



## The Coad Brothers: Panhandle Cattle Kings

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Article Summary: The Coad Brothers were among the first to see the possibilities of the range cattle industry. They drove vast herds of Texas longhorn cattle up from the south, gradually becoming the nominal owners of most of the North Platte Valley.

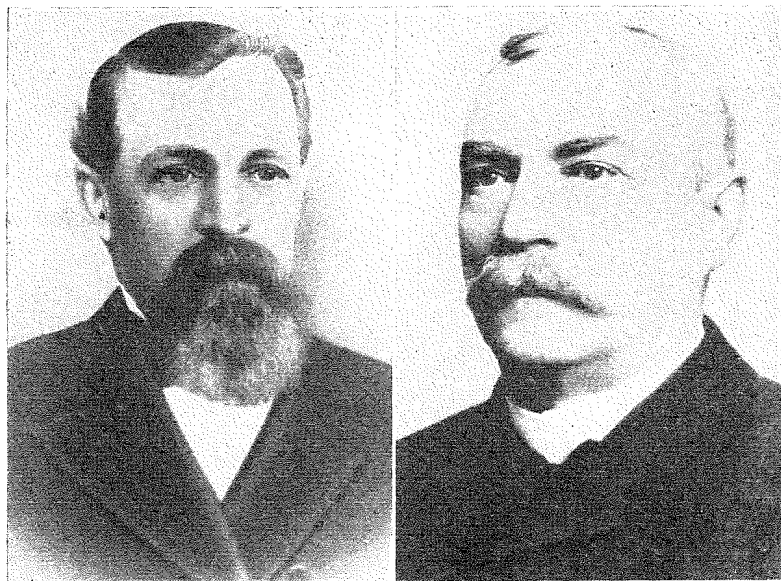
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Photographs / Images: Mark M Coad, John M Coad [*sic*, presumably John F Coad], contract between Coad Brothers and Nebraska Land and Cattle Company (1883)



Mark M. Coad

John M. Coad

**THE COAD BROTHERS: PANHANDLE  
CATTLE KINGS**  
By A. B. Wood

Historians have made much of the thrilling days of exploration, trapping and transcontinental migrations, the period during which the Indian was being subjugated, and the romantic days of homestead settlement. But there is an intermediate decade or so to which so little attention has been given in comparison with its importance that the writer is impelled to take up the burden of directing some notice to its beginnings and history. The thought arose as the result of a recent visit of Ralph G. Coad, now a prominent citizen of Omaha, whose address at the Oregon Trail Days event in Gering in July is incorporated in this article.

In the period somewhat corresponding to the completion of the Union Pacific railroad across Nebraska began the range cattle era. Buffalo had roamed the wide prairies for ages, and their depletion and virtual extinction had left in the minds of cattlemen no premonition that the plains of the northern midwest were adapted to the great meat industry which up to that time was confined largely to the staked plains of Texas and the southwest.

In Mr. Coad's address, reference is made to the encampment of his uncle, Mark M. Coad, and his own father, John F. Coad, on the wood reserve situated on Lawrence Fork (properly Lorrens' fork) in 1865. Prior to that time the Coad brothers had established a bull ranch not far from the present site of Julesburg, work oxen being incidental to their supply contracts.

The story is briefly told by Mr. Coad, some experiences with hostile Indians being narrated which are amply interesting. But it was when they had made a wood contract with Uncle Sam and located the camp at Lawrence Fork that the incident took place which to me appears to have been a powerful factor in later history. At least, the essence of it as drawn from his modest tale was the fine condition in which their oxen wandered back to the camp months after they had been dispersed by an Indian attack. In weather even 30 degrees below zero, the cattle thrived and fattened upon the succulent wheat, gramma and buffalo grass which then covered the plains.

The Coads were evidently thinking men—their conclusion was that if their oxen could withstand the inclemencies of below-zero temperature and thrive and fatten without shelter, other kine could do the same. So was born the range cattle industry in western Nebraska, which still exists as a major factor in the prosperity of the Nebraska sandhills, tho much of the area where the Coads took notice of this demonstration has been given

over to a different type of agriculture—either dry land grain farming or intensified irrigation cropping.

