

C. C. SLAUGHTER: THE CATTLE KING OF TEXAS

by

DAVID JOE MURRAH, B.A., M.A.

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PREFACE

Trail driver, Texas Ranger, banker, philanthropist, and cattleman, Christopher Columbus Slaughter (1837-1919) was in his day one of America's most famous ranchers. Born during the infant years of the Texas Republic, he participated in the development of the Southwestern cattle industry from its pioneer stages to the modern era. A pioneer in the West Texas ranching, Slaughter increased his holdings from 1877 to 1905 to include more than a million acres of land and forty thousand head of cattle. At one time "Slaughter country" stretched from a few miles north of Big Spring, Texas, northwestward two hundred miles to the New Mexico border west of Lubbock. His family, including his father, brothers, and sons, rode the crest of popularity he established and the Slaughter name virtually became a household word in the Southwest. In 1873, almost ten years before the highly profitable "beef bonanza" on the open range had made rich men of many Texas cattlemen, C. C. Slaughter was heralded by a Dallas newspaper as "the Cattle King of Texas."

Although Slaughter is a legendary figure in Texas, historians overlooked or avoided undertaking a significant

study of his career, hampered by the absence of any personal papers and business records. However, in 1966, Don W. Slaughter of Lubbock, Texas, donated to the Southwest Collection at Texas Tech University approximately one thousand letters of correspondence between his grandfather, George M. Slaughter, and his great-grandfather, C. C. Slaughter. These letters, saved from destruction by Don's uncle, the late Jo Dick Slaughter of Lubbock, were written from 1893 to 1910. Although covering only seventeen years of C. C. Slaughter's sixty-five-year career as a Texas cattleman, the correspondence led to the discovery of other significant materials.

During the course of this study I have become indebted to many people: Don Slaughter, his mother, Mrs. George M. Slaughter, II, of Roswell, New Mexico, Mrs. Anella Bauer, Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy DeLoache of Dallas, and other members of the Slaughter family graciously contributed valuable information; Mr. and Mrs. W. D. O'Brien of Lubbock generously provided financial assistance for the preparation of the final copy of the manuscript; the members of the staff of the Southwest Collection courteously assisted beyond the bounds of their official duties; and Seymour V. Connor and R. Sylvan Dunn, former directors of the Southwest Collection, collected a major portion of the materials used in this study.

I am also indebted to the members of my advisory

committee, Professors Jacqueline Collins, Harry A. Jebsen, Jr., Joseph E. King, David M. Vigness, and Kline A. Nall for their helpful criticism, and especially to Horn Professor Emeritus Ernest Wallace for his unselfish willingness to direct this dissertation beyond his retirement and without compensation. Thanks also go to my wife, Ann, and children, Jerel and Elaine, for their help, understanding, and encouragement during this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	ii
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
Chapter	
I. PRELUDE TO GLORY	1
II. WAR ON THE TEXAS FRONTIER.	21
III. CATTLEMAN AND BANKER	65
IV. ESTABLISHING AN OPEN RANGE EMPIRE IN WEST TEXAS	103
V. SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.	135
VI. ROYALTY ON THE RANGE: ANCIENT BRITON AND SIR BREDWELL	168
VII. THE "INDIVISIBLE" EMPIRE: THE LAZY S RANCH. .	199
VIII. THE AGRARIAN CHALLENGE	240
IX. BANKS, BAPTISTS, AND THE LEGACY.	280
APPENDIX.	325
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	329

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. The Northwest Texas Frontier, 1857.	18
2. Cynthia Jowell Slaughter.	51
3. Carrie Averill and C. C. Slaughter, c. 1876 . .	92
4. Divisions of the Long S Ranch	116
5. Handwritten Slaughter Letter.	171
6. Letterheads	186
7. Ancient Briton and Sir Bredwell	192
8. The Lazy S Ranch, 1898-1921	212
9. The Slaughter Ranches	216
10. Ranch Tour, 1899.	220
11. C. C. Slaughter's Sons.	226
12. Slaughter Cowboys at the Gail Land Rush, 1903. .	252
13. The Long S Ranch, 1905.	256
14. The Slaughter Family in 1905.	307
15. The Slaughter Home in Dallas, 1925.	316

CHAPTER I

PRELUDE TO GLORY

As word of the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860 spread throughout the South, thousands of young men rallied to defend their native states. Even on the western frontier of Texas, far removed from cotton fields and slaves, the war fever ran high. There, young Christopher Columbus Slaughter enthusiastically joined his friends and neighbors in forming a local militia company being organized for North Texas frontier defense. The impending conflict provided an opportunity for adventure, glory, and perpetuation of a long family tradition of militia service. Slaughter remembered well the stories his father had told of serving under Sam Houston during the Texas Revolution in 1836; he recalled his grandfather's accounts of being with Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815; he knew of his great-grandfather's service in a North Carolina militia unit during the American Revolution. Since his ancestors had already served as frontier militiamen in three American wars, young Slaughter proudly responded to the call for volunteers.

Three preceding generations of Slaughters had

experienced a century of American frontier life. The family line can be traced to the eighteenth-century Virginia frontier, but documenting its origin in America appears to be impossible.¹ The Slaughters of Texas may have originated in America with a Richard Slaughter who settled in Nansemond County, Virginia, in the early seventeenth century. According to a family genealogist, Elmer Cunningham Slaughter, Richard Slaughter's descendants within a century apparently had migrated through Bertie County into Lunenburg County, Virginia.² Walter Slaughter, C. C. Slaughter's great-grandfather, was born about 1750,

¹See Don W. Slaughter, "Anyone Interested?" unpublished typescript (12 pp.), Slaughter Family Reference File, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock. For many years, genealogists linked the Slaughters of Texas to a prominent Virginia family centered in Culpepper County. This family has been traced to 1619 or 1620, when John Slaughter received land grants in Rappahannock County, Virginia, and settled there. "Known Ancestors of Anella Slaughter Bauer of Texas," unpublished typescript in possession of Mrs. Richard Bauer, Dallas, Texas. See also, Raleigh Travers Green, Genealogical and Historical Notes on Culpepper County, Virginia, Embracing a Revised and Enlarged Edition of Dr. Philip Slaughter's History of St. Mark's Parish (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1964), p. 28.

A recent genealogical study by John Frederick Dorman discounts any connection between the Culpepper County Slaughters and the Texas family. John Frederick Dorman to Elmer Slaughter, letter, September 15, 1970 (xeroxed); and Elmer Slaughter, "Slaughter Family History," unpublished Typescript, 1971 (6 pp.), Slaughter Family Reference File, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

²Dorman to Elmer Slaughter, letter, September 15, 1970. The loss of the records will probably prevent the tracing of the family history in the seventeenth century.

possibly in Lunenburg County. A planter, Walter settled in Anson County in southwestern North Carolina during the late 1700s. At the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775, Walter enlisted in Captain Thomas Wade's light horse cavalry, a "minuteman" battalion³ and served until he was captured by the British. After his release, about 1780, he terminated his military career and returned home to marry Margaret Webb. Walter and Margaret had six children, including two adventurous sons, John and William.⁴

As cotton planters, Walter and his sons participated in the rush for new and fertile lands in the South. In the 1780s the Slaughters moved to Washington County, Georgia.⁵ After William married Nancy Moore in Amite County, Mississippi, the entire family moved in 1810 to Lawrence County, Mississippi, west of the Pearl River and north of the American-Spanish border. There, Walter and his sons engaged in both farming and stock raising. William and his brother John supported their neighbor frontiersmen in the eviction of the Spaniards from Baton

³Green, Genealogical and Historical Notes, p. 29. Thomas Wade commanded a battalion of local frontier militiamen, one of six created in North Carolina on September 1, 1775. Hugh F. Rankin, The North Carolina Continentals (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), p. 17; Don W. Slaughter, "Anyone Interested?" p. 4.

⁴Green, Genealogical and Historical Notes, p. 29.

⁵Don Slaughter, "Anyone Interested?" p. 4.

Rouge and participated in Andrew Jackson's defense of New Orleans against the British in 1815.⁶

William then followed his younger brother Robert to Hinds County, Mississippi, near present-day Jackson, and in 1821 to Copiah County. By 1825, William and Nancy had several children, including three sons, George Webb, born in 1811, Samuel Moore, in 1818, and William Ransom, in 1825.⁷ Soon after the birth of William Ransom, William, having heard the numerous stories of abundant and unbelievably cheap virgin land in Texas, with Nancy and the children set out by wagon for the land of greater opportunity. For some unknown reason, however, he settled in Sabine Parish, Louisiana, a few miles east of the Texas border. Perhaps, since he was a strong Protestant believer, he had developed some reservations about having to become a Catholic in a Mexican state, or perhaps he preferred the protection that nearby Fort Jessup afforded.

But William's eighteen-year-old son George Webb could not resist the bustling activity beyond the Sabine. Soon, young George Slaughter began freighting goods across

⁶James Cox, ed., The Cattle Industry and the Cattlemen of Texas and Adjacent Territory (St. Louis: Woodward and Tiernan Printing Company, 1895), p. 303. This account is based on an interview in 1894 with George Webb Slaughter, father of C. C., shortly before his death. It is the most complete first-hand account of George Webb Slaughter's experiences.

⁷Elmer Slaughter, "Slaughter Family History."

the river to San Augustine and Nacogdoches.⁸ George's stories about Texas influenced his father to move across the river in 1830, probably before the passage of the Law of April 6, 1830, that forbade the further immigration of Americans into Texas.⁹ Settling on a four-thousand acre tract in Sabine County, William not only continued to grow cotton, but also found the gentle hills of East Texas well-suited for stock raising.¹⁰

Far away from the political concerns of Mexico City, the Slaughter family paid little attention to the unpopular decree of April 6, 1830. However, when the Mexican government increased the strength of its military garrisons in 1832 at Anahuac and Nacogdoches, Slaughter and his neighbors became very alarmed.

The Mexican garrison at Nacogdoches was commanded by Colonel José de las Piedras, who had successfully

⁸ Allen Erwin, The Southwest of John H. Slaughter (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1965), p. 37n.

⁹ David M. Vigness, The Revolutionary Decades (Austin: Steck-Vaughn Company, 1965), p. 109.

