral History Interview #0070,  
13 March 1970, by .A Ray  
Stephens.  
UNT Oral History Collection.



Primary  
Source  
Adventures:  
Ranching in  
Texas

Can you find the  
running 'W'  
in  
this photo?

The Running W  
is the brand of  
King Ranch.



“Photograph of a man holding the lead rope of a King Ranch horse.” George Ranch Historical Park, 1948.  
Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-pt-7864>



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Primary  
Source  
Adventures:  
Ranching in  
Texas



Photograph of the main buildings bordered by a white wooden fence all belonging to the King Ranch.

George Ranch Historical Park, Photo: 17.6cm x 12.7cm 1940-1955 Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-7880>

University of North Texas Libraries



## What do you think about the working relationships that existed on early ranches?

They used to just beg for a little place to set up housekeeping in the corner of the barn. And people would say nowadays that that was discrimination, but these people . . . this was their summer vacation to come cotton picking and come and help with the grain. And they'd bring their families and live like gypsies and thoroughly enjoy it, and they made good money. And when they needed to go to the doctor, we took them to the doctor.

Transcript. Hattie Bell, Oral History Interview #0070,  
13 March 1970, by .A Ray Stephens. UNT Oral History Collection.



## An example of open range grazing



Cattle Ranch-Ft. Bend Co. Cattle in a pasture. Postcard, 1909. 8.8 cm x 13.8 cm.  
Fort Bend Museum, Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-pt-197>



Jenkins: Now you were saying that you have read a lot of the history concerning the Kenedy Ranch, and you know that there are a few things, historical things, that usually haven't come out in those histories.

Turcotte: Well, that's quite true. I think it's true of nearly all of the earlier ranches. I think the thing that has never been pointed out, to my knowledge, is the fact that they did have ex-Rangers in charge of every division of the ranch. They had Tom Tate on the Norias, George Durham on the South, and they had Jim McBride on the Encino Division, and they had Worth Wright and Bill Taylor on the Santa Gertrudis Division, and they had Charlie Burwell over on the Laureles Division. They were all ex-Rangers and lawmen and were all men that were capable of protecting their territory.

Jenkins: Did you say that lasted up into when? What the Texas Rangers did?

Turcotte: Well, they're all gone now, but they haven't been gone



Primary  
Source  
Adventures:  
Ranching in  
Texas



Bradly, Bill. Cowboys: Don Mercer and Vern Witherspoon on their horses. Deaf Smith County Library. Film copy negative, B&W 4 x 5 in. Permalink <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-13598>.