The story tells how the Coads acted upon their “hunch” and how they made vast drives of Texas long-horns from the south, occupying thousand of acres in the Panhandle area, establishing themselves upon advantageous locations and assuming “possessory” rights such as were recognized in those days, gradually becoming the owners (nominally, at least) of most of the North Platte Valley; how they built up such possessions until in 1883 they sold their properties, real and personal, to English, Scotch and eastern American interests which formed the Bay State Livestock Company, for nigh a million dollars.

It is the document carrying the agreement and inventory of this sale with which the writer will deal. At the time of the address it was presented to me, acting nominally as president of the Nebraska State Historical Society, and so accepted with certain understandings as to its preservation which will be carried out so that it may assist in perpetuating the story of that score or more of years which thus far have received less public recognition than they deserve.

I have made somewhat of a search for contemporaneous facts to make this story more specific, but they are rather few. The *Nebraska History Magazine*, published by this Society, contained in its July-September number for 1936 a story by Mr. Coad entitled “Irish Pioneers of Nebraska.” Here he mentions not only the Coads, but the Creightons (since so prominent in Omaha), John A. McShane, Bill Paxton and others of Irish ancestry; and, had his talk been along a different line, no doubt he could have told of many other Irishmen who had a part in the cattle era of western Nebraska—Dennis Sheedy, James E. Boyd, John J. McIntosh and others, some of whom he did mention casually in his Gering address herein.

had the full execution and delivery of the said parties of the first part, and the purchase and assignee of the said party of the second part.

The heretofore taken of the parties hereto have been duly taken, respective hands and made this 30th day of March, A.D. 1883

In presence of  
*Wm. Rushmore*                      Coad Bros

Nebraska Land & Cattle Co  
 Limited  
 by *Chas. H. Green*  
 Agent

State of New York  
 City and County of New York

On this 30th day of March 1883 before me personally came John S. Coad a member of the firm of Coad Brothers to me known and known to me to be a member of said firm and one of the underwriters described in and who executed the foregoing instrument in the name of his said firm and acknowledged that he executed the same as the said firm and deed of his said firm and for the purpose therein mentioned, and also acknowledged to me personally, however, the agent of the Nebraska Land and Cattle Company one of the parties described in the foregoing instrument and who executed the same as said agent and acknowledged that he executed the same as the said firm and deed of said company.

*Wm. Rushmore*  
 Notary Public  
 1883

Affidavit of Charles E. Rushmore  
 on Contract between Coad Brothers and  
 Nebraska Land and Cattle Company, Ltd., London, England  
 March 30, 1883

The yellowed old document which is before me is dog-eared, soiled, and even dimmed by the passing of the years. Yet it represents history, *multum in parvo*, and is priceless indeed, notwithstanding its conditions have long been fulfilled and the days of the open range have ended, half a century ago, with the revival of the herd law in July of 1887, when an election made it impossible for the herds of the cattle barons to run at large in Nebraska thereafter.

The importance of this contract lies not only in its relationship to history *per se*, but in pointing inferentially to the errors of our forefathers who passed through the Panhandle area *en route* to prospective homes in the west and northwest, oblivious to the possibilities of the country. The specific area now embraced in Scotts Bluff County produces more wealth than was washed from the placers of California in their halcyon days. Agriculturally, the soil at which they may have scoffed as they urged their ox teams westward was potentially richer than the vales of Oregon. Even the cattle industry, in which the Coads had so large a part in the beginning, is now a tremendous source of wealth in our Nebraska sandhills. This can be realized now, proving that hindsight is easier than foresight, but it has been a mystery to me and to the thousands who accept the obvious facts of today that those pioneers failed in their conception.

Passing over the inventory of the live stock and personal property covered in the sale contract, which are given in Mr. Coad's address, we come to the realty involved, the items being set forth as follows:

"1st. What is known as the "Home Ranche" of Coad Brothers containing 47 acres of land to which they have title.