¹⁰ William Kennedy, Texas: The Rise, Progress and Prospects of the Republic of Texas (Reprinted from the 1841 Edition; Fort Worth: Molyneaux Craftsmen, 1925), p. 139; Abstract of Valid Land Claims Compiled from the Records of the General Land Office and Court of Claims of the State of Texas (Austin: John Marshall and Company, 1859), p. 476; Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 303. Slaughter received title to one square league (4,428 acres) of land on August 16, 1835. An Abstract of the Original Title of Record in the General Land Office, Houston, 1838 (Reprint; Austin: Pemberton Press, 1964), pp. 149-150.

negotiated a peaceful settlement of the conflict between Colonel John Bradburn and the Anglo-colonists at Anahuac in 1832. Nevertheless, because of his oppressive policies toward American clergymen, Piedras was disliked by the East Texans. George Slaughter thought him to be "a man of narrow and decided views . . . , poorly qualified to wield authority over a people reared in the enjoyment of American liberty."¹¹ Further intimidated by Piedras' threat to ally with the nearby Cherokee Indians and his arrest of several Protestant clergymen, the colonists, including young George Slaughter, in a meeting at San Augustine in June 1832 voiced their protest.¹² Finally, when Piedras refused to support the popular movement to overthrow the extra-legal government of Anastacio Bustamante, the East Texans in July called for arms to drive the Colonel and his troops from Nacogdoches.¹³

The fighting erupted on the last day of July. Five hundred settlers, including companies from Nacogdoches, Ayish Bayou, Shelby, Neches, and Sabine united on the outskirts of Nacogdoches and elected Colonel James W. Bullock

¹¹ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 303.

¹² Ibid.; "The Autobiography of George W. Smyth," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVI (January, 1933), 210.

¹³ Alexander Horton, "Life of Alexander Horton and Early Settlement of San Augustine County," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XIV (April, 1911), 308-309.

as commander.¹⁴ For George Slaughter the battle served as an initiation into frontier violence which he would encounter for more than forty years. Moving from house to house, the colonists pushed through the narrow streets of Nacogdoches, forcing the Mexican troops to seek refuge in the Stone Fort. Outnumbered, Piedras in a midnight retreat on August 2 slipped his troops through the Texan siege, only to find his escape route cut off by the rain-swollen Angelina River. After a brief skirmish on August 3, he surrendered his command to Captain Francisco Medina and agreed to withdraw from Texas.¹⁵ During the battle the Texans killed thirty-three Mexicans and wounded seventeen or eighteen others, while suffering losses of three dead and seven wounded.¹⁶

George Slaughter's 1832 confrontation with Mexican troops appears to have been the major factor that led him to quit the drudgery of the cotton fields. As new settlers poured into eastern Texas following the cessation of the 1832 hostilities, he freighted their goods between Louisiana and Nacogdoches, and by the fall of 1833 he had a business sufficiently reputable that newcomer Sam

¹⁴ R. B. Blake, Historic Nacogdoches (Nacogdoches, Texas: Nacogdoches Historical Society, 1939), p. 10.

¹⁵ Ibid.; Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 304.

¹⁶ Blake, Historic Nacogdoches, p. 11.

Houston entrusted to him the transportation of his personal legal library from Louisiana to Nacogdoches.¹⁷

George's early success was short-lived. He answered the call to arms after initial shots of the Texas revolution were fired at Gonzales on October 2, 1835. Joining hundreds of his neighbors, George traveled west quickly to the San Antonio vicinity to join Stephen F. Austin's volunteer army assembling there.¹⁸ On November 26, he participated in the so-called "Grass Fight," an engagement in which the Texans captured a Mexican pack train loaded with hay.¹⁹

Slaughter, like many others, probably returned home during the lull that followed the "Grass Fight." There is no indication in the official records that he ever enlisted in the Texan Army;²⁰ but, when the fighting resumed, he promptly returned to the front. Joining Sam Houston, whom he had long admired, in January 1836, he reportedly carried messages from Houston to Texan positions at Goliad and the

¹⁷ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 304. Houston established residence in Nacogdoches "some time" prior to October 4, 1833. See Llerena Friend, Sam Houston: The Great Designer (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1954), p. 54.

¹⁸ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 304.

¹⁹ John Henry Brown, History of Texas (2 vols.; St. Louis: L. E. Daniell, 1892), I, 408.

²⁰ Vigness, Revolutionary Decades, p. 163.

Alamo.²¹ He took precautions to see that the messages were delivered verbatim:

Fearing interception from more than one quarter and anxious that his General should have the message verbatim, acting on previous instruction, [Slaughter] memorized the communication word for word and then to make assurance doubly sure, he removed the tacks from the sole of his right shoe, placed the written word between the inner and outer layer, replaced the tacks and was on his way to rejoice at the battle of San Jacinto.²²

According to his own testimony, he was enroute to the Alamo on or about March 6, 1836, when he encountered "Mrs. Dickerson and her negro slave," the only survivors of the Mexican siege.²³ During the six-week period following the fall of the Alamo, Slaughter reportedly served as a procurer for Houston's army.

After Houston's victory at San Jacinto on April 21, Slaughter returned home to see about his family. Soon

²¹Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 304; "Lieutenant George Webb Slaughter," unpublished and undated (2 pp.), Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library, San Antonio, Texas. For many years Slaughter's role in the dramatic days leading to the fall of the Alamo was memorialized by his portrait hanging in the Texas shrine, placed there by two of George Slaughter's daughters. A painting, published in several Texas history books, portrayed Slaughter delivering a message from Houston to Travis. John Henry Brown, Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas (Austin: L. E. Daniell, n.d.), following p. 668.

²²Cora Melton Cross, "Trailing Cattle to Northwest and History of Lazy S," Semi-Weekly Farm News (Fort Worth, Texas), July 17, 1936, p. 4. Cross's principal source for her article was W. A. Prater who worked for a time for C. C. Slaughter.

²³Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 304.

after his arrival in May, he became engaged to eighteen-year-old Sarah Mason, but the couple delayed their wedding, apparently because of the absence of any civil law.²⁴ Within a short time Slaughter was again serving as a procurer for the growing and boisterous army of Texas. He continued in this service until October. By that time, Texas had adopted a constitution, elected a president, and established some semblance of law. As soon as his service with the army terminated, Slaughter hastened home and on October 12, 1836, married Sarah Mason, who was five months pregnant.²⁵ When the child was born on the following February 11, the young parents named him Christopher Columbus, apparently in commemoration of their wedding date.

After his marriage, Slaughter resumed his freighting business for settlers and the new government. However, the influx of immigrants led to a conflict with the Cherokees of Texas that eventually erupted into war. For Slaughter the conflict marked his third call to military action in seven years.

²⁴ Ibid.; Marion Day Mullins, The First Census of Texas, 1829-1836 (Washington, D.C.: National Genealogical Society, 1959), p. 39.

²⁵ Prose and Poetry of the Livestock Industry of the United States (Kansas City: National Livestock Association, 1904), p. 521. See J. C. Koen, "George Webb Slaughter," West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, XXVIII (October, 1952), 109.

During the Revolution and the two years following, East Texans had enjoyed an uneasy peace with the neighboring Cherokee Indians. In the spring of 1838, the peace was shattered by a cunning Mexican patriot, Vicente Cordova, who established a stronghold on an island in the Angelina River in league with a force of East Texas Indians, including some Cherokees.²⁶ After engagements against the Texas militia in August and in October 1831, Cordova's band disintegrated, but his friendship with the Cherokees convinced many Texans that the Indians were plotting with Mexican agents.²⁷ Meanwhile, secret correspondence from Cordova to the Cherokees and other Indians was captured in May 1839 by a Texas ranger company during a skirmish near present-day Austin.²⁸ Convinced from the documents of Indian duplicity with the Mexicans, the angry Texans were anxious to end the supposed threat.²⁹ Mirabeau B. Lamar, who had become president of Texas the preceding December, decided that the Cherokees should be expelled from Texas. He had the full support of the East Texans,

²⁶ Seymour V. Connor, Adventure in Glory (Austin: Steck-Vaughn Co., 1965), p. 76; Brown, History of Texas, II, 156.

²⁷ Rupert N. Richardson, Ernest Wallace, and Adrian N. Anderson, Texas the Lone Star State (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 122.

²⁸ Brown, History of Texas, II, 160-161.

²⁹ Connor, Adventure in Glory, p. 98.

including George Webb Slaughter.

While negotiating with the Cherokees, Lamar sent Colonel Edward Burleson into their country (present-day Cherokee County) with two companies of regular troops and two volunteer units. Meanwhile, a second force of East Texas militia assembled at Nacogdoches in early July 1839, including a company from Sabine County under the elected command of Captain George Webb Slaughter.³⁰

After three days of negotiations, the Cherokees and Texas commissioners agreed to terms which provided for the peaceful withdrawal of the Indians from Texas, but Bowles, the Cherokee chief, had secretly mobilized his warriors. When Bowles' tactics were discovered, General Thomas Rusk moved three volunteer columns, including that of George Slaughter, into the Cherokee lands. The Texans first engaged the Indians in a brief skirmish on July 16 in Henderson County near Chandler. On the following day, the army found the Indians entrenched near the Delaware Village on the Neches River in Van Zandt County near Canton.³¹ In a two-hour battle, Chief Bowles was killed

³⁰Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 304; Kenneth Neighbours, Indian Exodus: Texas Indian Affairs (by the author, 1973), p. 15; Dorman H. Winfrey and James M. Day, Texas Indian Papers (4 vols.; Austin: Texas State Library, 1959-1961), I, 68 (hereafter cited as Winfrey, Texas Indian Papers).

³¹Hattie Joplin Roach, The Hills of Cherokee (n.p.: n.p., 1952), p. 15.

and the disheartened Indians fled. Slaughter and his company gave chase to the Trinity River near present-day Palestine where the conflict ended.³² Some of the surviving Cherokees retreated to join their kinsmen in northeastern Indian Territory; another band attempted to flee to Mexico but a portion were captured and sent to the Cherokee Nation.³³

After the Cherokee War, George Slaughter returned to Sabine County to pursue farming interests jointly with his father. While there, he and Sarah had four additional children.³⁴ In 1844, George entered the Baptist ministry, preaching only to small congregations. His new career eventually brought him fame on the Texas frontier.

But, it was cattle rather than converts that perpetuated the Slaughter name in Texas. By the 1840s a growing Texas population and a not-too-distant New Orleans provided a new market for cattle. George Slaughter, quickly seeing an economic opportunity, began to utilize a portion of his land for stock raising. Subsequently, he acquired

³² John H. Reagan, "The Expulsion of the Cherokees from East Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, I (July, 1897), 44-46; Winfrey, Texas Indian Papers, I, 77.

