

In a quiet little retreat fronting on the principal avenue in the once thriving burg of Yakima City, under his own vine and fig trees lives a quaint personage who, perhaps can tell more of the history of this fertile valley, more of hard fought Indian battles and more of actual frontier life than anyone else within the borders of Yakima county.

His name is Louis Ker, and while he has spent more than the normal time allotted to man, is nevertheless hale and hearty and with a mind as active and bright as when in the 50's, he settled in what, as he said was the prettiest country he had ever laid eyes on.

Mr. Ker was born on the Emerald isle 72 years ago (marked with ? in pencil) but notwithstanding this fact no truer American or braver defender of the stars and stripes ever lived. Soon after coming to this country Mr. Ker entered the army, being stationed at Fortress Monroe where after meritorious and efficient service he was put in command of one of the big guns and at that time the larvest gun in the service of the United States.

Early in 1855 the 9th infantry was formed under General Churchill and Col. Wright and Mr. Ker joined the company which was soon ordered to proceed west to fight the Indians on the frontier of Oregon.

Their first battle was fought near the cascades on the Columbia March 28, 1856, the regiment being under command of Colonel Wright.

Among the other troops engaged were two companies of the 4th infantry and a detachment of the 2d dragoons under the command of general--then lieutenant--Sheridan. Later in the year the regiment was ordered to this part of the country, being stationed for a time at Fort Simcoe. It was then that Mr. Ker decided that he had reached a country that was good enough for him and concluded to shake Uncle Sam and make a start in life for himself, although having had tempting offers

to remain in the army and having passed a successful examination at Fort Vancouver which entitled him to a commission.

While army life had its charms there were other things which seemed to outweigh these attractions, so in 1860 he received his discharge at Fort Colville, returning immediately to this valley where he began to gather about him considerable live stock.

The first white family to come into this part of the country, Mr. Ker says, was one by the name of Hall, who came in 1857 remaining until 1859 when they removed to Kittitas county.

Mr. Ker has ever remained a resident of Yakima county except for short periods of time one of which was when he was a member of the U.S. geological surveying party he visited Alaska, going to the head of the Stickeen river.

This was in the year of 1876. Of late years he has been satisfied to live a less active life but never tires in his entertaining way to tell of his early experiences in this unsettled and untutored country.

Mr. Ker is a man of sterling qualities one whose word is his bond and whom ~~has~~ every one has come to regard as such. His friends delight to tell of a little incident to show the character of the man. It is as follows:

In the early days when money was scarce and when nearly every one in this then sparsely settled country found cattle raising the most remunerative business to engage in, Mr. Ker bought a number of young cattle giving his word that he would pay for them on a certain date.

Time rolled on and Mr. Ker, finding something more lucrative elsewhere disappeared, no one seemingly knowing where. As the time for the payment rolled near, the holder of the account began to have grave fears of its being paid and said as much. This was too much for one of Mr. Ker's friends who overheard the remark and he ventured to wager that the

The Open-Range Cowboy

William Coleman, ex-bowboy now living in Toppenish, studied a painting on the wall of the Club cafe of cowboys with broad hats, flowing bandanas and fancy yellow chaps herding along a small bunch of cattle of various colors. The painting was done by a customer for a bar bill.

"You never saw anything like that in the early days," Coleman said. "They look like lost cowboys."

He termed sportily-dressed cowboys of the movie variety "milkmaids."

There might have been some rough characters in the Southwest but around Yakima the cowboys were peaceably inclined.

"You didn't see cowboys with a big gun strapped on 'em. I don't even remember Snipes packing one. What would you use a gun for?"

The main exception in central Washington was Hank Vaughn of Walla Walla. Coleman heard "he'd shoot their heels off to make 'em dance." But around Yakima there was no "rowin'", Coleman declared.

"The boss would get rid of a cowboy if he got smart."

"You didn't hear much bragging," Coleman recalled. "You might be a good rider but you didn't say anything about it. A cowboy would start blowin' and the boys would ask to see what he could do."

Despite the lack of bravado, Coleman believes the cowboys of central Washington were as good as those anyplace.