"2nd. What is known as the "Mitchell Ranche" containing about 320 acres of land and to which the Coad Brothers have title, and also about 320 acres of land forming a part of this ranche the title to which is in process of being obtained from the Government.

"3rd. What is known as the "Lower Ranche" containing about 160 acres of land, the title to which is in process of being obtained from the Government.

"4th. What is known as the "Crow Springs" lying south of Mitchell Ranche containing 80 acres of land to which Coad Brothers have title.

"5th. What is known as "Kane's Ranche" containing 80 acres and to which Coad Brothers have title.

"6th. What is known as the "Main Pasture" being about eight miles in width and thirty-five miles in length and which is enclosed, to which Coad Brothers have no title except a possessory title or right thereto.

"7th. What is known as the "Mitchell Pasture" which is five miles in width and eight miles in length and which is enclosed and to which Coad Brothers have no title except a possessory one.

"8th. What is known as the "Kane Pasture" being about three miles in width and four miles in length and which is enclosed and to which Coad Brothers have nothing but a possessory title.

"9th. What is known as the "Roubadeaux Pasture" about three miles in width and four miles in length and which is enclosed and to which Coad Brothers have nothing but a possessory title.

"10th. In addition to the foregoing the Coad Brothers have a large open and unenclosed ranche with almost unlimited boundaries and located on and south of Pumpkin Creek.

"11th. And all improvements on any of the foregoing parcels of land."

Some of these descriptions are vague; and even those who came into this region as I did shortly after that time are unable to state with certainty the exact location of all the places mentioned. It is worth noting, however, that it embraces practically the whole of that portion of Scotts Bluff County which lies south of the North Platte River, together with an undefined part of Banner County to the south.

Two of the areas are named as the "Mitchell Ranche," which is that now owned by M. B. Quivey; and the "Home Ranche," which was either west of the present location of Melbeta or at the head of Pumpkin Creek. The document does not make this entirely clear. It might have been either. In other contemporary history the Pumpkin Creek ranch is referred to as the "Home" ranch, but the acreage named in the document corresponds to a forty-seven-acre tract near Melbeta which was known as the Coad horse ranch at the time settlers came into this section. It so happens that the

writer purchased this land from the Bay State Company a few years after they went out of business in Nebraska, and from personal memory and the data on the abstract I incline to believe that this was the forty-seven-acre tract, although Mr. Quivey says a similar acreage is included in the lands he now owns, and where he has built up one of the show-place country homes in the valley.

The document is a distinct contribution to history. The huge sums agreed to be paid to the Coads were paid in due time, including an initial payment of \$200,000 on April 15, 1883, about two weeks after the execution of the contract in New York City on March 31. Other substantial payments were stipulated, with the final payment of \$312,800 falling due December 1, 1887. The total amount represented in the transaction was \$912,853. 82. While the Bay State paid the total sum, it was after they had been forced from the use of the Nebraska range by the election on the revival of the herd law in July, 1887. It was after the passage of that law, also, that they began disposing of the relatively small amount of titled real estate they retained from this and their other holdings.

The inventory of the live stock sold by the Coads, which appears in a schedule made a part of the instrument, showed 21,829 head of cattle, 180 saddle-horses, and wagons, saddles, camp outfits, etc., pertaining to the operation of the range. During the period within which the payments were to be made, Mark M. Coad was placed in charge of the new Bay State affairs on a salary of \$5,000 a year, and under the terms of his management he was to be allotted a certain amount of the receipts for expenses, the balance being payable in installments. Mark handled his job in a businesslike way, and was making the payments regularly as they came due, but the easterners who owned the outfit had a few pets at work, whom they wished to pamper in their respective jobs. In order to get rid of Coad, who insisted on his right to hire or fire, the eastern control was forced to



pay up in full, and no doubt ran the job thereafter to suit themselves.

