

# Banner Cattle County

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sheriff, Robert S. Weisiger, from his native state of Kentucky and were products of that state, owned by one of his kinsmen. Captain Weisiger possessed several race horses of national reputation. The most celebrated of these was Incommodore, which was the fastest horse in Texas and after finishing first on the New Orleans and Baltimore tracks ended his career in a flash of glory with a sad climax in the Kentucky Derby at Louisville. Incommodore was leading on the home stretch in this great racing classic when he was crowded against the fence close to the finishing line and fell and broke a leg. Methodist was the name of another Weisiger horse that won national fame.

Harry Gramann was another well known Victoria County horse breeder. He won the prize at the Gulf Coast Fair held in Victoria in 1858 for the best exhibition of fine horses. The prize, a silver loving cup, is still in the possession of his daughters, Misses Minnie and Ida Gramann. He also was the father of H. C. Gramann, retired Victoria grocer. Mr. Gramann came to Texas from Germany in the forties and died during the yellow fever epidemic in 1867.

John Shirkey and family settled in Victoria County from Botetourt County, Virginia in 1852, the same year as the Weisiger family came from Kentucky, and also brought some fine horse stock, of which Rose's History says: "Coming first to look at the country and seeing the want of improvement in stock, with considerable pains he (Mr. Shirkey) selected and brought out eighteen fine American mares and a fine animal of the Morgan stock." Mr. Shirkey located four miles south of Victoria and moved to the city in 1857, dying the following year. He was the father of Mrs. Pauline Clark of this city, now in her 88th year, and a descendant of one of the first families of Virginia, being an intimate friend of Gen. Robert E. Lee. The Shirkey horses were among the best in the county for many years. In fact, their importation led to quite a serious feud over the comparative merits of Virginia and Kentucky racing stock.

### Horse Breeding Extensive.

In later years all the leading Victoria County ranchmen, and also ranchmen of adjoining counties, raised fine horses, and many high priced stallions were imported for this purpose, including one named Knox of the Dan Patch strain of Kentucky and an earlier one called Pickles that were used to improve the horses on the Murphy Ranch, long noted for its superior horse stock.

Sidney Clay, son of Green Clay, who owned what is now the D. M. O'Connor Ranch in southern Victoria County and which is known to this day as the Clay pasture, also was a great race horse fancier. He was a kinsman of Captain Weisiger and a direct descendant of Henry Clay, Kentucky statesman. Big Jim, a product of the McFaddin Ranch, was one of the fastest horses in Texas thirty-five years ago. About the same time Billy Elm, owned by T. D. Wood, a leading Victoria ranchman of his day, was a racing sensation. In more recent years, Lon Martin, now spending his declining days on James O'Connor's ranch in Goliad County, sustained this county's reputation for speedy horses. Charles Adler, pioneer ranchman, still living, and Louis Sitterle, for years manager of the D. M. O'Connor ranches,

owned some of the finest racing stock in this section.

Anti-betting legislation ruined the breeding of thoroughbred horses here and elsewhere throughout the state, but the recent repeal of these restrictive laws is causing a revival of this old-time industry.

### Herefords Most Popular.

Most of the present day cattle of the United States are descendants of stock imported from Europe, largely from England. Among the English cattle to win early favor with Victoria County ranchmen were Durhams. The first Durhams or Shorthorns ever seen in this county, as previously related, were brought here from Kentucky by the Emmons. Another pioneer Durham breeder was Preston R. Rose, who purchased his stock either in East Texas or Louisiana some time in the fifties. Rose moved to this county from Harrison County, Texas, in 1845, and settled in Crescent Valley, "where in 1858 he enclosed with a plank fence a pasture of 10,000 acres," says Historian Rose, his kinsman. He died in 1869. J. C. Warden, John Green, Winn Traylor, Thomas N. Fleming and other pioneer Victoria ranchmen also imported Durhams, and at one time the late James F. Welder possessed more of these cattle than any other ranchman in this section.