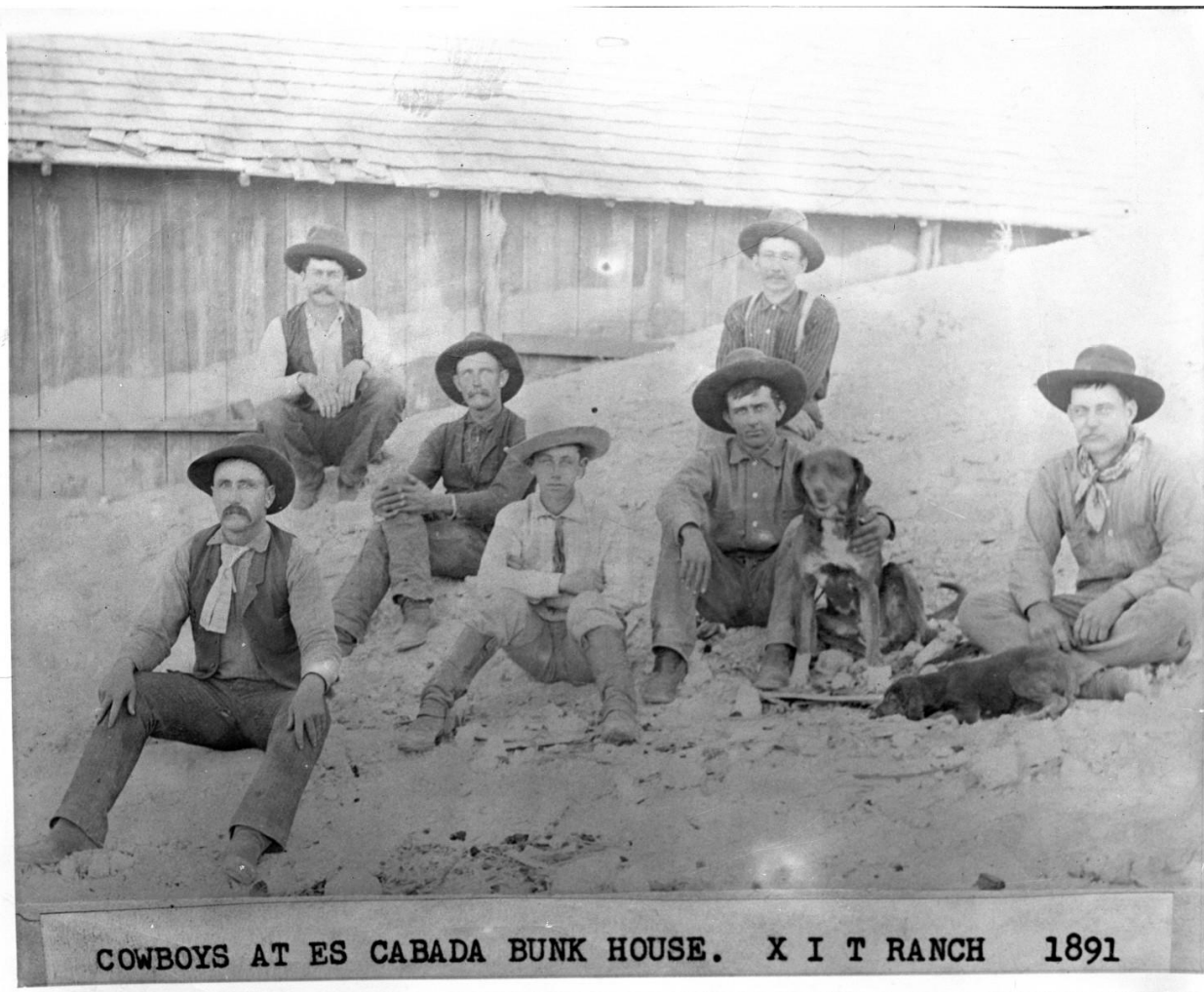
## Why do you think hired guns were needed to secure ranch property and deter thefts?

Turcotte: Well, my dad laughed when Tom Lea came out with a book on the history of King Ranch. He said, "They left out the fact that they did have trouble protecting their things and had a Texas Ranger in charge of each division." He said, "Really, there wasn't much emphasis on it." But he said, "They also left out the fact that they used imported cowhands." He said, "I think that they had a cowhand by the name of John Wesley Hardin that brought his whole cow outfit down for about six months or so."

Transcript, Louis E. Turcotte Oral History Interview #0774, 4 February 1988, by Floyd Jenkins, UNT Oral History Collection.



Primary  
Source  
Adventures:  
Ranching in  
Texas



“Cowboys of the Escarbada bunk house on the XIT Ranch in 1891.” Deaf Smith County Library.  
Film Negative: B&W , 4 x 5 in. Permalink <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-13563>.



Jenkins: Are there any other things that you can remember that your father said or that you know weren't included in the usual history of the King Ranch?

Turcotte: Well, no. That's sort of word-of-mouth history that is of interest. It wasn't included in their history. The fact is that they had to spend quite a bit of time defending their borders and getting their cattle back. It's a matter of record that there was over 400,000 head of cattle stolen from the King and Kenedy Ranches during their earlier period. The last of the stealing happened in 1916, and it came on up pretty close to as late as 1919. After World War I the bandits were still raiding back and forth across the river.

Jenkins: You say your father spent how long with the ranch?