This is primarily a story of the Coads, and no systematic research has been devoted to the general development of the cattle period which they were among the very first to initiate in western Nebraska. It might be mentioned that the Bay State Cattle Company, to whom they sold, had by this transaction absorbed practically all the herds occupying the territory south of the North Platte River. H. V. Redington, joined later by John M. Adams, had extensive holdings in the Lawrence Fork area. John A. Creighton (later prominent in Omaha history for philanthropic contributions to Creighton University and otherwise), was associated with John A. McShane (afterward congressman from the Omaha district), ranging from the head of Pumpkin Creek and on Little Horse Creek. John J. McIntosh established the Circle Arrow ranch near Antelopeville (now Kimball). McIntosh afterward became prominent as a banker, official and democratic leader in Cheyenne County.

The Bay State Company had acquired, by purchase or consolidation, most of these and a few other small outfits, some of them dating back as far as 1874, fairly coincident with the Coad decision that ranging cattle on the prairies was a sound enterprise. With the Bay State acquirement of the Coad interests it controlled in a general way the entire South Side range, but its domination was relatively short-lived as previously stated.

It may be pertinent to include also a brief sketch of the North Side cattle history during this romantic era of the free range. Powers Brothers, established about 1871 with their 7-U headquarters ranch near the present site of Bayard, sold to Dennis Sheedy, and he in turn to W. A. Paxton (a name since made familiar to all Nebraska) and Bosler Brothers. The Bosler ranch was well below the present site of Bridgeport on the north side of the river, and the Paxton holdings still farther east on the river. In due time these were merged into an organiza-

tion known as the Ogallala Land and Cattle Company, which held sway over practically all North Side territory in Nebraska until the end of the free range period in 1887. James E. Boyd (afterward governor of Nebraska) was concerned in this company.

Sheedy moved into Denver, where he became a wealthy and leading citizen. It is told of him that a young Irish girl came into Sheedy's mining company office in Denver one day, crying. She had been discharged by the manager of a large department store because she was a Catholic. This was in the heyday of the A. P. A. \* agitation. Sheedy at once went down the street and within an hour was the owner of the Denver Dry Goods Company store, and avowed (and kept the vow for years) that he would have no person employed or discharged because of religious affiliation.

It will be noted by the casual mention of many of these men who pioneered in stocking the Panhandle with range cattle that practically all of them not only made fortunes but in addition became men of standing in many other fields. They were somehow more or less kindred spirits. In a talk with the writer, Ralph Coad (son of John F. Coad) mentioned the fact that Dennis Sheedy, in the course of his career to wealth in Denver, visited at the Coad home in Omaha. John had erected an imposing brick residence in the West Farnam district in 1893. Sheedy admired it, and went back to Denver and had it duplicated there from the Coad plans.

The after-life of the Coad brothers witnessed both of them increasing in prominence and affairs. Mark M. Coad, who was the elder by a decade or more, in 1884 established a fancy farm property of six hundred and forty acres near Fremont, which he dolled up and made into a Percheron horse-breeding plant. The stable he built there cost \$15,000, and other appurtenances in proportion. He went back to Ireland for several dozen

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\*American Protective Association.—Anti-Catholic

stallions and mares, and today a large proportion of the Percheron stock in Nebraska and the west are their pedigreed descendants. He was one of the principal stockholders in the Merchants National Bank at Omaha, and had mining investments and real estate holdings in California, as well as a 16,000-acre ranch on Little Horse Creek in Wyoming, which he still owned at the time of his tragic death in 1911 at the age of eighty-one.

The murder of Mark Coad stirred the country. He was the victim of a Mexican sheep-herder who had had some trouble with the ranch foreman. The Mexican accosted him in the lobby of the Normandie Hotel in Cheyenne, at which time Mark told him he would have the matter investigated. Roy, a brother of Ralph Coad and Mark's nephew, was sent out to get the workman's attorney. After he left, the sheep-herder pulled out a gun and fired four bullets into Mr. Coad's body, death being instant. The culprit was arraigned for murder but pleaded guilty, thereby escaping with a thirty-five-year sentence. Near the end of his first year in prison he hanged himself in his penitentiary cell.

The will of Mark Coad left his large estate to an adopted son, to the sons and daughters of his brothers and sisters, and to a number of cousins still living in Ireland, but his chief bequest was one-tenth of the entire estate to St. James Orphanage in Omaha.