Herefords, now the most common and most popular blooded cattle throughout the state, were introduced from Northwest Texas about forty-five years ago. The original Northwest Texas stock is said to have been derived from Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina.

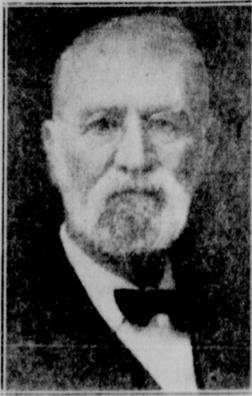
As was the case with Durhams, no Hereford cows were brought to Victoria County but only well-bred bulls, with a view of improving the stock of native cattle. With the Durhams, it was found that the first cross produced splendid cattle but they did not range well. In the case of the Herefords, it was discovered that the more they were crossed and the higher their grade the better they did on the range, and so cattle of this breed became the favorite of most ranchmen.

Before the introduction of Herefords into Victoria County, Martin O'Connor informs the editor, there was a type of cattle that was as well or better bred. This was the Sussex, another English breed. Mr. O'Connor states that a number of Sussex bulls were brought to this section from Tennessee, where they were obtained from a well known breeder of that state named Lee, and that the reason these cattle are not plentiful on our prairies today is because Lee had the misfortune of losing his foundation stock and it was too expensive then to import others from England. The Sussex were very large blood red cattle with heavy dark horns and the bulls often weighed a ton. Mr. O'Connor says they were fine beef and range cattle and seemed to be especially adapted to the coastal region of Texas.

### First Dairy Cattle.

There is no record of when the first dairy cattle were introduced in Victoria County. Before their introduction common Longhorn cows were generally used as milk cows, they being carefully selected for the richness and quantity of their milk. A large herd of Jersey and Holstein cattle were shipped to Victoria from Minnesota by A. Goldman, now deceased, pioneer business man of this city, in 1855, and this shipment of dairy cattle may have been the first received in Texas, or at least South Texas, for dairying as an industry did not exist in the South until quite recent years. Mr. Goldman saw these

## Soldier-Ranchman



WILLIAM B. TRAYLOR

The Traylor family settled in Texas from Alabama in 1840. The head of the family was Wm. Traylor, who was born in Oglethorpe County, Georgia, March 17, 1807, and died November 20, 1883. He engaged in the ranch business in Victoria and Calhoun Counties and from a small beginning became one of the largest landowners and wealthiest cattlemen of his day. His second wife, the subject of this sketch, was born in Alabama August 11, 1838, and came to Texas with her parents. He helped to manage his father's large estate and succeeded him in the cattle business, being equally as successful. His own distinction during the War Between the States as a Confederate soldier. His death occurred May 28, 1913. His wife was Miss Mary Ora Terry, to whom he was married in 1865. She was born in Anson County, North Carolina, June 13, 1846, and died March 13, 1880. One son and one daughter survive. They are P. Traylor and Mrs. Joseph V. Vandenberg, both of Victoria.

cattle while on a visit to relatives in Minnesota and their milk producing qualities were a revelation to him. Many of them contracted the Texas fever and died but he made other importations until he owned the finest dairy herds in this whole section. Today Victoria County is one of the leading dairying counties of the state and Victoria is rapidly becoming an important milk market with the location of associated industries.

"Strange to say, the Jersey is a very distantly related cousin of the Longhorn," says a historical review of the Texas cattle industry. "The same color seems to predominate in the two breeds, and there is also distinct in both the characteristic mealy color ring mark around the nostrils. George W. Curtis and other authorities attribute this birthmark to Spanish regions, and the short distance between Spain and Jersey makes it exceedingly probable that the Jersey originally came from that once great cattle country."

### Cattalos Failure.

In the early nineties it was thought that Texas had developed an extra fine breed of range and beef cattle by crossing the Hereford with the bison or buffalo. The first cross produced fine beef cattle but succeeding crosses resulted in poor types and the practice was finally abandoned. These experiments were conducted by the late Charles Goodnight, an extensive ranchman of the Panhandle. The offspring were called cattalos. Like the bison or buffalo, they had fifteen ribs on each side, or two more than regular cattle, and retained much of the bison's hump and shaggy mane.