"You never saw a big belly on them. A horse could kick them in the belly and it wouldn't hurt. It was the work that did it. They worked 24 hours a day sometimes, especially when they were night herding, and only got \$30 to \$35 a month for it."

Coleman recalled that Snipes, even when he was well up in age, rode "straight as an arrow."

He didn't drink or gamble, Coleman believes.

Big Bend
Cattle-Killing Winters

The winter of 1880 and 1881 was the worst ever experienced in eastern Washington Territory and eastern Oregon since the settlement of the country. It commenced to snow about the 15th of November, 1880, and the last heavy snowfall was March 15, 1881. All the tall sagebrush around where Pasco is was buried under snow and ice. We had not begun to keep our eye on Pasco; it was not on the map, or thought of; the only settlement was Ainsworth. I have heard it estimated by well-informed cattlemen that over 100,000 head of cattle and horses perished by cold and starvation that winter in eastern Oregon and Washington. Ben Snipes lost immense numbers in the Yakima country. Dave Coonce at Ringold bar, near White Bluffs, was one of the heaviest losers. Many cattlemen in the lower portion of the Big Bend were cleaned out entirely. Providence cut, on the NP, about 40 feet wide, drifted full of snow. All bunch grass and forage was deeply buried, and in four or five miles between Messa and Eagle Rock hundreds of horses and cattle perished by drifting with the wind and falling off the cliffs into the rocks and deep snowdrifts below. Cattle in the vicinity of Pasco broke into homestead shacks in their endeavor to find shelter from the bitter wind, and hundreds drifting with the wind onto the ice of the Columbia river broke through and were drowned. This was the beginning of the end. Each ~~the~~ year thereafter, incoming settlers fenced more and more of the springs and waterholes and the free range became more restricted.

The winter of 1889-90 finished the cattle business on the open range in the Big Bend country. The intense cold was accompanied by deep snows that stayed on the ground in many places until the end of May...There was very little stock left ~~at~~ after that winter,

drives.

Two roads led from the ranges of Northwest to Montana territory. One was over the Mullan road which ran northeasterly from Fort Walla Walla to the Spokane valley, thence into northern Idaho and across the Panhandle to Montana and to the eastern terminus at Fort Benton.

The second route was through southern Idaho by way of Boise City.

The use of the Mullan road declined when the NP completed its railroad in 1883 and brought the Columbia basin closer to the ranges of Eastern Montana.

By 1885 cattle ~~drove to Montana from Oregon and Idaho~~ movement to Montana from the Yakima valley reached its peak, 37,000 head being shipped out. Montana buyers paid \$17 a head at Walla Walla for Yakima valley. Movements of cattle out of northern Idaho, Oregon and Eastern Washington to Montana virtually stopped by 1890

In 1880 there were 55,098 head of cattle in the Yakima valley and 44,000 in the Columbia plateau near Spokane and Whitman counties.

In Walla Walla and south of the Snake river there were 29,000, a total of 191,114 head east and west of the Cascades in Washington territory. In 1880

In 1880 100,000 head of beef cattle were moved out of Washington territory to Montana, Oregon, British possessions and Wyoming.

In 1885 a trainload of stock for Montana ranges was going out of Yakima daily for several weeks in May.

drives.

Meyer & Co. of Chicago purchased 9,500 head of beef cattle in the Yakima valley and the Crab creek country of the Columbia Basin in 1870, paying \$150. Snipes sold 3,500 head, S.R. Geddis 3,000 and Robert Dunn 400. The cattle were driven eastward to make connection with the Northern Pacific shipping points.

Snipes sold ~~some~~ ~~four~~ ~~year~~ ~~old~~ ~~steers~~ on Puget Sound, weighing 750 pounds for \$50 a head that he had purchased two years ~~ago~~ before in the Willamette valley for \$10 a head. He estimated the cost of herding them and transporting them to market at ~~some~~ ~~head~~ \$8 a head

$\frac{1}{2}$ Texas cattle, brought into Montana, Nevada, Idaho and Eastern Oregon in 1872 drove the prices down for inland stock to, ~~\$25.00~~ ~~head~~ \$30 a head for cows and five cents a pound for beef stock.