³³ Brown, History of Texas, II, 163.

³⁴ U.S., Seventh Census of the United States, Population, Sabine County, Texas, National Archives (Microcopy No. M-432, Roll 914). Nancy, the second child, was born in 1840. George Webb, Jr., was born in 1843, Peter E. in 1844, and John B. in 1848.

three thousand acres, much of which he dedicated to that purpose. His herd grew slowly; by 1850 it probably still numbered less than a hundred head.³⁵

Although Slaughter's cattle at first provided the family with only a secondary income, to the young Christopher Columbus the small herd grazing the hills of Sabine County seemed of immense importance. While learning, during his boyhood days, to handle, brand, and castrate cattle, he too was the recipient of a mental "brand"--the romance of the range, an indelible mark that he carried to his grave.³⁶

In 1849 George, his brother William, and twelve-year-old C. C., known as "Lum" to his family and friends, drove 92 head of cattle to their new ranch located along the banks of the Trinity River in Freestone County, 175 miles west of the Sabine settlements. The drive provided the Slaughters with valuable experience. Although trailing was nothing new, most herds were moved from farm to market along north-south river routes. This drive, on the other hand, crossed the Angelina, Neches, and Trinity rivers, thereby providing an opportunity for C. C. to begin developing an expertise that eventually became a basic

³⁵ U.S., Seventh Census of the United States, Agriculture, Sabine County, Texas, Texas State Library (Microcopy Roll 3); Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 304.

³⁶ Prose and Poetry, p. 521.

tool in the creation of a family fortune.³⁷

Leaving William with the cattle, George and C. C. returned to their farming interests in Sabine County. However, the death of George's father William in April 1850 helped to sever the family's tie to Sabine County.³⁸ Furthermore, by 1852, raising cattle appeared more attractive financially than growing cotton on the worn-out soils in East Texas. At least, it was worth a try. Thus, George Webb Slaughter, who by now had four sons, C. C., George, Peter, and John, in 1852 headed west with his family and possessions to the valley of the Trinity River in southern Freestone County.³⁹

The Trinity River valley provided ample grass for the Slaughter herds. Annually, the family drove small herds to Shreveport for shipment to New Orleans. Because their ranch was located near the fork of the Trinity on the Shreveport Trail, young C. C. was often gainfully employed by drovers from the west to help them get their

³⁷ Ibid., p. 521; T. C. Richardson, "Christopher Columbus Slaughter," Walter Prescott Webb, ed., The Handbook of Texas (2 vols.; Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1952), II, 618.

³⁸ John Frederick Dorman to Elmer Slaughter, letter, April 25, 1971 [xeroxed], Slaughter Family Reference File, Southwest Collection.

³⁹ Another son, William Baxter, was born in Free-stone County in 1852. J. Marvin Hunter, ed., The Trail Drivers of Texas (2nd ed., rev.; Nashville, Tennessee: Cokesbury Press, 1925), p. 865.

herds across the frequently rain-swollen river.⁴⁰

Freestone County offered other opportunities for C. C. In 1854, after finishing his education at Larissa College in Cherokee County, a Presbyterian boarding school, young Slaughter set out on a three-month trading venture. In his father's wagon, he drove east to the pine forests of Anderson County, near Palestine, purchased a load of lumber, hauled it to sparsely settled Dallas County, and sold it to incoming settlers for a fair profit. Slaughter then drove north to Collin County near McKinney and bought a load of wheat. Securing the use of a grist mill and using his own team, he ground the wheat into flour, bagged and loaded it, and pointed his team southward.⁴¹ After pausing briefly at home, young Slaughter drove southward another hundred miles to Magnolia in Montgomery County where he sold his last bag of flour. During a three-month period the enterprising lad had traveled by wagon four hundred miles and netted a handsome \$520 profit.⁴² With the money, he immediately purchased his uncle's interest in his father's herd. Thus began a partnership that

⁴⁰ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 332.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 331. See also, "Colonel C. C. Slaughter," Frontier Times, VIII (July, 1931), 433-437.

⁴² Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 332; Prose and Poetry, p. 521.

continued for more than twenty years.⁴³

Meanwhile, Freestone County had filled rapidly with settlers, who by 1855 had converted over 250,000 acres to cotton production.⁴⁴ Ample grass had become scarce. Furthermore, for several years, the Slaughters had noted that the cattle from the Brazos River Valley were fleshier and larger than their own and had heard that farther west ample grass and water were available. The potential lured young Slaughter westward as it had his father more than twenty-five years before. By the spring of 1855, C. C. had convinced his father that they should explore the Brazos and other westward streams for a new ranch.⁴⁵

For two months during the summer of 1855, the Slaughters roamed over hundreds of miles of West Texas grasslands, even penetrating the hunting grounds of the Comanche and Kiowa Indians. Because of the newly-established line of frontier defense posts, the Plains Indians were relatively peaceful that summer.

The Slaughters went west to the Brazos, possibly

⁴³ Since cattle in 1856 were worth about six dollars apiece, Slaughter's first herd probably numbered seventy head. J. Frank Dobie, The Longhorns (Reprint; Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1941), p. 48.

⁴⁴ Memorial and Biographical History of Navarro, Henderson, Anderson, Limestone, Freestone, and Leon Counties, Texas (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1893), p. 402.

⁴⁵ Prose and Poetry, p. 521.

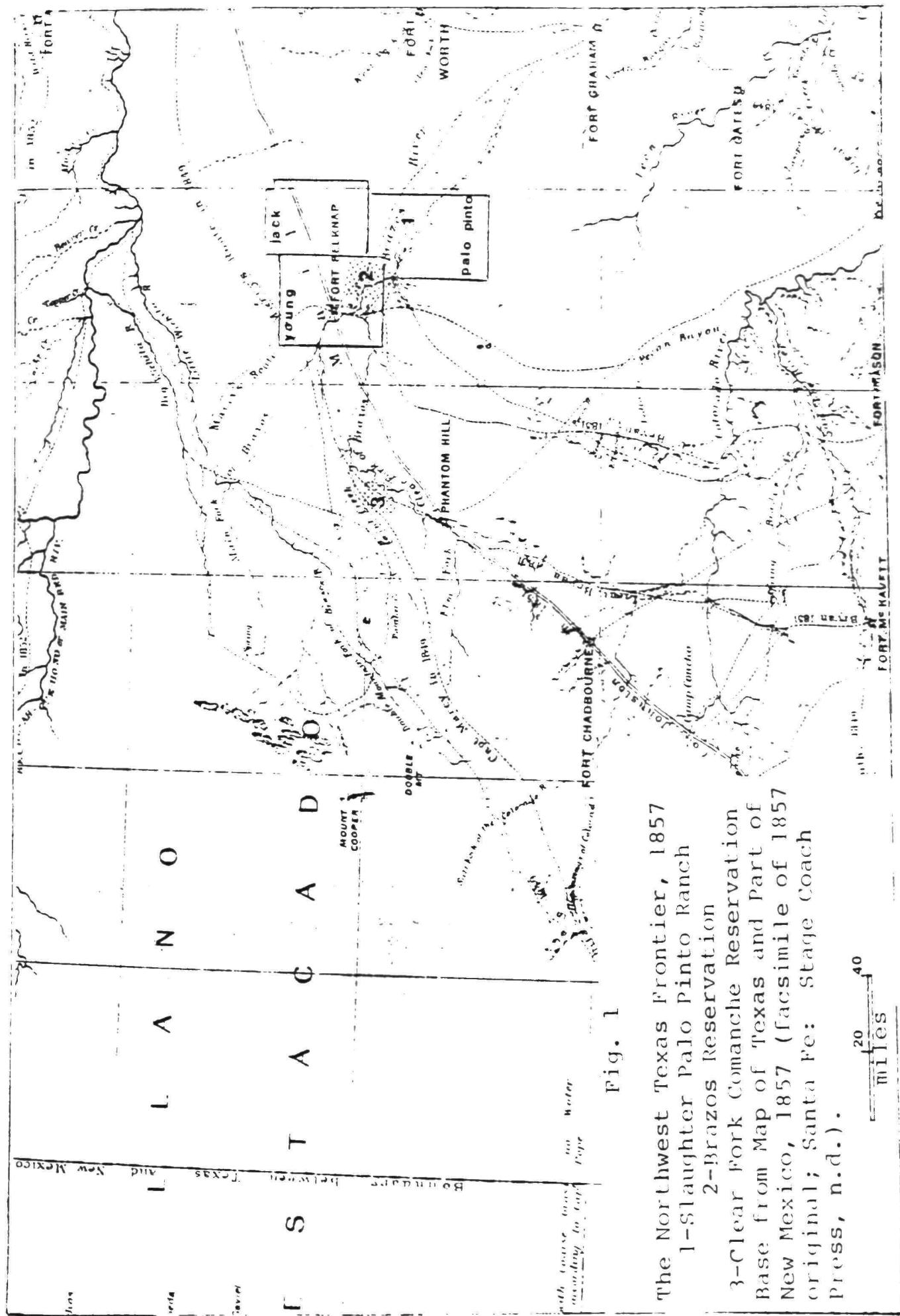


Fig. 1

The Northwest Texas Frontier, 1857
 1-Slaughter Palo Pinto Ranch
 2-Brazos Reservation
 3-Clear Fork Comanche Reservation
 Base from Map of Texas and Part of New Mexico, 1857 (facsimile of 1857 original; Santa Fe: Stage Coach Press, n.d.).

striking it near Fort Graham, in Hill County, ten miles west of present-day Hillsboro.⁴⁶ There they turned north-westward along its banks as far as Fort Belknap. Then, probably along the established military roads, they moved west to the Colorado River Valley and explored where no cattlemen had been.⁴⁷

The Slaughters' choice of a new range was not difficult. Although the virgin Colorado Valley appeared to be a cattlemen's haven, it also was still the home of both buffalo and Indians. The upper Brazos country, however, in Palo Pinto and Young counties, offered both lush grass and military protection. Lying in the western Cross Timbers, the Brazos Valley provided a broken, well-watered terrain; nearby Fort Belknap promised military security.

George Webb Slaughter chose and bought for what became his final home 2,900 acres along a sharp bend in the Brazos, four miles north of the tiny settlement of Galconda (now Palo Pinto) in Palo Pinto County. In 1856, C. C. drove the Slaughter cattle herd north to the new ranch and supervised the building of a new home for the

⁴⁶ The Slaughters apparently followed the military roads leading from Fort Houston in Anderson County to Fort Graham and other points farther west. See "Early Trade and Travel Routes," William C. Pool, A Historical Atlas of Texas (Austin: Encino Press, 1975), pp. 106-107.