Recently there has been developed on the King Ranch at Kingsville a splendid type of beef cattle named the Santa Gertrudis breed after the ranch. These cattle represent a Brahma-Shorthorn cross. They carry three-eighths Brahma and five-eighths Shorthorn blood, have sleek shiny coats, are cherry red and are notable because of the disappearance of the hump and drooping rump—two of the most objectionable features of the Brahma. They are said to possess all the desirable characteristics of the Brahma and some possibly their own.

"There has been in the past few years a great need on the part of the beef producers in the Gulf coast country for additional Brahma blood," says The Country Gentleman. "The United States De-

partment of Agriculture and numerous private agencies have investigated the sources of supply, to find, discouragingly, that the two great breeding grounds of Brahmas, or zebus, are now closed to our importers. India and South America have numbers of them, but owing to the prevalence of rinderpest, foot and mouth and other diseases, we cannot import from these countries." The King Ranch therefore decided upon the importation of Africaner cattle.

### The Klebergs.

The King Ranch, due to the progressiveness of the late Robert J. Kleberg, a native of the neighboring county of DeWitt and a brother of former Congressman Rudolph Kleberg of this district, has for many years been a leader in the improvement of Texas cattle. Congressman Richard M. Kleberg, a son of Robert J. Kleberg and owner and co-manager of the King Ranch, is as progressive as his father and is largely responsible for the continuation of his policies. Congressman Kleberg has honored The Advocate with a special article on the cattle industry in this edition.

It was mainly due to the efforts of Robert J. Kleberg and his cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture that it was discovered in 1890 that the cattle tick was the carrier of Texas fever. "This was the first discovery of an insect acting as the carrier of disease, and in view of the fact that it led to the discovery of the part which certain mosquitoes play in the spread of malaria and yellow fever, it ranked as one of the most important discoveries of modern times," according to an article by George M. Rommel in "The South in The Building of the Nation." Before this discovery some experts thought the disease was communicated by the excreta or saliva of Texas cattle.

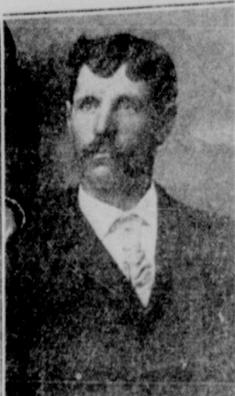
### Fever Restrictions.

"Ever since the development of the cattle industry in Texas and the business of shipping Southern cattle north began, it was known that, in some mysterious way, such cattle were dangerous to Northern cattle, although after a time they lost this dangerous characteristic," further states Mr. Rommel. "The same experience was had when Northern cattle were taken south large numbers dying when so transported. The interest of the Federal Government in the matter began in 1868, when enormous losses occurred among Northern cattle after the shipment of Texas cattle into Illinois and Indiana. The first result of the government's work was the quarantine against cattle in the Southern States, on account of the presence of the disease. This quarantine prohibited shipment from such localities, except for immediate slaughter, but permitted shipment during the period of the year when experience had shown that the cattle were harmless."

"The habits of the tick made possible its eradication by simple methods of pasture rotation, when carefully managed. The female tick always drops off the animal to lay eggs, and the young ticks hatched from these eggs crawl up grass and weeds, attach themselves to passing cattle, and they are the actual carriers of the Texas fever organism. If cattle are removed to tick free pastures after the ticks have fallen off them, and no more ticks get on them, they can be safely brought into contact with non-innocent cattle. Dips are now used, however, which kill the ticks without injury to the cattle."