John F. Coad, younger of the brothers, went to California after the Bay State transaction was completed in 1883, where he invested heavily, selling later at a good profit and returning to Nebraska to make the family home in Omaha, where Mr. Coad also became interested in banking. He purchased much farm land in the Indian Territory, Texas, western Iowa and Nebraska. One of his buys was a 13,000-acre tract near Norfolk for which he paid \$13 an acre and sold a year or so later for \$16. On a farm near Pacific Junction, Iowa, he fed and sold about eight hundred head of cattle every year. Meanwhile

he was president of the Packers National Bank in Omaha. His son Ralph says of him that he was a great family man, having thirteen children, to all of whom he gave the best education afforded in the colleges and universities of the nation. The son states that his father rarely spent an evening away from his home. He passed away in October, 1910.

Ralph G. Coad, to whom history will owe a debt of gratitude for his relinquishment of the historic document which has been reviewed and elaborated upon in this article, is a man of high standing in Omaha. For some years he was the manager of the public utilities commission of that city. His address follows:

It is indeed a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction to me to accept the invitation of your committee to come out here and join with you in this Oregon Trail Days celebration. My father, John F. Coad, and my uncle, Mark M. Coad, once owned and operated a large cattle ranch which included the very spot where we are now gathered. I have brought with me the contract of sale of that ranch, which my father and uncle executed in the year of 1883 when they sold this very region south of the North Platte to the Nebraska Land and Cattle Company, Limited, of London, England, which was later known as the Bay State Cattle Company. This contract, which was executed in New York City on the 31st day of March, 1883, describes in detail the various ranching properties which the Coad Brothers owned. The Coad Brothers had legal title to very little land, but they had what was then known as "possessory" title to over 220,000 acres of land. They also sold at that time 22,000 head of cattle and 180 saddle horses. This contract has always been held dearly by the members of the Coad family. Today, as the youngest son of John F. Coad, I am presenting this document to your Scotts Bluff museum so that the same may be held by you, and your children's children, as a permanent record of the cattle industry which once so greatly prospered in this region of Nebraska.

On this occasion I believe it is fitting and proper that I should relate some of the history of my father and uncle and their associates in the cattle business when this district was known as the great "cattle kingdom" and the ranchers as the "cattle kings."

My father and uncle were born in Ireland and came to Massachusetts in the latter part of the 1840's. They gradually worked their way westward and in the year 1858 arrived at Nebraska City, where they immediately entered the freighting business. My father

was then a boy of sixteen and my uncle twelve years his senior. They freighted from Nebraska City to Denver. While their business started with but two prairie schooners, it quickly grew to large proportions. The freight trips in those days were started in the late spring and finished in the fall of the year. There was an idea which prevailed among the early freighters that neither man nor beast could live in the western part of this state after snow fell. Nebraska City was then the largest city in this state, but in the winter months there was little work except in preparation for the spring activities.

The Coad Brothers had a different idea of this region, and in the year 1862 they established a ranch at Julesburg, Colorado. This was known at the Wisconsin Ranch. There they kept a large herd of bull oxen and also a large quantity of food supplies which they freighted there in the fall. In the spring they rushed these into Denver when the food supply there was low and prices high. The Coad Brothers made a substantial sum of money on this idea in the spring of 1863.

In January of 1864 a large band of Indians made an attack upon the Wisconsin Ranch and the various other bull ranches in a radius of two hundred miles, destroying all of the ranches and killing nearly all the people on them. My uncle put up a great defense, but he lost most of his oxen and his food supplies, valued at \$20,000. However, he was able to save the lives of his sister and brother-in-law, Ben Danielson, and their two infant children, and also an old man and a young boy who were staying on the ranch that winter. The story of his defense of the Wisconsin Ranch is one of outstanding courage and fighting ability. In that fight, twenty-two Indians were killed and thirty badly wounded. A company of United States soldiers, under command of Lieutenant Kennedy, tried to come to his rescue but they were driven away by the superior number of fighting Indians. The American Ranch, which was located about twelve miles from the Wisconsin Ranch, was owned by John Morris. The Indians attacked this first. They killed John Morris and his six men and captured Mrs. Morris and her two children, destroyed all the buildings, stole a supply of liquor and then, encouraged by fire-water, made their attack on the Wisconsin Ranch.