⁴⁷ Prose and Poetry, p. 522.

family. However, he never forgot the potential he saw in the Colorado River country farther west and would eventually claim that range for his own.⁴⁸

The Slaughters quickly adapted to their new environment and the Brazos Valley provided ample grass, shelter, and water for their growing herd, and the two nearby Indian reservations, the Brazos Reserve for the Wichita and other East Texas sedentary tribes and the Comanche on the Clear Fork of the Brazos, offered a ready market for their cattle. Their neighbors--the Cowdens, Daltons, Goodnights, and Lovings--shared their enthusiasm for cattle raising. Incidentally, each family would become legendary in the Texas ranching industry.

⁴⁸Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 333.

CHAPTER II

WAR ON THE TEXAS FRONTIER

Through Palo Pinto County the Brazos River winds among low rugged sandstone hills. Tough mountain cedars, famed for fenceposts, and mesquite, blackjack, and scrub oak, line the slopes. In the flattened river bends and creek bottoms stand big elm, Spanish oak, cottonwood, ash, walnut, pecan, and willow trees. Long pools and rock-littered rapids fed by numerous streams flowing from rolling valleys provide ample water for man and livestock.¹ There, on a sheltered bend less than a mile from the river, C. C. Slaughter in 1856 supervised the building of a log cabin for his father and family.

The population of Palo Pinto County during the mid-1850s, like the rest of the northwest Texas frontier, was increasing rapidly. Three years before the Slaughter family arrived at its new home in 1857, there were enough residents to organize a county government. Nevertheless, the region was still isolated. From Fort Belknap, thirty miles west

¹John Graves, "The Brazos of the Northwest Texas Frontier Today," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, XXXIV (1958), 4.

of the Slaughters' home, according to an early settler, lay "nothing west from there to the Rocky Mountains."²

The Anglo predecessors of the Slaughters in Palo Pinto County were also cattle raisers, attracted there by the rugged terrain and well-watered valleys. The Cowdens, Goodnights, Lovings--names that would become legendary in ranching circles--were Slaughter neighbors.³ For them, nearby Fort Belknap and two Indian reservations provided a ready market for their beef.

For several years, frontier life for George Webb and his sons followed a set pattern: the father preached the gospel while his boys cared for the cattle. The elder Slaughter, who had only three weeks of formal education, had been shepherding small Baptist congregations for more than ten years prior to his move to Palo Pinto County. His presence was soon well-known on the northwest Texas frontier for his fiery and forceful preaching.⁴ On one

²Charles Goodnight, as quoted in J. Evetts Haley, Charles Goodnight: Cowman and Plainsman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949), p. 33.

³W. C. Cochran, "Story of Early Day Indian Troubles and Cattle Business of Palo Pinto and Adjoining Counties," unpublished and undated typescript (68 pp.), Archives, University of Texas, p. 39.

⁴Koen, "George Webb Slaughter," 111; "Scrapbook History of Mineral Wells and Palo Pinto County," unpublished scrapbook, Mineral Wells Municipal Library, Mineral Wells, Texas; Zane Mason, "Some Experiences of Baptists on the Texas Frontier," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, XXXVI (1960), 37-38.

occasion, a young school teacher in Palo Pinto, J. H. Baker, noted Slaughter's pulpit delivery: "As usual with him, he dwelt at great length at laborious exhortation, repeating himself frequently until the congregation was wearied . . . His subject matter is good, but his style is vehement and boisterous."⁵

Near his home he built in 1858 the Slaughter Valley Baptist Church, the first in the county, and later founded other congregations in Palo Pinto, Mineral Wells, and adjoining communities. Even with hostile Indians in the country, he weekly followed a sixty-mile circuit with a Bible and a hymnbook in his saddle, often preaching with the revolver and carbine within reach.⁶ In spite of his pastoral manner, Slaughter founded fifty churches and baptized three thousand persons during his fifty-year ministry. Before he retired in 1886, he was far better known as an itinerant preacher than as a cattleman.⁷

To Slaughter, however, cattle were more important

⁵ Mary Whatley Clarke, The Palo Pinto Story (Fort Worth: Manney Company, 1956), p. 5.

⁶ James H. Baker, "The Diary of J. H. Baker, 1858-1918," unpublished typescript (662 pp.), Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin, pp. 112, 141 (see also microfilm copy, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock).

⁷ Koen, "George Webb Slaughter," p. 110; Zane Allen Mason, Frontiersmen of the Faith (San Antonio: Naylor Company, 1970), p. 87.

than saving souls. On one occasion, a small Baptist congregation had gathered at its church to hear the famed preacher who had failed to appear at the appointed hour. Late in the evening, Slaughter arrived and quickly explained to the faithful few who had waited that he had encountered several unbranded calves along the way that needed his brand.⁸

By 1860 more than a thousand head of cattle carried the Slaughter brand. Owning the second largest herd in the county and four thousand acres of land along the Brazos, George Webb and C. C. claimed a modest estate valued at \$20,000. Their cattle holdings increased 300 percent during the decade of the 1850s.⁹ The Slaughter operation required five men, including two hired hands, to handle the work.

George Webb's family grew almost proportionately to his wealth. In addition to C. C., Nancy, George, Jr.,

⁸W. C. Holden to David Murrah, interview, Lubbock, Texas, March 2, 1970. Even though his ministerial services were appreciated by his neighbors, at least on one occasion they could not resist having fun with the aging cattleman-preacher. "One Sunday morning when the Reverend was preaching a warm and lengthy sermon under a brush arbor some cowboys ran a small bunch of mavericks down on the meeting place. Frightened, the animals dashed through the aisle and among the benches. The incident did not particularly excite Reverend Slaughter, but he did not forget the boys in his closing prayer. He called on the Lord 'to hold them over the fires of hell, take them by the neck, let them dangle over the fiery furnace, but, oh Lord, don't let them drop.'" Carrie J. Crouch, A History of Young County (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1956), p. 170.

⁹U.S., Eighth Census of the United States, Agriculture, Palo Pinto County, Texas, Texas State Library (Microcopy Roll 2).

Pete, and John, two children, William ("Bill") and Francis, arrived while the family resided in Freestone County. After the move to Palo Pinto, two daughters, Mary and Sarah Jane, were born in 1858 and 1860, respectively. Eleven children seemed to promise George Webb Slaughter a long-lasting legacy.¹⁰

Like their neighbors, the Slaughters soon took advantage of the cattle market provided by the nearby military fort and the two Indian reserves. Established in 1851, Fort Belknap was located in central Young County on the north bank of the Brazos near present-day Newcastle, thirty-five miles northwest of Slaughter Valley. Situated on the Butterfield Overland Trail, the post was occupied by one to four companies of soldiers.¹¹

A greater market was provided by the nearby Indian reservations. Created in 1854 by the federal government from lands donated by the State of Texas, the reservations consisted of two tracts, one for the sedentary tribes and the other for the nomadic Comanches. Closer to the Slaughters, the Brazos Reservation, consisting of eight square leagues (approximately 35,427 acres) in southeastern

¹⁰U.S., Eighth Census of the United States, Population, Palo Pinto County, Texas, National Archives (Microcopy No. M-432, Roll 913).

¹¹Crouch, History of Young County, p. 16; Barbara Neal Ledbetter, A Guide to Fort Belknap (N.p.: n.p., n.d.), [p. 1].

Young County, was the home of more than a thousand residents.¹² Forty-five miles to the southwest, on the north side of the Clear Fork of the Brazos, was the Comanche Reservation, a four-square-league tract.¹³ Only 350 to 400 Comanches ever settled on the smaller reserve.

The Federal government purchased beef through contractors from the Slaughters and other nearby cattlemen who provided delivery of approximately thirty-four head weekly.¹⁴ This market added more than \$25,000 annually to the cattlemen's economy. To facilitate their business, the Slaughters in 1858 moved their herd and feeding pens from the home place to a point approximately five miles east of the Brazos Reservation.¹⁵

Hostilities between the Indians and the whites soon disrupted the lucrative trade. The United States

¹² Rupert N. Richardson, The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1933), p. 217 (hereafter cited as Richardson, Comanche Barrier); Ernest Wallace, Texas in Turmoil (Austin: Steck Vaughn Co., 1965), p. 21; H. P. N. Gammel, comp., The Laws of Texas (10 vols.; Austin: Gammel Book Co., 1898), III, 495-496.

¹³ Crouch, History of Young County, p. 16.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 21. Preston Webb and Pleasant Webb were awarded the contract for 1857-1858. During the year they delivered to the reservations approximately 800,000 pounds of beef at \$3.98 per hundred. Robert S. Neighbors to Preston Webb and Pleasant Webb, letter, June 15, 1857, and Quarterly Reports, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, Texas Agency, 1847-1859, National Archives (Microcopy No. 234, Roll 860).

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 91, 134; Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 304.

Second Cavalry, which had manned the scattered frontier posts in the area since 1855, withdrew in 1857 to quell a possible Mormon uprising in Utah. After its departure, Nokoni Comanches immediately began raiding settlements from Palo Pinto southward.¹⁶ A seven-year-old boy was scalped while playing near his home in Palo Pinto County.¹⁷ By 1858, several whites had been killed and more than a hundred horses stolen throughout several frontier counties. Fortunately for the Slaughters, the Indians avoided northern Palo Pinto County, but reprisal raids by federal and Texas military forces into the heart of the Indian country along the Canadian River near the Texas-Oklahoma line incited additional Comanche atrocities. By the end of 1858, the frontier was poised for full-scale war.

Many settlers blamed the reservation Indians for the depredations.¹⁸ The agitation against these Indians was led by John R. Baylor, a former agent of the Comanche Reservation. Dismissed from that post in 1857, Baylor

¹⁶ Wallace, Texas in Turmoil, p. 22.

¹⁷ J. W. Wilbarger, Indian Depredations in Texas (Austin: Huching Printing House, 1889), p. 509.