"The German Government, which in 1879 had passed a decree regulating the importation of American cattle," says a well known work on the economic history of the South. "In 1884, in account of some alleged cases of Texas fever in American cattle which had been shipped to Hamburg, prohibited the importation of live cattle from the United States—a policy which was soon followed by France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. This led to inspection by the American Department of Agriculture, but in some cases the State Department found difficulty in inducing the

## Followed Longhorns



FRANK ALONSO

Mr. Alonso is the only ranchman pictured on these pages who is still in the field of the living. He is enjoying good health and remains active at 73. Mr. Alonso was born November 10, 1850, in the Province of Santander, Spain, where the Texas Longhorn originated. In 1873, at the age of 24, he emigrated to America, spending a year in Havana, Cuba, before locating in Victoria. First he worked here for Alexander Brothers and then for A. & S. Levy, and met with immediate success upon entering the live stock business. At one time he was the most extensive horse and mule trader in Southern Texas. He is the only surviving member of the original Board of Directors of the Victoria National Bank. Mr. Alonso's wife was formerly Miss Appolonia Stricker. They were married February 8, 1890. Their two daughters are Mrs. Chas. H. (Catherine) Hopkins and Mrs. William (Margaret) Hector. Mr. Alonso either likes to appear in the picture reproduced above or in the only one he had available. It is about forty years old.

foreign governments to remove the restrictions—which in some instances appeared to be a pretext to keep out American exports in order to prevent competition."

### Tick Eradication.

Dipping vats were built in Texas as early as 1891 and the first one was located on the Taft Ranch near Sinton. About the same time John J. Welder, Robert J. Kleberg and other leading ranchmen installed vats. But the dip industry began to wane as the ticks were made too strong and killed the cattle as well as the ticks. For this reason, it was not until the discovery of the Spindletop oil field about 1899 that dipping became effective as a result of the use of oil from that field—commonly called Beaumont oil—as the body of the dipping solution. However, it was not so much the Texas fever as the range scare of about 28 years ago that made dipping common.

Most cattlemen delayed cleaning their cattle of ticks and were content to remain below the quarantine line because of the danger of them coming in contact with an clean cattle and the attendant heavy losses. Under Governor James E. Ferguson's first administration in 1917 a dipping law was passed but it was not put into practice until about 1922, when the tick infested sections of the state were divided into zones, the zones next in clean territory receiving the first attention. The cattlemen generally were then ready to cooperate in the movement, and Victoria County was one of numerous counties that built dipping vats and observed the law, spending approximately \$10,000 in cooperation with ranchmen and farmers in its enforcement, with the result that Victoria County became one of the first tick-free counties in the state.

The tick eradication law was unpopular in isolated sections of the state and many ranchmen and farmers occasionally disregarded the law, all because of the fact that they would suffer heavy losses among their herds if they were clean and came in contact with dirty cattle, and the law was well founded. For instance, there was a sandy pasture below Kingsville where ticks could not crawl and many cattle pastured there died when moved to another pasture near Corpus Christi where ticks thrived. This caused the owners to have ticks carried to herds from their Corpus Christi pastures and placed on the cattle in the pasture below Kingsville.

Texas Ideal Cattle Co., Victoria, Texas is an ideal cattle country.

especially the coastal section, and with the elimination of the ticks and the fever the ranchmen have no serious diseases to contend with except charbon and most of them vaccinate for that every year. The pink eye blinds cattle temporarily but is not fatal. The black leg affects young animals but is easily controlled. Screw worms are common and result from branding, sterilization and barb-wire cuts but they can be eradicated by simple doctoring. Tuberculosis is not prevalent among range cattle, only attacking to a slight extent dairy herds, or cattle that are confined to close quarters. The fluke, a disease that causes cattle to starve to death in the midst of plenty, is not common. The hoof and mouth disease is the most dreaded malady, but there has been only one epidemic of this disease in Texas and that occurred in 1924 and was confined to a small portion of Harris County. The epidemic is thought by some to have been caused by importations of foreign cattle. Another theory is that the organisms were conveyed in straw, forage or other material brought by steamships from South America to the Port of Houston.

### The First Fences.

Numbers of the earlier ranchmen fenced their pastures but for many years the range was open.