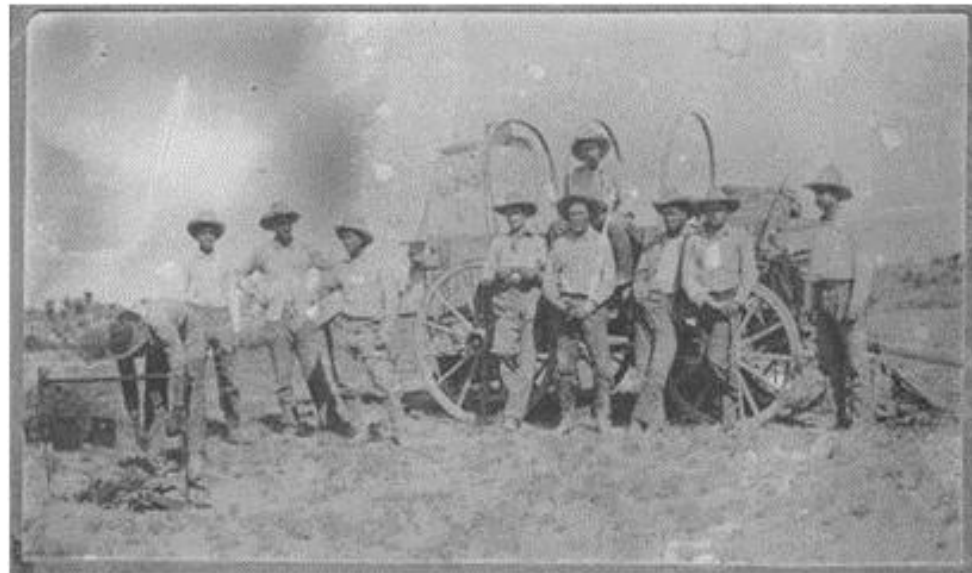
Turcotte: Oh, he was on the ranch all of his life.

Jenkins: The Kenedy Ranch.

Turcotte: He came as a child three years old, and he spent his life here. He went away to school. He went to business school at Waco and came back to the ranch.



Cowboys preparing to  
brand cattle.



10 Ranch hands, standing near wagon and camp fire, near Van Horn. Clark Hotel Museum. TX.

B&W; 2 x 4 in. 1906

Permalink : <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-14156>



“Photograph of four hands branding a cow, near Van Horn, TX.” Clark Hotel Museum, TX.

B&W, 2 x 4 in. 1906

Permalink : <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-14153>



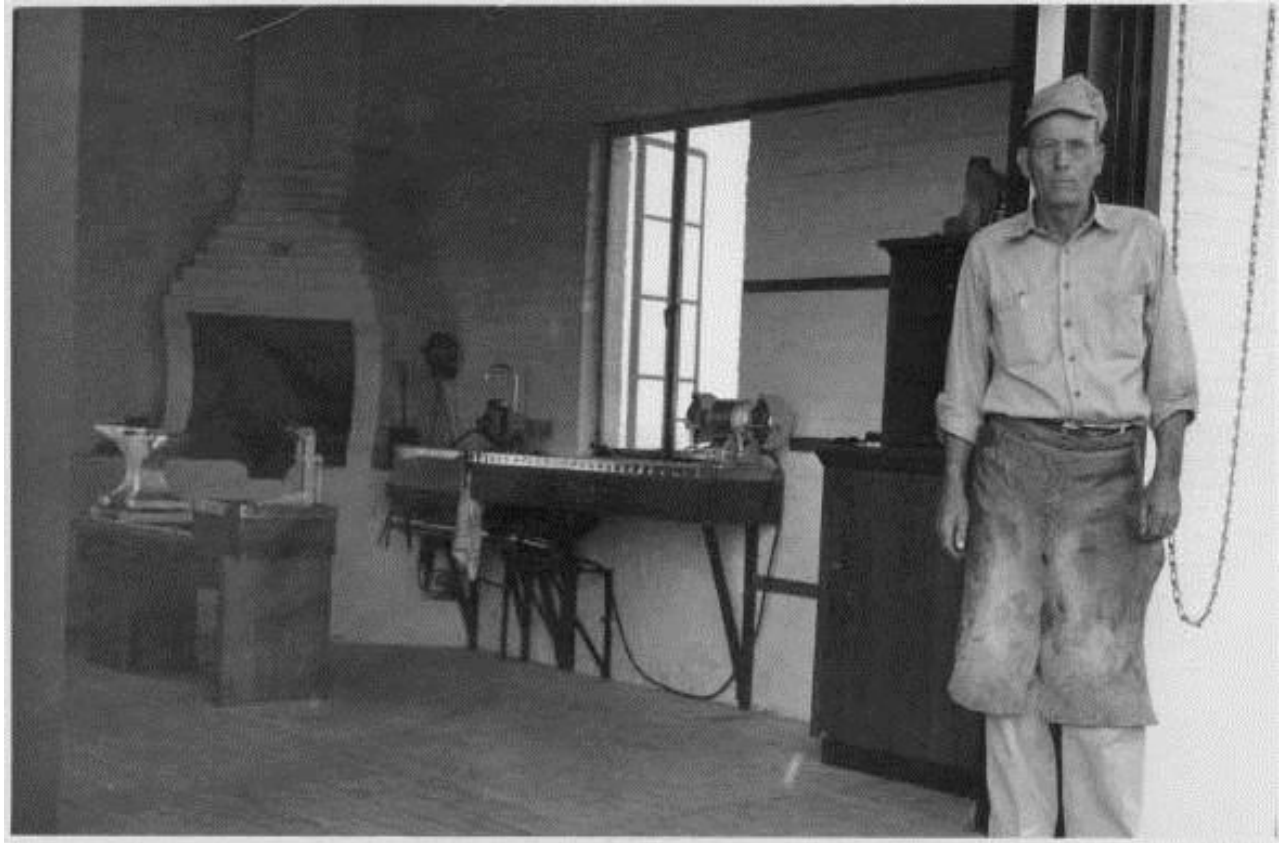
Asher Richardson. And he did all his trading with the Lockwood National Bank then. So I hit him for a job, and he gave me a job riding fence. And now he says, "Sidney, I'm going to give you the same instructions that I'd give my own son." He said, "I want you to go around the fences." The ranch I was on was 35,000 acres, and there was one, two, three, four, five pastures. The river pasture, the one that went down close to the pasture to the river, that went down about half a mile to the Rio Grande, and I had to go around that every other day. Now, he says, "I want you to carry a Winchester and a six-shooter wherever you go." He says, "If you find anybody off of the road, shoot and ask questions afterwards." There was one road through from Carrizo Springs to Eagle Pass that went through the ranch. That was the only outlet we had in there. Well, thank goodness, I didn't have to shoot anybody. But that was the instructions that I was working under at that time. I know