¹⁸ F. M. Harris to S. P. Ross, letter, March 1, 1859, U.S., Congress: Senate, Report of the Secretary of the Interior, S. Ex. Doc. 2, 36th Cong., 1st sess., 1860, p. 629.

established a small cattle ranch in Stephens County¹⁹ and became a severe critic of Robert S. Neighbors, superintendent of the Texas reservations.²⁰

[The frontier settlers divided into factions. Many, like Baylor, blamed the reservation Indians for the deprivations. However, the Slaughters and other Palo Pinto residents defended their friendly Indian neighbors and resisted any attempts to punish them. In December 1858, a party of about twenty frontiersmen from the counties south of Palo Pinto determined to settle the problem. The mob, led by Peter Garland of Erath County, vowed to kill any Indians found off the reserve.]²¹

Meanwhile, a band of twenty-seven Caddo and other reservation Indians, under the leadership of an old and peaceful chief, Choctaw Tom, had left the Brazos Reservation to hunt game along the river. Encouraged by the friendly Palo Pinto residents to stay in the area to hunt bear, the Indians camped on December 27 only one mile from

¹⁹ Jerry Don Thompson, Colonel John Robert Baylor: Texas Indian Fighter and Confederate Soldier (Hillsboro, Texas: Hill County Junior College, 1971), p. 11.

²⁰ Kenneth Franklin Neighbours, Robert Simpson Neighbors and the Texas Frontier (Waco: Texian Press, 1975), p. 195 (hereafter cited as Neighbours, Neighbors); Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 22.

²¹ Richardson, Comanche Barrier, pp. 251-252.

the Slaughter Ranch.²² There the party of Erath County settlers surprised and killed seven of the sleeping Indians, including Choctaw Tom's wife and daughter.²³

Awakened by the gunfire, C. C. Slaughter hurried to the scene. When he determined what had happened, he rushed home, saddled a horse, and headed for the reservation. He vividly recalled the incident:

I knew instinctively that what few Indians had escaped would immediately return to the agency . . . and [then] return before daylight to bury their dead and afterwards wreak a most horrible revenge on the innocent people of that settlement for an act committed by a lot of hotheaded thoughtless men from an entirely different section of the country. I determined to prevent this second outrage if possible.²⁴

C. C. Slaughter was in the most dangerous situation he would ever face. After riding two-thirds of the way, he encountered a large band of hostile Indians: "They were covered with war paint and in the ugliest possible frame of mind," Slaughter remembered. Personally acquainted with a number of the leaders, he explained the situation and tried to assure the Indians that the residents of Palo Pinto were

²² Crouch, History of Young County, p. 22; Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 332; Richardson, Comanche Barrier, p. 252. Charles Goodnight, then a resident of the area, described the attack as a "dirty piece of business." Goodnight as quoted in Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 26; Neighbours, Neighbors, p. 224.

²³ J. J. Sturm to S. P. Ross, letters, December 30, 1858, and January 15, 1859, Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1860, p. 600; Neighbours, Neighbors, p. 224.

²⁴ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 332.

innocent. "By constantly talking in this vein and assisting them in the burial of their dead, I eventually succeeded in quieting them for the time being," he said. "I shall always firmly believe, however, that had I not interceded on this occasion there would have been one of the most horrible massacres ever perpetrated by savage vengeance."²⁵ Slaughter's midnight intervention was not in vain. Within two days, the Palo Pinto settlers had formed a defense, but no attack ever came.

Some Palo Pinto settlers expressed sorrow for the murders. "It is [with] feelings of deep sorrow we have to inform you that whereas the friendly Indians were among us hunting, acting in a peaceable manner . . . ,"²⁶ explained a committee of Palo Pinto citizens headed by W. W. Cochran. ". . . the people do not approve the course of said party in the affair; and furthermore, the people of this county desire to live in peace and amity. . . ." Through such intercessions, coupled with the leadership of Neighbors and Agent Shapley Ross, the Indians were temporarily quieted.

The murderers, however, went unpunished. Authorities in Palo Pinto County refused to comply with a

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ W. W. Cochran, et al., to Major Neighbors and Captain Ross, letter, December 27, 1858, in Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1860, pp. 602-603.

proclamation by Governor Hardin Runnels for their arrest.²⁷ John S. "Rip" Ford, who was commanding a Texas Ranger company in the area and was fearful of a clash between Rangers and settlers, also refused to search out and arrest them.²⁸

Although C. C. Slaughter may have sympathized with the Indians' plight, it was impossible for him or other men of reason to quiet the frontier outcry against the continued presence of the reservation Indians in Texas. The anti-Indian faction, which now grew rapidly, turned to John R. Baylor for leadership. After speaking at several community meetings, Baylor succeeded in enlisting the support of a majority of the settlers in an effort to rid Texas of the reservation Indians.²⁹ On April 25, 1859, most of the leading citizens of Palo Pinto County, including Oliver Loving, J. S. McLaren, George Jowell, J. H. Baker, and George Webb Slaughter signed a letter calling for the immediate resignation of Superintendent Neighbors and Agents Ross and Matthew Leeper. "Your course and conduct for the last eighteen months, having utterly failed to give satisfaction to the citizens of the frontier of Texas . . . the

²⁷ Proclamation by H. R. Runnels, January 10, 1859, in Texas Indian Papers, III, 312-313; S. P. Ross to R. S. Neighbors, letter, May 12, 1859, Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1860, p. 639.

²⁸ W. J. Hughes, Rebellious Ranger (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 154.

²⁹ Neighbours, Neighbors, p. 236.

opinion prevails generally that you have acted in bad faith to the Indian and white man. . . ." ³⁰ Two groups emerged, the "Baylor" men, comprised of frontier settlers, and the "Indian" men, predominately merchants who held contracts to supply reservations with provisions. ³¹ Although the evidence is not clear, the Slaughters eventually sided with the settlers. ³²

Baylor's agitation of the frontier settlers finally doomed the Texas Indian reservations. ³³ To drive the reservation Indians out of Texas, Baylor in May 1859 assembled an "Army of Defense" at Rock Creek on Dillingham Prairie,

³⁰ Citizens to Neighbors, letter, April 25, 1859, Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1860, pp. 641-642.

³¹ Baker, "Diary," May 21, 1859, p. 96; Thompson, John Robert Baylor, p. 13.

³² Although George Webb Slaughter signed the petition to remove the Indian agents, there is no evidence to indicate that C. C. Slaughter participated in the 1859 opposition to the reservation. However, many of his neighbors did, including Charles Goodnight and J. H. Baker. Three factors suggest that C. C. Slaughter took no part in Baylor's action: first, he had supplied beef to the reservation for several years and would not have wanted to lose that market; second, his intervention in the December 1858 incident is indicative of his friendly attitude toward the reservation Indians; third, he was never on good terms with Charles Goodnight and J. H. Baker, both of whom did participate in Baylor's subsequent attack upon the reservation. In January 1861, Baker, a strong Baylor supporter, outspokenly opposed C. C. Slaughter's election as commander of Palo Pinto's Ranger company. Baker, "Diary," January 19, 1861, p. 243.

³³ Thompson, John Robert Baylor, p. 13.

near the Slaughter feeding pens on the Young-Palo Pinto County line.³⁴ With 280 armed men, he moved onto the Brazos Reservation on May 23, capturing and killing an eighty-year-old Indian man and an old woman near Salt Creek, one mile south of present-day Graham. In retaliation, a party of fifty Brazos Indians, under Chief José María, pursued the invaders, forcing them to take shelter at Marlin's Ranch, about six miles west of Graham. After killing two of Baylor's men in a pitched battle, the Indians withdrew to the reservation headquarters, and the invaders retreated to the safety of Fort Belknap.³⁵

Although the conflict at Marlin's Ranch terminated Baylor's incursion onto the reservation, it did not quell the resistance to the continued presence of the Indians. Baylor and his followers maintained a camp at Rock Creek for several days following the attack. Fearing another conflict, Neighbors secured military protection for the reservations.³⁶ Finally, on June 11, 1859, he received orders from Washington to transfer the Texas Indians from

³⁴ Baker, "Diary," May 18, 1859, p. 95.

³⁵ Ibid., May 23-24, 1859; Neighbours, Neighbors, pp. 240-245; Haley, Charles Goodnight, pp. 26-31; S. P. Ross to R. S. Neighbors, letter, May 26, 1859, Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1860, pp. 645-646. For an excellent firsthand account of the fight at Marlin's Ranch, see John M. Elkins, Indian Fighting on the Texas Frontier (N.p.: n.p., 1929), pp. 18-26.

³⁶ Neighbours, Neighbors, p. 246.

the Comanche and Brazos reservations northward into the Indian Territory.

The Slaughters and other stock raisers apparently opposed removal. Several ranchers, including C. C. Slaughter's close friends, F. M. Harris and M. S. Dalton, testified in signed statements that they had never been molested by the Indians while hunting for their cattle on the reserve.³⁷ The cattlemen's support of Neighbors and the Indians, however, went unheeded. On August 1, 1859, the exodus began. Escorted by Neighbors, his Indian agents, and two companies of the Second Cavalry and one company of the First Infantry under the command of Major George H. Thomas, 1,051 Brazos Reservation Indians and 384 Comanches started for their new home. Left behind were cattle, horses, and other animals valued at nearly \$15,000.³⁸ On August 8, the caravan crossed the Red River and eight days later reached its destination on the Washita River near present-day Fort Cobb, Oklahoma.³⁹

³⁷ Ibid., p. 260.

³⁸ Neighbours, Neighbors, pp. 271-273; Neighbours, Indian Exodus, p. 136; Wallace, Texas in Turmoil, p. 26; Robert Simpson Neighbors to A. B. Greenwood, July 24, 1859, letter, Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1860, p. 687.

³⁹ Wallace, Texas in Turmoil, p. 26. Tragically, many of the transplanted Indians were doomed. Soon after they were relocated in the Washita valley, the Tonkawas were attacked in 1862 by an alliance of Creeks, Shawnees and Delawares and were practically annihilated. A remnant

The exodus brought to an end the controversial experiment with reservations in Texas; it also deprived the Slaughters and their neighboring stock raisers of a valuable market for their beef. The Palo Pinto cattlemen's conflict with their neighbors who had supported Baylor, however, subsided rapidly in the wake of renewed Indian raids and political battles.⁴⁰ Kiowas and Comanches continued to raid North Texas frequently throughout the remainder of 1859. Especially hard-hit were Jack, Young, Palo Pinto, and Parker counties where the Indians stole "all the horses they could get."⁴¹ The resulting discontent was a major factor in incumbent Governor Hardin Runnels' defeat by Sam Houston in the 1859 election.⁴² The citizens of Palo Pinto and the frontier pleaded to Houston for relief from the depredations "with all its

returned to Fort Belknap in 1863. Thomas C. Battey, The Life and Adventures of a Quaker Among the Indians (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1875), pp. 58-59; W. W. Newcomb, The Indians of Texas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), p. 359.