The first fences were made of cypress, oak and mesquite rails. Then there were plank fences built of lumber shipped in from Florida. The posts were placed close enough together so the planks would overlap. They were one-by-six cypress boards about fourteen feet long and the fences were three boards high, staves built of mesquite and other poles served as pens. Smooth wire fences then made their appearance. The wire was run through holes in the fence posts. It was not until the early sixties that barb-wire was marketed. The first demonstration of a barb-wire fence in Texas was made in San Antonio about 1876 by John W. Gates, who was to become a famous capitalist. The miniature fence was built across Alamo Plaza, and a few years later the whole country was under barbed wire, states Martin O'Connor, to whom the editor is indebted for much of the information contained in this article.

Rose's History says that The Advocate in 1853 then under the ownership of F. R. Pridham, first advocated the system of fenced pastures for enclosing live stock. "Mr. M. L. Stoner inaugurated the discussion of the subject," says Rose, "and Dr. E. H. Smith contributed several well-written papers to the columns of The Advocate in support of Mr. Stoner's suggestions. The sons of Mr. Stoner were probably the first in the county to test the practicability of the theory, by actual experiment, on any considerable scale, their pastures having been enclosed in the winter of 1857."

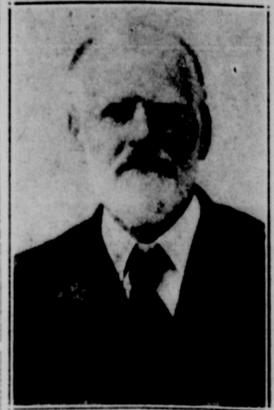
D. E. Faut, early cattleman of Goliad County, was among the first ranchmen in this section to make use of barbed wire. The first pasture of fence of any kind in Texas of which there is any authentic record was built by Martin de Leon, founder of Victoria, who established a ranch on the Aransas River above what is now the town of San Patricio in 1896 and enclosed it the same year. The enclosure was undoubtedly a zig-zag fence made of oak and mesquite rails filled in with brush, as that was the form of the earliest fences.

### Fence Cutting.

Rose makes this reference to the first fence cutting in Victoria County:

"This radical revolution in the mode of handling live stock was not consummated without serious opposition on the part of the 'barbed-wire' and several miles of wire fence belonging to Mr. Robert Clark was cut down on the west side of the Guadalupe River. But so universal was the indignation of all classes of citizens at this deed of vandalism that the perpetrators were promptly punished and a repetition would not be conducive to longevity; and except for the destruction of Mr. Jose M. Gonzales—which doubtless was prompted by revenge—no similar destruction has been attempted."

## Owned Fleming Prairie



THOMAS N. FLEMING

Thomas Newton Fleming was a member of a family that was among the early settlers of this section. He was born in Sumpter County, Alabama—November 14, 1832, and came to Texas during his early manhood, the family settling at Green Lake, Calhoun County, once one of the most prosperous communities in this section with many elegant homes. Upon the abandonment of Green Lake, Mr. Fleming located in Victoria, and after serving in the Confederate Army became one of this county's leading ranchmen, owning all of what is now known as the Fleming Prairie in the southern portion of the county. He was a leader in the breeding of fine cattle. Mr. Fleming died March 10, 1908. His wife, Mrs. Molly Reeves Fleming, died five years before. Of a large family of children, only one son, P. R. (Lee) Fleming of Piedras Negras, Mexico, and one daughter, Mrs. William H. (Kate) Smith of this city, survive. One son, former Mayor J. H. Fleming, died only a short time ago. Another son, E. R. Fleming, was postmaster of Victoria and still another son, William Neville Fleming, was one of the wealthiest ranchmen of Southwest Texas.

would not be conducive to longevity; and except for the destruction of Mr. Jose M. Gonzales—which doubtless was prompted by revenge—no similar destruction has been attempted."

Mr. Clark was one of Victoria County's largest ranchowners and one of the most extensive cattle shippers of Texas. He had as a partner Charles Stillman, the New York banker. They operated a boat line between Indianola, New Orleans and Havana, and were among the first ranchowners in the state to fence their lands. As already mentioned, Mr. Clark's widow is still living in Victoria.