Why do you think  
safety on early ranches  
was a problem?

Transcript. Sidney M. Freeborn,  
Oral History Interview #0131,  
2 July 1972, by .A Ray Stephens.  
UNT Oral History Collection.



Blacksmithing remained an important part of ranching for over a century.



“Blacksmith shop on the King Ranch.” George Ranch Historical Park, B&W Photograph  
15.3 cm x 10 cm. 29 November 1948. Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-7866>.



Even winter doesn't stop a cattle ranch.



*Cattle in a snow covered pasture on the George Ranch. George Ranch Historical Park.*  
Photograph. 12.8cm x 10.1cm, 1940. Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-8998>.



Why the King and  
Kennedy Ranches  
separated.

Transcript, Louis E. Turcotte  
Oral History Interview #0774,  
4 February 1988, by Floyd Jenkins,  
UNT Oral History Collection.

Jenkins: So there was a connection between the King Ranch and Kenedy Ranch.

Turcotte: Oh, yes. They operated as one ranch. It was a partnership.

Jenkins: Okay, all right.

Turcotte: It was a partnership, but then they broke up.

Jenkins: That partnership started about when?

Turcotte: Oh, it started just right shortly after the Civil War.

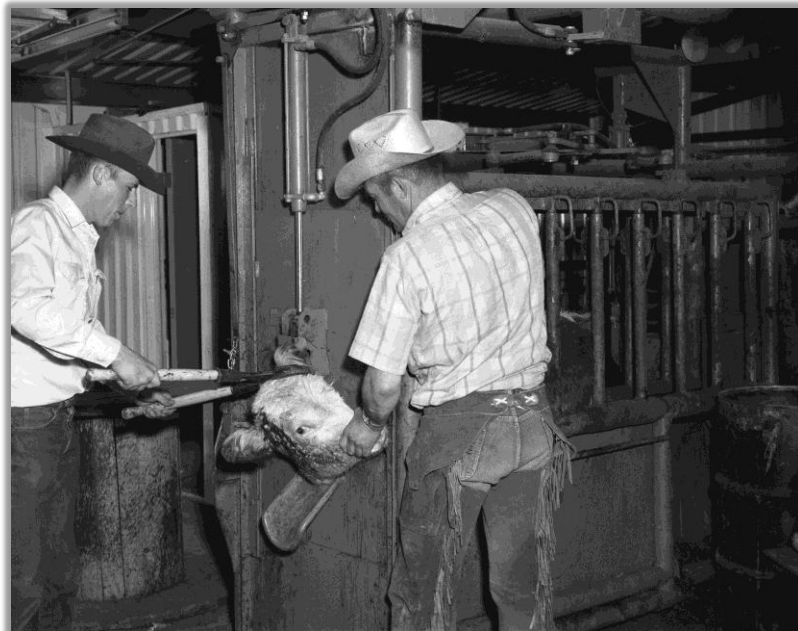
Jenkins: Then the separation came about...