⁴⁰ The conflict between Neighbors and supporters of the Brazos reservations came to a tragic end on September 14, 1859. Following his placement of the Texas Indians in the Indian Territory, Superintendent Neighbors, on his return trip, stopped at the village of Belknap to conclude unfinished business. There, he was shot in the back by Edward Cornett and died on the street. Neighbors, Neighbors, p. 283.

⁴¹ Richardson, Comanche Barrier, p. 153; Friend, Sam Houston, p. 325.

⁴² Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 48; Wallace, Texas in Turmoil, p. 27.

attendant atrocities." In a petition sent to Governor Houston on February 9, 1860, a Palo Pinto resident, John Topp, pointed out that "the facts set forth are indeed true--As an additional voucher for the truth of this statement, I call your attention to the signatures of those of our county officers who were present----and especially to that of the Rev. G. W. Slaughter, who was with your excellency in the memorable wars of independence."⁴³

Even before receiving the petition, Houston was taking steps to improve the frontier situation. He had called upon the federal government for additional troops and supplies, and had dispatched seven companies of Texas Rangers to Northwest Texas; and in March 1860 he authorized the organization of Minute Men companies of fifteen men each in twenty-three counties.⁴⁴ As a result, tentative peace was restored to frontier Palo Pinto County in the summer of 1860--but not for long.

The tragic death of C. C. Slaughter's younger brother George heralded the beginning of a dismal decade. Only seventeen years old, the second son of George Webb

⁴³John Topp to Sam Houston, letter, February 9, 1860, Texas Indian Papers, IV, 1-2.

⁴⁴Wallace, Texas in Turmoil, p. 27; Sam Houston to the Chief Justices of the Texas Counties, General Order, March 9, 1860, Amelia W. Williams and Eugene C. Barker, eds., The Writings of Sam Houston, 1813-1863 (8 vols.; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1938-1943), VII, 507 (hereafter cited as Williams, Writings of Sam Houston).

Slaughter was already invaluable in the operation of the family's cattle business when an accident, on June 15, proved fatal. George's father the next day described in his weekly newsletter to his parishioners how it happened:

The animal [the mule which George was handling] became frightened and by an unlucky movement got the rope twice around the boy's neck. He then pulled the stake up, and ran off dragging the boy after him over the worst ledge of limestone rock to be found in this vicinity, running several hundred yards before he could be stopped.⁴⁵

Death soon struck the Palo Pinto community again. Two days after the funeral, the Indians depredated the vicinity. One report claimed that two women had been killed and two young girls kidnapped. Within hours, a volunteer company was in pursuit of the marauders but without success.⁴⁶ Another raid near Jacksboro, fifteen miles north of the Slaughter ranch, took the lives of a young couple named Mason, provoking the bereaved father of the young woman killed to plead with the neighborhood boys to "bring him the scalps of any Indians we killed."⁴⁷

At first, little was done to stop the Indian raids. With the removal of the reservation Indians in 1859, federal troops were withdrawn from Fort Belknap. The small

⁴⁵ Baker, "Diary," pp. 144, 146.

⁴⁶ Cochran, "Story of Early Day Indian Troubles," p. 9.

⁴⁷ Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 51.

company of Texas Rangers sent to replace them could do little to provide frontier protection. A party of six well-armed frontiersmen, however, led by John R. Baylor, that rode west from Young County in June 1860 to Paint Creek, near present-day Albany, killed twelve Indians.⁴⁸ Upon its return, Young County settlers staged a barbecue in honor of the Indian fighters, and Palo Pinto residents displayed similar hospitality, but the biggest celebration was held in Weatherford, in Parker County.⁴⁹ There, the avengers were greeted with a tumultuous welcome. Celebrating the "victory" with a barbecue, the frontiersmen exhibited the prized scalps, including one of a white woman, and heard stirring exhortations to "exterminate the Indians."⁵⁰ In spite of Baylor's success, however, more than twenty whites had been killed in raids by November 1860.⁵¹

A mid-November raid through Palo Pinto County by a band of Comanches and Kiowas finally provoked the state into action. C. C. Slaughter, with ninety-four other young

⁴⁸ Thompson, John Robert Baylor, pp. 18-21.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

⁵⁰ Fannie McAlpine Clarke, "A Chapter in the History of Young Territory," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, IX (July, 1905), 58.

⁵¹ Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 52; N. W. Battle, et al., to Sam Houston, Letter, November 13, 1860, Texas Indian Papers, IV, 42-44.

settlers, including Charles Goodnight, formed a volunteer Ranger company to pursue the invaders. On December 5, the civilian soldiers assembled in eastern Young County, organized into nine squads, and elected as captain J. J. "Jack" Cureton, a veteran of the Brazos reserve skirmish of 1859. C. C. Slaughter was a private.⁵²

Meanwhile, Governor Houston had appointed in September 1859 young Lawrence Sullivan Ross, already an experienced Indian fighter, as commander of a Ranger company that he recruited in the Waco area. Because his father, Shapley Ross, was Indian agent of the Brazos Reservation, Ross had spent his summer vacations roaming the area. Anxious to return to the frontier adventure, he raised a company of forty-seven Rangers and proceeded directly to Fort Belknap.⁵³ On December 12, he assumed command also of the volunteer militia under Cureton. Then, joined by 23 U.S. Army Dragoons from Camp Cooper under the command of Sergeant J. W. Spangler, he started on the following day with his force of 150 men toward the Indian country.⁵⁴

⁵² Ranger Muster Rolls Index, Archives Division, Texas State Library; Muster roll, December 5, 1860, C. C. Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

⁵³ Clarke, "A Chapter in the History of Young Territory," p. 59.

⁵⁴ Baker, "Diary," p. 33; Carl Coke Rister, Fort Griffin on the Texas Frontier (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), p. 29.

Although Slaughter, as well as his friends, was apparently perturbed over the youth of his commander, he obediently followed his orders. The column first moved in a northwesterly course through the rolling breaks of the Little Wichita, passed near present-day Wichita Falls, and on December 16 crossed the Big Wichita and Beaver Creek south of present-day Vernon. Late that afternoon, the troops became excited when they sighted Indians.⁵⁵

On the seventeenth, with the late arrivals from Palo Pinto and Belknap, Cureton's volunteers numbered almost one hundred. Realizing that he had an unmanageable force of raw recruits, Cureton, on the morning of the eighteenth, lectured his young command on the importance of order and discipline. Meanwhile, Ross's Rangers and the regulars crossed to the north side of the Pease River. Cureton's and Ross's columns then proceeded westward, camping for the night on opposite banks of that stream.⁵⁶

The next morning, about fourteen miles west of Vernon, Ross surprised a Comanche camp.⁵⁷ Without waiting for the larger body of volunteers to join his command, he

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 204-205.

⁵⁶ Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 53; Elkins, Indian Fighting, p. 35. Elkins participated in the Ross expedition under Cureton.

⁵⁷ Clyde L. Jackson and Grace Jackson, Quanah Parker, Last Chief of the Comanches (New York: Exposition Press, 1963), p. 39.

ordered an immediate attack and killed twelve in the band, including Chief No-bah (Nocona?) in hand-to-hand combat.⁵⁸

Slaughter and the other volunteers missed the battle by minutes. Goodnight, who was serving as a scout, arrived in time to see the final minutes of action. He then turned to watch Slaughter and the others straggle to the site. "With their tin cups, pans and guns glistening in the bright sun," Goodnight remembered, "they made a thrilling sight that was very impressive. I regret to say that there were some good horses behind, but probably the riders' appetites were not craving for lead."⁵⁹

When Slaughter and the others arrived, they found the place strewn with packets of buffalo robes, blankets, tents, food supplies, and other materials the Indians had preserved for winter survival. There, they also saw

⁵⁸ For many years Ross believed that he had killed Nocona, father of Quanah Parker. However, Haley indicates that the chief killed No-bah and that Nocona died many years later while hunting plums along the Canadian River. For varying accounts of Nocona's death, see Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 57, Rubert N. Richardson, ed., "The Death of Nocona and the Recovery of Cynthia Ann Parker," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLVI (July, 1942), 15-21; see also Ross's narrative of the expedition in James T. DeShields, Cynthia Ann Parker (St. Louis: by the author, 1886), pp. 61-66; J. W. Wilbarger, Indian Depredations in Texas, p. 336; L. S. Ross to George Alford, letter, April 18, [?], E. E. White, Experiences of a Special Agent (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1965), pp. 263-272.

⁵⁹ Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 55.

prisoners taken during the skirmish--a woman, a boy, and a little girl.⁶⁰ The capture of the woman made Ross and the expedition famous.

The squaw's blue eyes indicated to Ross that she was white, although she spoke no English and was dressed in full Indian regalia. While being questioned by "Colonel" Isaac Parker of Weatherford, the woman exclaimed in broken English, "Me Cynthia Ann."⁶¹ In 1836 Cynthia Ann Parker, then nine years of age, had been captured by the Comanches during a raid on Parker's Fort on the Navasota River near present-day Groesbeck. Afterward, she was hunted by family and friends, and by the time of her rescue, her name had become legendary. The story of the battle and her release was later told by Ross and published throughout the state.⁶²

For several days after Ross captured Cynthia Ann, Cureton's command of volunteers continued to search for Indians in hostile Indian country along the Pease River. On December 20, Cureton dispatched Goodnight and ten men westward to follow a fresh trail. South of present-day Childress, the scouts discovered what Ross had missed--a

⁶⁰ Baker, "Diary," p. 210; Wilbarger, Indian Depredations, p. 338.

⁶¹ Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 61.

⁶² Cochran, "Story of Early Day Indian Troubles," p. 11; Dallas Herald, January 2, 1861, p. 1.

large encampment of a thousand or more Indians. After riding a short distance to avoid discovery, the scouts hastened to report their discovery to Cureton.⁶³ Meanwhile, at the main camp, many of the youthful volunteers had become restless and fifteen from Parker County had left for home. However, every Palo Pinto man, including C. C. Slaughter, remained loyal to Cureton.⁶⁴

A few hours after the Parker County group had left, Goodnight and his men rode into camp with their ominous report. After an evening parley, Cureton wisely decided to turn back because he had only seventy-nine men left. On Christmas Day, the weary and hungry cattlemen-soldiers began the long trek home.⁶⁵

Two days on the return trip had elapsed when the company encountered five Indians. The troops gave chase but their horses were quickly too fatigued to continue. The wearied volunteers finally straggled into Fort Belknap on January 1 and disbanded.⁶⁶

Back at home, Slaughter had more trouble. During his absence, Indians had stolen forty of the ranch's best

⁶³ Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 61.