"One great objection, and, indeed, bugbear of the original cattlemen of Texas, was his horror of being crowded," writes W. S. James in his work on cowboy life. "The first thing that especially aroused the indignation of the stockmen relative to barbed wire," Mr. James proceeds, "was the terrible destruction of stock caused by being torn first on the wire and the screw worm doing the rest. This was especially the case with horses. When the first fences were made the cattle, never having had experience with it, would run full tilt right into it, and many of them got badly hurt; and when one got a scratch sufficient to draw blood the worms would take hold of it. Some man would come into a range, where the stock had regular rounds or beaten ways, and fence up several hundred acres right across the range, and thus endanger thousands of cattle and horses. After the first three years of wire, I have seen cattle and horses that you could hardly drive between two posts, and if there was a line of posts running across the prairie, I have seen a bunch of range horses follow the line out to the end and then turn."

Says James Cox in his History of the Cattle Industry of Texas: "With the advent of barbed wire came the shears and the illegal cutting of strands. Many lives were lost as a result of this illegal work, and one of the most arduous tasks ever given to cowboys was the riding along the lines and watching out for fence-cutters. It frequently happened that an entire

## Cow and Calf Worth \$10 in Days Before Texas Independence

(From The Reminiscences of John J. Linn) It is only with the most careful reflections that I can recall the period in Texas history that poses like a cultivated and the wilds of nature, the capitulation of Ugarret in year 1835 Texas was a rostral paradise. Health, plenty and teemed throughout the mastodon would not have greater curiosity than a lecturer. There were no law in the land, for the litigation.

Money sufficient for was in circulation. The cattle was an unknown body—strangers from a grave would have no consideration at the honest yeomanry of Texas cow thief. Corn eras law of locks, and smoke to close by, equally open to agreement, a cow and legal tender for ten dollars are worth forty dollars in some will say, the ratio have the material relations of

colony of small cattlemen would combine against a trader who had fenced the acres, as well as every watering place for every driving distance. The lature eventually made to cut a fence.

First Aransas Well The fencing of pastures wells a necessity for those whose lands were far from water and many soon made their appearance in this section was Thomas O'Connor, and James Power, the engineer a member of Power & Co. colony. He procured the machinery from the Well Works of Austin, died in 1887 before the first well was dug. The first rotary drilling brought to Texas. This was the most extensive er and ranchman of the section. At his death he left Dennis M. O'Connor well completed, and many Artesian wells were throughout this section. Knowlan, who died 20 ago in Victoria, was known water well owner South Texas in the well located in this city after the first locomotive from New York, Texas & Austin from New York City and at the time of its conducting the Knowlan & Supply Company.

Trail Driving Before the coming of roads cattle were driven to markets but long drives was a connected with roads trail driving cause the railroad was regarded as too high to be between the Kansas were driven to Kansas while other herds were in Montana and breaks of the Texas so much hard feeling. History, that in some bodies of men passed of Texas with their neighbors.

## The Longest Longhorns



This diamond-studded Longhorn head was presented to President William McKinley in 1897 by Dennis M. O'Connor, widely known Victoria County ranchman, whose lands embraced a large area of Refugio, Aransas, San Patricio and Goliad Counties. At the time of their presentation, these horns were the longest known in Texas. Mr. O'Connor was the son of Thomas O'Connor, the Texas cattle king. His sons, Martin O'Connor and Thomas O'Connor, ranchmen and capitalists, reside in Victoria.

## White Faces -- Herefords -- Victoria County's Favorite Cattle



Courtesy of The Cattlemen, Ft. Worth, Tex.

## Brahma or Indian Cattle



Here is a Brahma bull that descended from the 1, 1905. It is owned by States Jacobs of Houston, whose ranch in Harris County ranks one of the McFaddin and Pierce Ranches for the number of the are noted for their splendid adaptability to especially favored because of their fine beef quality.