The overstock situation in 1875 found some of the salmon canners on the Columbia turning to beef and mutton at the close of the season and shipping it out along with oxtail and other soup, there were 18 canneries operating on the lower Columbia and the first was sent to England. By 1877 the canneries were taking 10,000 head of cattle a year.

By 1899 there were 11,390 head of cattle in Yakima county, 168,745 sheep and 2,130 hogs

Lang bought up 7,000 head in 1876 in the Palouse country and south of the Snake and gathered them at Huntsville near Waitsburg. They were taken to the middle west in June, fattened in the corn fields and sold at Chicago.

Montana cattle stocking.

C.J. McNamee, the Northern Montana cattle king purchased the N.N. stock brand of the Home Land and Cattle company of St Louis, setting a new record for a stock transaction in that state in which he bought 30,000 head of cattle. and put McNamee in front of the Northwest cattlemen. The Home Land and Cattle company decided to go out of cattle business and into agriculture and other pursuits in 1897.

John J.C. Lonergan represented another Montana stockman, Millick and bought and shipped out 10 train loads from Eastern Washington the same year.

Millick was disappointed by the Montana climate and moved to Nebraska to fatten out his stock where hay was plentiful and cheap and he bought corn at 8 cents a bushel.

Sanborn & Company of Miles city bought 4,000 head of Yakima valley stock in 1885. Prouty & Knowlty of Glendive, Mont. were buying valley cattle in 1897.

drives:

Drives into the Yakima country in 1868 beat a trail through Oregon City in 1868 when by early June 5,000 head of stock had passed through the Dalles.

Butchers on the Puget Sound bought stock and cowboys took the animals over Snoqualmie pass in bands and small bunches.

The livestock traffic was too heavy in 1883 that the trail was kept open all winter long by the herds of 100 and 200 that took four days to cross from the Yakima and Kittitas valleys

Phelps and Wadleigh were supplying 400 head of cattle a year to Seattle in 1874. By 1879, 20,000 head a year were moving over Snoqualmie.

W.H. Crockett took 516 head of cattle for Phelps and Wadleigh over Snoqualmie in the fall of 1878, the largest single band of to be taken over that route up to that time, and before snow blocked the pass, many other bands of 225 or 30 or 40 head were crossed to Seattle. Snow and mud blocked the pass by the end of the month, a band of 448 driven over by George Smith some died of exhaustion and others drowned in the Snoqualmie river. In late December a trail was broken through the snow and small herds were headed to market by cattlemen anxious to get out of the country because of apprehension over the Indian trouble that year.

The following year Smith took a herd from the Kittitas valley to Seattle, a nine-day trip, also 16 horses.

The trail was kept open by driving cattle from Yakima

Three thousand head of cattle were driven through Snoqualmie

drives

rom Yakima to Seattle in 1881

By 1892 trains had taken over where the cattle drovers left off to take cattle to Seattle. Snipes and Allen, A.J. Splan and L.N. Rice were shipping them out by the carload. Cattle, loaded east of Yakima were unloaded at Yakima and fed before they resumed their last trip to the butcher shops at Seattle.

Drives;

Lang & Ryan roamed the valley purchasing cattle for their drives to the Middlewest. In 1878 they bought 12,000, mostly in ~~the Columbia Basin~~ from cattlemen in the Columbia Basin and paid \$13 a head.

The stock, during that era, was assembled at Walla Walla in herds up to 5,000 and the cattle were run over the river at Lyon's ferry, taken across the mountains to Boise, Shoshone and American Falls, ~~later~~ to the Laramie plains in Wyoming. From there they were sold to the Chicago and Omaha markets. It took up to ~~three~~ three months to take a herd along that route. The cattle, regardless of where they came from, were known as Oregon cattle and when the herds were assembled on the Laramie plains they sometimes tallied 50,000 head. they were wintered there a year and then sent to market.

Rand, Briggs & Co. sent ~~some~~ their cowboys from Cheyenne by stage to the ~~Walla Walla~~ Walla Walla to start ~~the~~ a drive of 4,000 head in 1879. After

W.F. Millick of Montana was one of the buyers who came into the Yakima ~~country~~ country. He purchased 2,000 head from P.A. ^{Harry} Bounds, Meyer and Moran at Yakima and paid \$13 a head in 1897.