Turcotte: It came along like in 1890, somewhere along in there. The Kenedy side always said that Captain Kenedy was a Quaker, and he liked to avoid violence. He felt like the land acquisition program was getting involved in too much violence, because they were buying land from heirs and then other heirs were creating fights over it, and there were a considerable number of lives being lost in the land acquisition program due to the different heirs. With some selling and some not wanting to sell, it was a situation that was made to order for a lot of trouble. And the Kenedy stories that I always heard said that they wanted no part in that type of violence just to acquire land.

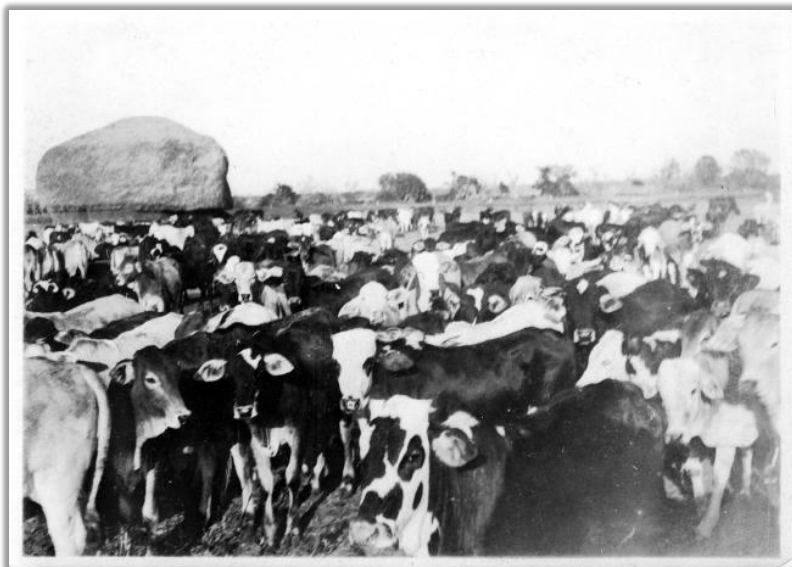




Images of dehorning cattle  
and large cattle herds.



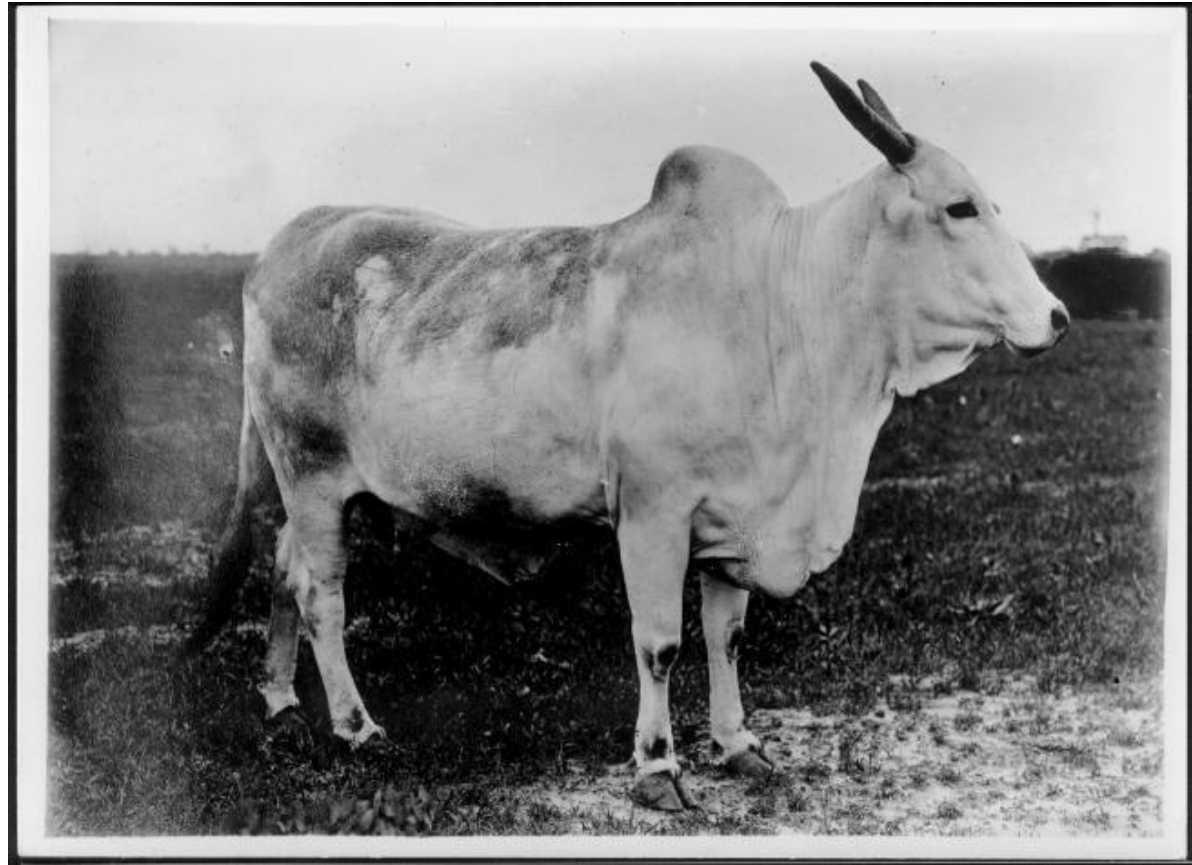
Bradly, Bill. Dehorning Cattle. Deaf Smith County Library, B&W.  
Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-pt-13420>