⁶⁴ Baker, "Diary," p. 216; Elkins, Indian Fighting, p. 35.

⁶⁵ Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 61.

⁶⁶ Baker, "Diary," p. 227.

horses. Fortunately, the family had survived by barricading themselves in their homes.⁶⁷ Even more appalling was the shocking news that Republican Abraham Lincoln had been elected President of the United States. "The fact has caused great excitement among the people," Slaughter's neighbor, J. H. Baker, recorded, "and they are in for secession."⁶⁸

The Palo Pinto settlers were anxious for action. Because of the renewed Indian threat, or perhaps responding to a growing secession fever, the Palo Pinto County's chief justice, R. W. Pollard, on January 14, 1861, issued a call for the formation of a fifteen-man Ranger company to range the borders of the county.⁶⁹ On January 19, the young men

⁶⁷ For the property stolen, George Webb Slaughter filed a claim against the U. S. government after the war for \$6,500, but at the time of his death in 1894 the claim had not been paid. Cox, Cattle Industry, pp. 304, 322.

⁶⁸ Baker, "Diary," p. 190.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Baker indicates that the order to raise the company came directly from Governor Houston. However, there is no evidence that Houston ever called out the Palo Pinto company in January 1861. On March 9, 1860, Houston did issue general orders providing for the creation and service of twenty-three companies in each of the threatened counties, including one from Palo Pinto. Some of these companies were mustered out on orders from Houston on May 5, 1860. Companies in thirteen counties, including Jack, Young, and Palo Pinto, were to be reviewed by Captain J. M. Hall to determine their effectiveness in the field. Hall was also to instruct the lieutenant of each company "to hold himself in readiness should occasion require, or the Chief Justice of the County deem it necessary to call the Detachment into the field again." Sam Houston to J. M. Hall, letter, May 5, 1860, Williams, Writings of Sam

of the county gathered at Palo Pinto for enlistment. Following initial enrollment, the volunteers elected officers. C. C. Slaughter was chosen to command as lieutenant. His election, however, was not unanimous. "I opposed his election as I do not consider him suitable for that office," recorded J. H. Baker. "I have but little confidence of the company's doing any good, but hope for the best."⁷⁰ Other officers elected included two sergeants and two corporals. Ten privates rounded out the company. The lieutenant was to serve as quarter master.⁷¹ For his service Slaughter received \$95.00 a month.⁷²

Under Governor Houston's order, which originally created the Minute companies in March 1860, each unit was instructed immediately to "take the field and enter upon active scouts, affording protection to the inhabitants of

Houston, VIII, 48-49. The Chief Justice of Palo Pinto County acted under these instructions in January 1861. On January 6, 1862, C. C. Slaughter filed a claim with the state government for pay for his Ranger service. In his affidavit, he stated that the company was "called in by R. W. Pollard, Chief Justice of Palo Pinto County, by the general orders of said state. . ." Confederate Audited Military Claims, 1862-1865, No. 1020, Comptroller's Records, Archives Division, Texas State Library.

⁷⁰ Baker, "Diary," p. 243.

⁷¹ Sam Houston to the Chief Justices of Texas Counties, General Order, March 9, 1860, Williams, Writings of Sam Houston, VII, 507.

⁷² Ranger Muster Rolls Index, Archives Division, Texas State Library.

their respective counties."⁷³ Each company was to establish a central camp within the county. The lieutenant was also instructed to purchase supplies and furnish the men with rations. Arms, especially revolvers, were to be provided by the state.

Secession fever quickly altered the nature of Slaughter's frontier service. Previously, on December 3, 1860, approximately two hundred citizens of the Austin area had issued a proclamation calling for the election on January 8, 1861, of delegates to a convention to consider secession. Two weeks later, Governor Houston reluctantly called for a special session of the Texas legislature that convened on January 21 and promptly endorsed the convention. The convention met on January 28 and on February 1 overwhelmingly approved an ordinance of secession.⁷⁴

When word of the secession ordinance reached the frontier, the settlers took prompt action. At Camp Cooper, located on the Clear Fork of the Brazos 32 miles west of Fort Belknap and occupied by 250 U.S. Army regulars, approximately 200 armed Texans assembled, intending to

⁷³ Houston to Chief Justices, letter, March 9, 1860, Williams, Writings of Sam Houston, VII, 507. Under Houston's order, ten of the frontier counties, including Palo Pinto, were to be provided with newly purchased revolvers. See Sam Houston to the Citizens of the Frontier, March 8, 1860, letter, Williams, Writings of Sam Houston, VII, 503.

⁷⁴ Wallace, Texas in Turmoil, pp. 60-62.

take the post, if necessary, by force.⁷⁵ Included in the Texas camp were six companies of Rangers under the command of Colonel W. C. Dalrymple, several armed bands of volunteers, and the Palo Pinto Ranger Company⁷⁶ commanded by C. C. Slaughter.

Upon learning of the passage of the secession ordinance, Dalrymple, without waiting for authorization, on February 18 called upon Captain S. D. Carpenter, commander at Camp Cooper, to surrender the post.⁷⁷ Two days later, Carpenter agreed to evacuate on the following day and to withdraw to San Antonio.⁷⁸ Slaughter and his men

⁷⁵ W. C. Dalrymple to O. M. Roberts, letter, February 23, 1861, E. W. Winkler, ed., Journal of the Secession Convention of Texas, 1861 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1912), pp. 384-385.

⁷⁶ Dalrymple had been commissioned by Houston on December 29, 1860, to assume command of Ranger troops in service for protection from the Indians. Williams, Writings of Sam Houston, VII, 386. The only source documenting Slaughter's presence at Camp Cooper, a reference in Confederate Reunion Scrapbook, C. C. Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, dated 1901, reads: "He [Slaughter] was commissioned an officer at the outbreak of the war on the frontier and was serving on the state border when he and his command was mustered into the Confederate service at Camp Griffin [Fort] . . ." Since Fort Griffin was not established until 1867, the writer's (and probably Slaughter's) reference must have been to nearby Camp Cooper.

⁷⁷ Dalrymple to Roberts, letter, February 23, 1861, and Dalrymple to S. D. Carpenter, letter, February 18, 1861, Winkler, Journal of the Secession Convention pp. 384-385.

⁷⁸ Carpenter to Dalrymple, letter, February 20, 1861, Winkler, Journal of the Secession Convention, p. 388.

decided to escort the federals toward San Antonio. Near Camp Colorado, six miles northeast of Coleman, however, the Palo Pinto Rangers turned aside to follow a fresh Indian trail.⁷⁹ Finding no Indians they returned to Camp Cooper.

Slaughter and his men remained in the field as scouts until their term of service expired on April 23.⁸⁰ Returning home, they soon learned that state troops had successfully removed all federal troops from the state, that Texas had joined the Confederacy, and that the war had begun.

The outbreak of the war affected young C. C.

⁷⁹ Confederate Veterans Scrapbook, C. C. Slaughter Papers. The surrender of Camp Cooper almost proved to be an embarrassment to Texas authorities. The Secession Convention in Austin appointed Colonel H. E. McCulloch to command troops on the northwest Texas frontier and to negotiate surrender of the various federal posts. While enroute to Camp Cooper, McCulloch met the federal troops routed by Dalrymple from Cooper and made them surrender again. When he arrived at Camp Cooper, McCulloch required that Dalrymple's troops, under the command of Captain E. W. Rogers, capitulate the fort to him. Rogers did so willingly on March 9. Winkler, Journal of the Secession Convention, pp. 366-380. McCulloch found the post's supplies had been ransacked by the armed citizens and "the whole part was filled with persons, when the state troops entered the same." H. E. McCulloch to John C. Robertson, letter, March 9, 1861, Winkler, Journal of the Secession Convention, p. 381.

⁸⁰ Ranger Muster Roll Index, Archives Division, Texas State Library.

Slaughter only slightly. Anxious to rebuild his cattle and horse herds that had been depleted during his absence, he chose not to join one of the many companies being raised to fight the Yankees. Furthermore, having completed almost four months of frontier Ranger service under Ross and with his own command, the young cattleman felt no obligation to re-enroll in a Minute Man company.⁸¹

During the initial months of the war, the frontier remained relatively quiet. In May 1861, the Palo Pinto Rangers gave chase to four marauding braves who had stolen seventeen horses;⁸² otherwise, the company saw little action, thanks to the diplomacy of the newly-established Confederate States of America. On August 12, 1861, Commissioner Albert Pike successfully negotiated treaties with the Comanches, Kiowas, and Wichitas which brought a temporary peace to the Texas frontier.⁸³

C. C. Slaughter took advantage of the period of peace. With the aid of his father, he began to enlarge his

⁸¹ Gammel, Laws of Texas, V, 346. On February 7, 1861, the Texas legislature created a new law for frontier defense, providing for companies of forty men to be raised in each county. Ten men were to be kept in the field as "spies"; service was not to exceed ten days at any one time. This arrangement was both necessary and satisfactory to the frontiersmen, for it allowed them to remain at home, many miles from the war in the East, and to protect their families and livestock.

⁸² Baker, "Diary," pp. 250-251.

⁸³ Wallace, Texas in Turmoil, p. 235.

cattle holdings. Because the war offered a potential market for Texas beef, the Slaughters bought cattle at every opportunity.⁸⁴ They marketed stock through neighboring drovers, including Oliver Loving, who were commissioned to supply the Confederacy with beef. Loving, who had herded cattle to Illinois and Colorado before the war, drove beeves throughout the war to various points on the Mississippi River.⁸⁵

The frontier peace also afforded young Slaughter another opportunity. Soon after his return home from Ranger service, the twenty-four-year-old cattleman began courting Cynthia Jowell, the seventeen-year-old daughter of George Slaughter's neighboring rancher, James A. Jowell. In the autumn, the couple set Thursday, December 5, 1861, for the wedding. Held at the Jowell home in the evening, the ceremony was elaborate for a frontier wedding in the midst of war. J. H. Baker, who was a candlebearer and consequently enjoyed a front row advantage, summarized the proceedings in his diary:

It was announced that all were ready and we appeared on the floor. Miss Nan and I led the way, the other attendants next, followed by the bride and groom. There were several awkward moves before we were placed right. However, all was finally satisfactory

⁸⁴ Prose and Poetry, p. 523.