Cattle drives from California started with the gold discoveries in the north and had an additional push when drought conditions hit the ranges there in 1864. Then the state passed a herd or no-fence law, requiring ~~owned~~ cattlemen to fence ~~their~~ their ranges or herd the cattle on them. Settlers were permitted to plant on open land. The result was that many of the cattlemen headed ~~for the wide open spaces in Nevada, Oregon and Idaho.~~ for the wide open spaces in Nevada, Oregon and Idaho.

cattle drives..Alaska..

The Alaska gold rush brought a demand for beef there and the Yakima country helped produce the need. The Thompsons and Thorps took oxen overland to Dawson from Hain's station, packing them with 300 pounds of provision. The trail for the cattle drives led from Haines' mission through the Chilkat pass to Lake Arkell and was one of the best routes over to range to Dawson. When they reached Lake Arkell they made a log raft, 30 by 90 feet and two logs deep, killed the cattle and floated the meat down the river to Dawson, avoiding the dangerous canyon and the White Horse rapids in the way. Thompson and Thorp and Willis Thorp and his son. Fenton Powell contracted to take cattle to Alaska over the Dalton trail. British Columbia charged a 27 per cent duty

to prevent importation but permitted cattle destined to the Klondike to be taken through without paying duty.

Expenses of the Alaska trip were so big that while \$13,000 was made on the stock the transportation ran one party \$2,000 in the hole because of a four month trip to the Klondyke. The cattle became so poor during the last stages of the trip that only 35 miles could be made in nine days and they were slaughtered and the frozen meat packed in

Howard Benson of Benson and Gauthurat took 61 head of Yakima cattle to Fairbanks by boat, rail and overland over the Valdez trail in 1909 and found prices so good that he decided to try again.

overland drives.

Cattle brought around Hepner and brought into Oregon were stock with delay between their eyes and came from the Rock Creek range. They were horned herefords and cost \$15 with calves at their side in the spring. The first muley or hornless herefords came into the cattle country a quarter of a century ago. It cost 10 cents a head to bring the stock over on the ferry at Arlington and calves were free.

From Arlington the range trail led along the Columbia to the Klickitat river and then through the reservation. Drovers herded a few days at the bend below old Yakima city and rested up and then continued on to the Wenas or Kittitas country.

Drives..Naches pass.

Cattlemen using the Naches pass on the ~~old~~ had a corral on
Crow creek on the east slope and found good feed on the route to the
summit but from there on it was rough. Cattle and horses had to ~~stay~~
~~wait~~ three days and two nights without feed and then were gra zed
on Bear prairie, a camp near the mouth of Green river which was
a difficult ford. There were 17 fords across it . Cattle were taken
to the Ha daway ~~Chambers~~ Chambers pasture, six miles from Olympia
and they were cut out there by h ambers and driven to the butchers
in town. Sh ~~ee~~

Cattle bought in the Harney country at Oregon took a month to reach the upper Yakima country. They ferried the river at Arlington and came through Bickleton and the Satus, night herding ~~Oreides and on the boat~~ Four drivers, a messwagon and cook accompanied as many as 500 cattle on a trip

Drives to Boise.

Boise City received cattle from the Walla Walla in 1864 with opening of a new road across the mountains. They were driven from Linkton's mill across the mountains to Grand Ronde valley in one day. They also came in by the Goose Lake route to Owyhee and Boise mines. The McKenzie and Middle Fork roads were used by drovers coming from the Willamette country

In 1867 the steamer, Iris was taking cattle to Lewiston, Ida from Linn county, Ore.

Cattle brought up from the Willamette valley by steamer and driven through the Dalles were so poor when they reached there that "it bothered them to cast a shadow." The Dalles residents were beginning to be irked by the cowboys driving cattle through town furiously in daylight and feared that children would be gored or trampled and the ferry boat operator planned to put his steam ferry in operation at a corral below town to avoid the danger of them being driven through the streets. The upriver cattle movement, by boat to the Dalles, started as early as March.

mines.