Uncle Mark, Jim Moore and Charles Perkins spent the balance of that winter fighting Indians with the government troops. He was in over 25 fights with the Indians that year. After the fight on the Wisconsin Ranch he had the respect of the Indian, the soldier and the frontiersman, and later of the rancher and the cowboy. Many of these early cowboys were very bad men.

In the year 1865 my father entered into a contract with the United States Government to supply Fort Laramie and Fort Sedgwick at Julesburg with cord wood. He established a camp which

was located south of here on the Lawrence Fork. In February, while engaged in cutting wood at the Fork, my father and his band of men were attacked by the Indians. They were greatly outnumbered and the Indians ran off their horses, mules and oxen. The ground was covered with snow and the temperature at that time was about 30 degrees below zero. The oxen could not travel fast enough for the Indians, so on the second day the Indians confined their efforts to driving away the horses and mules. For four or five weeks afterwards, the oxen kept straying back into the camp. To the surprise of all, the oxen were in very fine condition and their healthy appearance was proof of the fact that they had rustled for themselves and fed on the sun-cured grasses of the plains. It was at that time my father made up his mind that the cattle-raising industry was possible on the western range.

The Union Pacific railroad was then being constructed. My father and my uncle gradually retired from the freighting business and it was in 1867 they took a contract with the government to supply the government posts in the west with hay. That hay was cut and put up on Mitchell Bottom—the first hay put up in western Nebraska.

From that time on the Coad Brothers controlled the Mitchell Bottom. Later they acquired all the land east of the bottom, south of the North Platte to Court House Rock. They contracted with the government for hay and lumber until 1872, and during part of that time obtained their wood from the Elk Mountains in Wyoming, where they had established a bull ranch.

In the year 1870 my father took a trip to Texas, where he contracted for ten thousand longhorn cows. They were driven up the Chisholm Trail and delivered to the Coad Brothers at Ogallala, Nebraska. About this same time my uncle went to Illinois and purchased a herd of the finest bulls he could locate. They were shipped out to Ogallala by the Union Pacific railroad.

With the opening of the Union Pacific, the pony express on the old Oregon Trail was discontinued and the Coad Brothers acquired the pony express station house at Scottsbluff in 1870 and used it as their ranch house.

About this time other men were entering into the cattle business. H. V. Reddington of Sidney located on the Lawrence Fork, where my father earlier had a lumber camp. Tom Kain had an eight-thousand-acre ranch on this side of the river, which was later taken over by the Coad Brothers. The Bosler Brothers located on the north side of the river with headquarters at Lewellen about 1873. They had a very large ranch, and part of it was occupied by the Boyd Brothers. James E. Boyd later became governor of the State of Nebraska. Bill Paxton located near Ogallala. Colin Hunter located on Little Horn Creek in 1872. The Powers Brothers of Texas located across the river from here in 1871. They sold their

land to Dennis Sheedy in 1873 and returned to Texas. J. J. McIntosh located a ranch on Lodgepole Creek a few miles from the present town of Kimball in 1872.

Ed Creighton had a bull ranch on Horse Creek in 1867, and in 1870 he stocked this and his other ranches on Pumpkin Creek with Texas cattle. The Creighton Texas cattle arrived at Ogallala about six weeks before the Coad cattle arrived. John A. Creighton and Long Jim Creighton were employed in this cattle enterprise by Ed at this time. The Creighton and the Coad ranches were the first in western Nebraska to stock with Texas cattle. Ed Creighton died in 1874 and his younger brother John A. Creighton took charge of his estate.