A Large herd of Cows at Goliad Ranch.  
George Ranch Historical Park  
B&W photo 12x17.4 Permalink:  
<http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-pt-8305>



Image of a Brahman cow, one of the many  
breeds used by the King Ranch.



Brahman cow. George Ranch Historical Park. B&W 17.8cm-12.8cm  
Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-7898>



## The size of the Kennedy Ranch and the importance of artesian wells.

Turcotte: Well, the size of the Kenedy Ranch...well, they sold the Laureles. That was 200,000 acres. They had 400,000 acres left here in Kenedy County. That was their main landholding. They had some land out of Corpus and some in the Valley. But the main ranch was 400,000 acres.

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Turcotte: One of the things that ws the turning point of ranching, along in 1913 to 1920 or so, was the development of the artesian well. Of course, my grandfather drilled a lot of these wells. It enabled the ranchers to have a much more dependable water supply. It was originally touted as for being for irrigation, which didn't prove out.

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Transcript, Louis E. Turcotte Oral History Interview #0774, 4 February 1988, by Floyd Jenkins, UNT Oral History Collection.



Image of the Santa Gertrudis, bred by the King Ranch. In 1940, it was officially recognized as the first beef developed in the United States.



Santa Gertrudis I. George Ranch Historical Park. B&W 18.1cm-12.5cm  
Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-7788>



Primary  
Source  
Adventures:  
Ranching in  
Texas

How many  
weeks  
do you think it  
would take to  
dip 20,000  
cattle?

Turcotte: Well, the main thing about the ranch, as far as the cattle business in general in this part of Texas, was that the fever tick was a terrible thing. It caused a terrible loss of cattle, and it was finally eradicated. But the screw worms weren't, and we lost tremendous numbers of calves to screw worms, and grown cattle.

Jenkins: Ticks they got rid of mainly how?

Turcotte: By dipping. Every six weeks. And it was quite a chore. The land there at the Kenedy Ranch was 400,000 acres, and they ran approximately 20,000 head of cattle, so logistically it was a hell of a job to dip all those cattle every six weeks.

Jenkins: Did they carry dipping vats with them? How did they do that?

Turcotte: No, no. They built dipping vats at different places on the ranch.



How the Texas  
ticks were  
controlled.

Transcript, Louis E. Turcotte Oral History  
Interview #0774, 4 February 1988, by  
Floyd Jenkins, UNT Oral History Collection.

Turcotte: Well, the dipping vat was built at a set of pens, just in connection with an ordinary set of cattle pens, cattle working pens, usually on one corner. They were made out of concrete. The only difference from a normal set of pens was that they had a drain back then where the cattle were jumped into this dipping vat and had to swim to the other end. They had these big, long forked sticks, and they'd push their head down under water. Then the cattle went to a ramp letting them out, and that ramp, which was all cement, tapered back to where the water would run back into the dipping vat.

Jenkins: So a concrete dipping vat was made below the level of the ground?

Turcotte: The vat itself came up above the ground, though, about four feet or so, but the water level was below the level of the ground. It was deep enough so they couldn't walk. They had to swim.

Jenkins: And they would be pushed under.