Cattle driven from the Oregon country to the Frazer river during the quarter ending April 30, 1861, were valued at \$133,600.

Herds passing through Wallula and Walla Walla on their way to the Cariboo ~~and~~ included bands up to 500 that came all the way from California. By 1864 droves of cattle were going through Walla Walla headed for the Kootenai mines.

Cariboo butchers paid 10 cents a pound on the hoof for the stock in 1865 when a backlog of ~~2,000~~ 2,000 cattle were waiting on the Thompson river for buyers.

Jerome Harper and J.H. Parsons started driving cattle to the Cariboo in 1860, herding from 600 to 1,000 a year, including stock bought in California. From Wallula the cattle trail headed north on the right bank of the river and the stock was swum over at the Snake crossing and then continued along the east bank ~~000000~~ toward British Columbia. The heaviest runs passed through the Wallula late in July.

Roundups.

Two roundups a yer was the general custom, one beginning in April or May and continuing for several weeks and the other in late summer. Calves that were missed in the spring were ca00 roped and marked and beef cattle, ready for the butcher, were separated.

Cattle bought by Middlewestern buyers during the winter were delivered at the spring roundup because it took months to deliver them overland to ranges in Wyoming or to get them to the Union Pacific station at Cheyenne from where they were sent east to the Mississippi valley. The cattle that had been cut out of herds at the spring roundups were branded with the road mark of the buyer and the counter-brand of the seller.

Slickearing was a practice when cattle grazed on open ranges. Sleepers Slick-ears or Mavericks were called that were turned up without mothers and there were always some of them at every roundup. Some cowmen branded more calves than they had cows, the cowboys finding them unbranded on the open range where they were roped, an iron heated in a sagebrush fire and applied.

In 1883 an agreement was reached on the Yakima range that half of the slick ears would be branded for Snipes and Allen and the others divided among other cattlemen.

David Coonc
Cattleman

...In the spring of 1869 we (Mrs. Coonc and her husband) bought cattle and took them overland to Ocho-co, at Prineville, about 100 miles over the mountains east of Albany. Barney Prine was then king of Ocho-co. The place was full of the toughest men I ever saw; every Sunday they would get drunk, quarrel and shoot up the town. They finally started to brand Mr. Coonc's cattle. Mr. Coonc couldn't kick and I persuaded him to move to White Bluffs in 1872.

The cattle were swum over the river and driven to Ringold bar near White Bluffs. Here we lived three years. There was a large Indian camp up the river near us...Chinamen were then washing gold in the bars along the Columbia and frequently traded gold to me for flour and bread...About 1878 he (Coonc) read in the almanac that there would be an eclipse of the moon. He told the Indians that he was a great man; that on a certain day he was going to place his hand over the moon. The eclipse came off on scheduled time. Mr. Coonc then told the Indians that if they stole any of his cattle he would blow "poof" and that would be the end of the thief. Mr. Coonc had been accidentally shot through the hand. This had left a bullet hole, which he showed the Indians as proof that shooting him with bullets could not injure him...

At one time Mr. Coonc was a partner of Dan Drumheller, now...of Spokane. Mr. Coonc had lots of cattle and horses. One spring we branded 500 calves. Mr. Coonc used to drive beef cattle from Yakima over the mountains by Snoqualmie pass to the Sound...

--Elizabeth Ann Coonc
Reminiscences of a Pioneer Woman.
Washington Historical Quarterly
Vo. 8; No. 1. Jan. 1917

California Cattle 1860s

(Estimated 1,000,000 cattle perished 1864-65)

"the traveler for years afterward was often startled by coming suddenly upon a veritable Golgatha--a place of skulls--the long horns standing out in defiant attitude as if protecting the fleshless bones."

--The Passing of the Cattle Barons of California by J.M. Quinn in Historical Society of Southern California publication 1909-10

California Herds

(1864 lot of cattle starved to death in California)...