Jim Moore was the first Pony Express rider between Julesburg and Scottsbluff station. He and my uncle did considerable Indian fighting in the winter of 1864. Moore was one of the early ranchers in this valley. After his death his widow sold the Moore ranch and later married R. S. Van Tassell, who became one of the big ranchers in Wyoming. Before going into the ranching business, Van Tassell had a contract with the Union Pacific whereby he supplied 1,240,000 ties at \$1 apiece. The Swan Brothers and Dan Sullivan and Carey, the Kurkindall Brothers, Yoder Brothers and the Olerichs Brothers were some of the larger outfits in Wyoming.

Cheyenne was the capital of this cattle kingdom. Most of the business offices of the ranches were in Cheyenne. The laws governing the ranches were made by the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, and the Territory of Wyoming was governed by this same organization. They had a majority of the members of the legislature in that territorial government. My father was a charter member of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association and a member of the first territorial legislature of Wyoming. After 1870 father lived in Cheyenne and had charge of the office and all business transactions of the Coad Brothers. Uncle Mark lived on the ranch and had charge of the men and all ranching activities.

The cattle multiplied rapidly in this valley. Profits were great. The Indians were no longer giving trouble to the ranchers. Life was beginning to be easier to possess, railroad facilities were getting better, when the English, Scotch and Easterners began to take a lively interest in this great Western bonanza.

The Bay State Cattle Company bought the Creighton ranches in 1882 for \$750,000. John A. McShane became its first manager.

The Coad Brothers had the fastest ponies in the valley and therefore their cowboys were the most efficient at the roundups. One reason for this was that Uncle Mark gave every cowboy three ponies, and if he ever found one riding a tired pony he fired him. Their hay land was the best in the valley. Their bulls were the envy of all. The Coad ranch soon was wanted by others. My father went to New York at the invitation of the English and eastern inter-

ests in 1883 and sold the ranch for \$912,000.

Dennis Sheedy sold his ranch to Bill Paxton and the Bosler Brothers a few months after the Coad Brothers sold. A great number of sales took place in 1883 and 1884.

While father was in New York he became well acquainted with a young lawyer in the firm which was handling the legal business for the English and Scotch interests. He was Charles E. Rushmore. Rushmore was sent to the Black Hills later to represent the eastern interests, and while there a mountain was named after him. In recent years Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor, has been converting that peak into a national monument. You will notice that the witness and the notary to this document of sale is none other than this same Charles E. Rushmore. He visited father at our home in Omaha on several occasions.

The Union Pacific railroad was rapidly bringing homesteaders westward. Towns were springing up like magic along the right of way of the Union Pacific. About 1886 the homesteaders began settling on the ranges, and soon the Cattle Empire was broken up and this great frontier faded away. You now have your beautiful cities and farms where the mammoth herds of Texas longhorns once grazed. You have prospered in this valley. Today it is truly known as the "Garden Spot of Nebraska." I feel proud of the fact that my father and uncle were the first to realize the great farming possibilities of this valley.

I have sought to give, in conjunction with the text of Mr. Coad's address in Gering, merely an outline of the range cattle period—one of the most romantic in Nebraska history—in one specific area. Were there space to wander into a wider field, the story of those days\* through which the Texas trail had seen countless thousands of weary longhorns plodding from south to north, hazed by wide-hatted cowboys, what a wealth of material, and what a prolific volume of adventure, tragedy, comedy, failure and success would be involved!

This article does not include a fraction of the basic facts and interesting incidents which surround that epoch: How the sandhill area became established, as it remains today, as an ideal cattle range; how the Coffees, John Bratt, Newman, Hunter, Evans, Bartlett Richards and others figured; how Dr. Graham became the first rancher on the upper Niobrara; how his son-in-law,

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\*The period from 1867 to 1887, inclusive.



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Captain James H. Cook, settled down on the now famous Agate Springs Ranch to enjoy an honored old age; how Jim Dahlman, later famous political character and mayor of Omaha, and the notorious "Doc" Middleton, subject of many a dime thriller, won spots in the cow picture—these and many other lights and shadows of a fruitful and prophetic period of sound adventure might be woven into a more complete story of this least publicized but truly important epoch in the annals of the west.

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