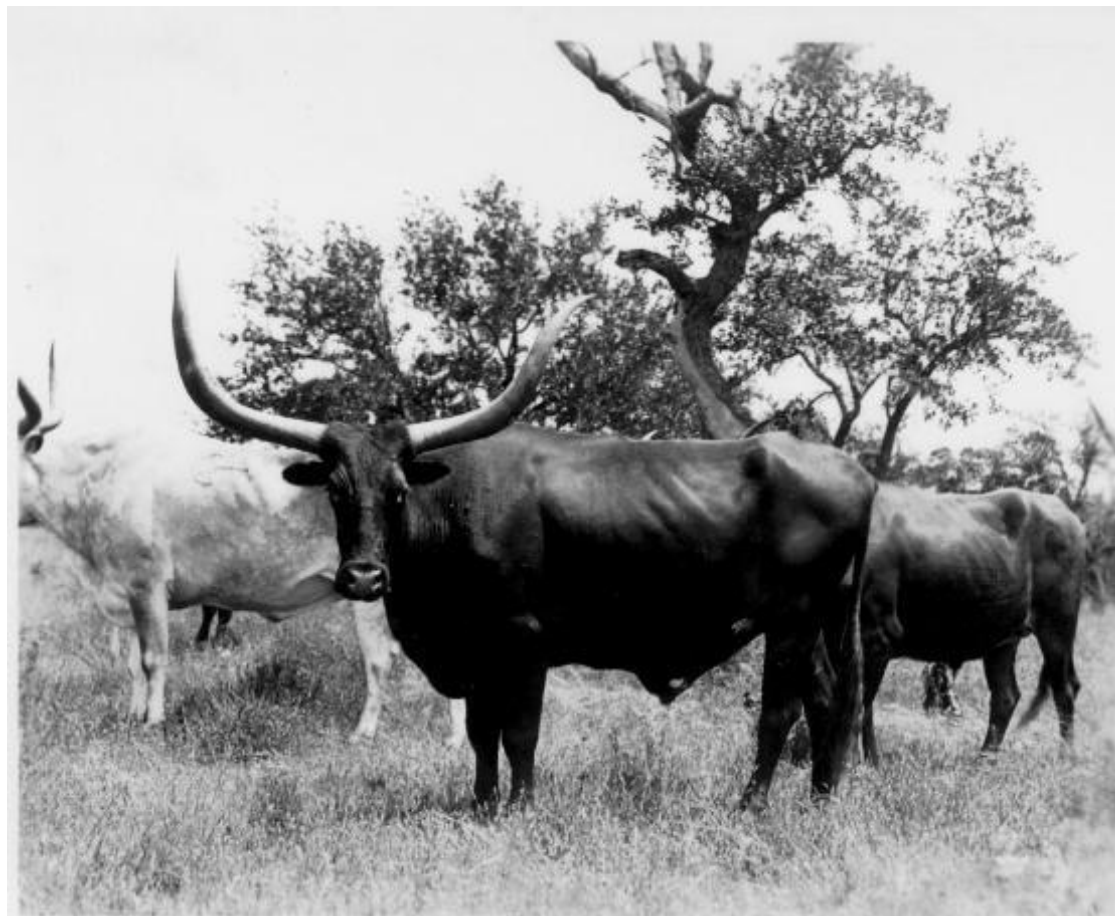
Turcotte: They would be pushed under, yes. Every now and then they'd have to rope a calf or something. The dip that they used was an arsenic dip, which was a very poisonous thing. They measured it very carefully with water when they put it in.

Jenkins: Now how do they get rid of ticks?

Turcotte: Oh, nowadays they use Co-ral.



## The Longhorn – an iconic symbol of Texas.



Longhorn cattle in a pasture. George Ranch Historical Park. B&W 12.6cmx10.2cm  
Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptH-7943>



Learn about life  
as a vaquero.

Transcript. Hattie Bell,  
Oral History Interview #0070,  
13 March 1970, by A Ray  
Stephens.  
UNT Oral History Collection.

McKamey  
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had lots of wind. We had wind from the south and wind from the north and there was always that terrible, terrible dust.

Stephens: Was this by season? North in winter, south in summer?

McKamey: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. But we would have died without that south breeze because it was so hot. But . . . and Kingsville is still a very hot place. But one of the things I remember is that when the . . . on Saturday when the cowboys would get their pay on the ranches and most especially the King Ranch, they would ride to town on their horses and we . . . if we would be downtown or sometimes they would go by our house because our house was on the path that they could have traveled to town, and such dust as they raised when they would come riding into town. And they'd come yipee-yi-yaing just exactly as you would think cowboys would do.