The discovery of gold in Eastern Oregon and Washington territory (now Idaho) in the autumn of 1862 caused a great influx of people into that previously unoccupied country. These had to be fed and a few enterprising ranch men from California hastened hither with large herds of beef steers. These were wintered on the white sage and tall rye grass of the Snake river country and it was thus demonstrated that cattle would live during winter in all that northern region with small loss. Here then was an outlet for the starving herds of California when the great drought was so rapidly and repeatedly decimating them. Thousands upon thousands died upon the plains while their owners were hoping and praying for rain, and thousands more died on the trail leading to pastures new. With the return of the seasons to their normal conditions and the adjustment of the herds to their somewhat changed relations a new trouble arose.

The state legislature passed a herd or no-fence law. This required the owners of cattle to fence them in or herd them off the land of others, while at the same time it permitted settlers to plant crops on the open prairies and made cattle owners responsible for damage done to growing crops on unfenced lands. The result of the passage of this law was the driving of most of the cattlemen out of the state for the reason that the expense of close herding and the trespass suits consumed all the profits in the business. A few men, who had grown rich, succeeded in purchasing large tracts of land from the holders of Spanish grants that had been confirmed and were thus enabled to fence in their herds and remain in the state. The majority of their herds, however, were taken to Nevada, eastern Oregon and Idaho. Since that

California Herds (2)

time the beef supply of the state has been largely drawn from the range herds of Oregon and Nevada, those two states supplying annually from 25 to 30 per cent of all the cattle killed. Recently, since the completion of the San Francisco railroad, Arizona has become a small factor in the beef supply of the Pacific and as a result prices have materially declined. Another result of this influx has been the forcing of a portion of the Oregon and Nevada cattle upon the Eastern market...

The Cattle Industry of California
in 3rd Annual Report of Bureau of Animal Husbandry
1886

Okanogan ranges

...In 1875 Billy Granger, James Palmer and Phelps & Wadleigh came to the country with bands of cattle to pasture them on the extensive and decidedly nutritious ranges...

History of Northern Washington
Western Historical Publishing Co. 1904

...Until 1836 there were no cattle in the country except those owned by the Hudson Bay company and those brought from the east by the Whitman party (the missionaries brought eight mules, twelve horses and sixteen cows)

The Hudson's bay company wished to continue this condition as long as possible, well knowing that the introduction of cattle of any other means of wealth production among the American population would necessarily render the people that much more nearly independent.

When, therefore it was proposed by Dring, Ewing Young and Jason Lee that a party should be sent to California for stock the idea was antagonized by the autocratic Columbia river monopoly. Thanks largely to the assistance of William A. Slacum of the U.S. navy by whom money was advanced and a free passage to California furnished to the people's emissaries the projectors of the enterprise were rendered independent of the Hudson Bay company.

Ewing young was captain of the expedition; P.L. Edwards of the Wilamette mission was also one of its leading spirits. The men purchased 700 head of cattle at three dollars and head and set out upon their return journey. They succeeded in getting about 600 head to the Wilamette country, notwithstanding the bitter hostility of the Indians.

Gilbert quotes from the diary of P.L. Edwards which he says was shown him by the latter's daughter in California to prove that the trouble with the Indians was caused by the wanton and cold-blooded murder by members of the party of a friendly Indian who was following the band.

The Indian hostilities were not incited by the Hudson Bay company as some have stated by 00 but may properly be laid at the doors of

the men who committed this barbarous outrage in revenge for wrongs suffered by a party to which they belonged two years before.

Before the arrival of meat cattle in the Willamette country provided practically the first means of acquiring wealth independent of the Hudson Bay company.

In 1841 eight young men built and equipped a vessel named the Star of Oregon in which they made a trip to San Francisco. Joseph Gale served as captain of the doughty little craft of which Felix Hathaway had been master builder. The vessel was exchanged at Yerba Buena, San Francisco, for three hundred and fifty cows. Gale remained in the Golden State through the winter, then set out overland to Oregon with a party of forty-two immigrants who brought with them as J.W. Nesmith informs us, one thousand, two hundred and fifty head of cattle, six hundred head of mares, colts, horses and mules and three thousand sheep.

..In 1843 came the largest immigration the Oregon country had yet known, piloted across the plains and over the mountains by Whitman himself.

Its eight hundred and seventy-five persons with their wagons and thirteen hundred head of cattle settled forever the question of the national character of Oregon.