Stephens: Mexicans?

McKamey: Uh-huh. These were the Mexican vaqueros who worked for the King Ranch. And I remember their leather chaps and the . . . and I remember always they wore the same kind of hats that the master wore. They all rolled their hats exactly the same way that the head of the ranch rolled his.





Why do you think land ownership has been so important  
in our state's history?



Texico Land Office. Deaf Smith Country Library. Creation date. 16-2-1906. B&W 6x7cm  
Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-9788>



Stephens:

What about wages for the workers? You've seen this change over the years.

McKamey:

We used to pay them by the week . . . so much a week, and then they received their house, wood, and water, and if they needed to go to the doctor, we paid their doctor bill, and then they paid us back when the harvest season came because they made more money during the harvest season. Now our workers on our farm punch a time clock just like they do in all industries, and they work a certain number of hours. We are required to pay them a certain amount. We are still furnishing houses. But there will come a day in the not too far off future when they will have to provide their own houses. Mrs. Sparks said that she felt that we had run a patron type of organization, and we did because we did look after our own. And there is a great love and a great rapport that exists between us and our people, but it's fast disappearing because when they come and work by the hour, and they punch a time clock, and you don't know what is going in their family, then you are no longer . . . you no longer have the rapport with them

Why do you think the  
customs for paying  
ranch hands changed  
over time?

Transcript. Hattie Bell,  
Oral History Interview #0070,  
13 March 1970, by .A Ray  
Stephens.  
UNT Oral History Collection.



Primary  
Source  
Adventures:  
Ranching in  
Texas

Do you think it  
would be hard to  
be a ranch  
foreman?

Transcript, Louis E. Turcotte  
Oral History Interview #0774,  
4 February 1988, by Floyd Jenkins,  
UNT Oral History Collection.

Turcotte: Well, the foreman, which was usually my dad. Obviously, he couldn't be at every round-up, and when Dad wasn't there, well, it was me. But on the ranch at one time, there were three complete cow outfits. There was over a hundred men on the Kenedy Ranch. They had what we called rancheros, who were the older cowboys that were responsible...they stayed at one of the camps, and they stayed there permanently. They didn't go out. They would help with the round-up when it was in their territory. Usually, they were responsible from 20,000 to 30,000 acres. Their job was to ride every day, check the fences and the waterings and the cattle. If there was anything wrong, they got in and reported it. They stayed there all week. They stayed in camp houses with a fireplace.

Jenkins: High living, uptown.

Turcotte: Oh, they were first class. But the rest of us stayed in tents because we moved. Usually, the camp would be in one spot for a week, and you would work three or four



Jenkins: Now the men, though, slept in tents.

Turcotte: yes.

Jenkins: Like community tents?

Turcotte: Big sixteen-by-fourteen tents. Each man had his own cot, which were folding wooden canvas cots, and he had his own bedroll. All of the cots and bedrolls went in the chuck wagon when you moved, and this was a big ol' long wagon. It took two teams to pull it. All the bedding and stuff went in the front of the chuck wagon, and the chuck box was on the back end of it. There was quite a bit of equipment that went.

The little wagon was used for...his job was real important. He had to haul wood and water to the camp, and he took food out to the round-up at noon. He carried the branding irons and all of the necessary stuff to work cattle--vaccination equipment, the horcata, which was a fork. Most people don't know what



Primary  
Source  
Adventures:  
Ranching in  
Texas



✕ Ranch Chuck Wagon, Kent, Texas

Ranch Chuchwagon. Clark Hotel Museum. B&W 3x5in.

Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-13999>



## Do you think branding cattle would be a tough job?

It's a live oak post about ten feet long, and it had a fork at the top of it. That thing was set in the ground so that the fork was just above saddle horn height so that the roper could just ride up to it and raise his rope up and drop it in that fork and pull the calf up against it. And you had two men there. One would grab that calf by the head and the other one by the tail, and then the roper would slack off, and they'd throw him, just turn him over. And it was fast.

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Transcript, Louis E. Turcotte Oral History Interview #0774, 4 February 1988, by Floyd Jenkins, UNT Oral History Collection.



Primary  
Source  
Adventures:  
Ranching in  
Texas



“Photograph of a herd of predominantly.” Santa Gertrudis Cattle.  
George Ranch Historical Park. 1968-1971 18cm x 12.7cm  
Permalink: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-7602>