⁸⁵ Oliver Loving to F. R. Lubbock, letter, [1862], Texas Indian Papers, IV, 67-68.



Fig. 2
Cynthia Jowell Slaughter

and the ceremony was performed by S. A. Oxford, Esq. We were then ushered into the dining room where we partook of a fine supper.⁸⁶

Although Baker enjoyed the initial celebration, he saw no usefulness in the party that followed at the Jowell home:

The remainder of the night was spent until 11 pm in conversation and various foolish games. As soon as I was relieved of my responsibilities, I came home, feeling I had spent the time quite unprofitably. . . . The rabble attempted to get up a regular chaviriri [sic], but failed. They fired several guns, blew a bugle, and yelled around the house a few times, but did not get their bells and other noises started, and consequently considered it a failure. It is a shameful practice and ought to be stopped.⁸⁷

On the following day the groom's family hosted the customary "infair" dinner. From the Jowell home, a huge throng moved in an elegant procession to the village school where two hundred guests consumed, according to Baker, "a very good dinner--the best I have seen in Texas."⁸⁸

The ceremonies completed, Slaughter settled his bride in a simple log-cabin home near his father's ranch. There, their first child, George Morgan, was born November 2, 1862. Soon, however, his family's comfortable life on the frontier ended when one day, while C. C. was driving cattle, a small party of Comanches, who no longer adhered to their treaty, trapped Slaughter's young wife in her

⁸⁶ Baker, "Diary," p. 288.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 289.

house. Pretending to want food, the Indians crowded around the door until Cynthia opened it slightly to hand them some of her cooking. One Indian attempted to push into the room but was stopped by a shotgun blast that struck him in the chest. Fearing that the sound of the shot would bring quick aid to the lone housewife, the other Indians fled. When he returned home a few hours later, C. C. found a distraught wife and on his doorstep a dead Comanche. For the duration of the war, he housed his wife and son near the stockade at Palo Pinto.⁸⁹

Indian attacks were imminent as the withdrawal of the federal troops left the frontier unprotected. In an attempt to provide security, the legislature on December 21, 1861, created nine companies to be raised from thirty-five frontier counties and one additional from other sections of the state. Service was for a twelve-month period. Jack, Parker, Young, and Palo Pinto counties were called upon to provide one company to be known as the Frontier Regiment.⁹⁰

Designed to provide protection for the entire Texas frontier, the law provided that troops should be stationed about twenty-five miles apart from the Red River to the Rio Grande, and "that scouts shall pass over the ground between

⁸⁹ George A. Wallis, Cattle Kings of the Staked Plains (Denver: Sage Book Company, 1964), p. 61.

⁹⁰ Gammel, Laws of Texas, V, 453.

any two stations once every day."⁹¹ In compliance therewith, Colonel James M. Norris, named to command the Frontier Regiment, selected sixteen sites for a chain of posts, including Camp Belknap, at old Fort Belknap, and Camp Cureton, on the West Fork of the Trinity River, ten miles south of present-day Archer City.⁹²

Many settlers in Palo Pinto County quickly volunteered for service. On February 1, 1862, more than two hundred assembled at Palo Pinto for organization and enrollment.⁹³ J. J. Cureton, who had commanded a similar company in the late 1860 campaign under L. S. Ross, was elected captain. Seventy-eight others enrolled,⁹⁴ but only two from the 1860 company, J. H. Baker and Parker Johnson.⁹⁵ C. C. Slaughter, with a new bride at home, did not enroll in the initial enlistment but possibly participated in scouting activity on a voluntary basis.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Wallace, Texas in Turmoil, p. 237; General Orders No. 4, April 23, 1862, Ranger Correspondence, Adjutant General's Office, Archives Division, Texas State Library.

⁹³ Baker, "Diary," p. 300.

⁹⁴ Muster Roll of Captain J. J. Cureton's Company, Frontier Regiment, February 1, 1862, Ranger Muster Rolls, Adjutant General's Office Records, Archives Division, Texas State Library.

⁹⁵ Ibid.; Muster Roll, J. J. Cureton, December 5, 1860, C. C. Slaughter Papers.

⁹⁶ Only one source indicates that Slaughter served in the Frontier Regiment in 1862. William E. Cureton,

On March 15, when he had raised a force of 112 men,⁹⁷ Cureton was ordered by Colonel Norris to establish his posts at Belknap and Camp Cureton.⁹⁸

This system of frontier defense worked effectively in 1862.⁹⁹ With a respite from Indian raids, C. C. Slaughter used the year to build his cattle herds and to tend to family needs. He also attempted, on behalf of several of his neighbors and himself, to obtain state pay for military service for January through March 1860. On January 6, 1862, Slaughter filed affidavits for himself

J. J. Cureton's son, wrote that "Goodnight, [C. C.] Slaughter, and Sanger again cast their fortunes with him [J. J. Cureton]; were first stationed at Old Fort Belknap on the upper Brazos in Young County." William C. Pool, ed., "Westward I Go Free: The Memoirs of William E. Cureton, Texas Frontiersman," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXXI (October, 1977), 170.

⁹⁷ Haley, Goodnight, p. 66.

⁹⁸ General Orders No. 1, February 1, 1862, Ranger Correspondence, Adjutant General's Office Records.

⁹⁹ W. C. Holden, "Frontier Defense in Texas during the Civil War," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, IV (1928), 21. Only a quarrel between Cureton and Lieutenant Colonel A. T. Obenchain marred military life at Belknap. On June 5, 1862, Obenchain ordered the arrest of Cureton on several charges, including treatment of Obenchain in an "unbecoming manner." The dispute resulted in Obenchain's murder by two of Cureton's friends, who afterward hid with Cureton's neighbors in Palo Pinto County and were never indicted for the crime. The incident worsened relations between the frontier and state government. A. T. Obenchain to J. N. Norris, letter, June 25, 1862, Ranger Correspondence, Adjutant General's Office Records; Holden, "Frontier Defense," p. 22. An excellent account of the Obenchain-Cureton dispute is contained in Haley, Charles Goodnight, pp. 69-83.

and nine of his men. Slaughter's claim was for \$297.66 for three months service at \$95.00 per month and other expenditures incurred as quartermaster.¹⁰⁰ The claim was still unpaid in 1866.¹⁰¹

The peace collapsed near the end of 1862. On October 23, Comanche Indians, agitated by federal agents, destroyed the Confederate Wichita Indian Agency and, by the following spring, were poised once again to raid the Texas settlements. The Indians soon learned to slip through the Frontier Regiment's line of defense. On February 28, 1863, two men, including J. H. Baker's uncle, were killed near the village of Palo Pinto by a party of Indians who were returning from a raid in adjoining Parker County.¹⁰² For the Slaughters and their neighbors, who were attempting to hold their cattle herds together, maintenance of life and property became difficult. Forced to combine their fire-power and foodstocks, the Slaughters "forted up" with neighbors in a small stockade in Palo Pinto when Indian

¹⁰⁰Confederate Audited Military Claims, 1862-1865, No. 1020, Comptroller's Records, Archives Division, Texas State Library.

¹⁰¹After the war, Slaughter filed a claim for \$431.71 for unpaid service in 1861. Of this amount, \$297.66 was for his three-months service as lieutenant of the Palo Pinto Ranger Company. Statement of W. L. Robards Concerning Unpaid Soldiers, October 5, 1866, Winfrey, Texas Indian Papers, IV, 118-119.

¹⁰²J. W. Wilbarger, Indian Depredations in Texas, pp. 510-511; Baker, "Diary," p. 318.

raids were imminent. Such raids, ironically, sometimes made George Webb Slaughter's ministry an easier task. Assembling a congregation in a crowded "fort" was not difficult, and on his irregular calls to the scattered frontier outposts, he often performed a number of baptisms and weddings.¹⁰³

As the months passed, Indian depredations increased on the frontier, in spite of the continued presence of the Frontier Regiment. Re-created in January 1863 by Governor Francis R. Lubbock, the Regiment served another year under considerable handicap. It lacked men, horses, and ammunition, and what horses it had, without adequate grass, due to a spring and summer drouth, became too weak to be of much service.¹⁰⁴

In an attempt to deal with the deteriorating situation, the Texas legislature in December 1863 again changed the system of frontier defense. The new law provided for the enrollment of all persons liable for military duty residing in the frontier counties, including Palo Pinto, into companies of twenty-five to sixty-five men,¹⁰⁵ and

¹⁰³ Marilynne Howsley, "Forting Up on the Texas Frontier during the Civil War," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, XVII (1941), 73-74; Samuel P. Newcomb, Diary, December 25, 1865, Archives, University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁰⁴ Holden, "Frontier Defense," p. 25.

¹⁰⁵ Gammel, Laws of Texas, V, 677-679.

divided the frontier into three military districts approximately equal in the number of troops available. Frontier District Number One, encompassing Palo Pinto and surrounding counties, was placed under the command of Major William Quayle of Decatur.¹⁰⁶ It had subject to duty 1,517 men of the 4,264 total for the three districts. The law provided that one-fourth of the total were to be kept in the field all of the time,¹⁰⁷ and that, upon completion of the organization, the force was to be turned over to the Confederate States, "but in no event are such forces to be kept away from their own proper field of operations for a longer time than one month, unless such forces are used against an Indian enemy."¹⁰⁸

C. C. Slaughter on February 2, 1864, enlisted in the District One regiment as a private in Company A of Young County's First Frontier Regiment under the command of Captain William Peveler.¹⁰⁹ From February to October, he alternated duty with his neighbors, serving ten days out of every forty.¹¹⁰ Concerned primarily with scouting

¹⁰⁶ Holden, "Frontier Defense," p. 28.

¹⁰⁷ Gammel, Laws of Texas, V. 678.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 679.

¹⁰⁹ Ranger Muster Roll, 1864, Adjutant General Office Records.

¹¹⁰ Baker, "Diary," pp. 334-335.

for Indians in the Fort Belknap area, the citizen-soldiers soon were confronted with a new enemy, deserters and Kansas jayhawkers. These men, many of whom had fled from the South's deteriorating armies, sought refuge on the isolated frontier. Their presence made the work for the military difficult. Occasionally arrests were made, but growing sympathy for deserters in the waning months of the war, especially in North Texas, prevented rigorous enforcement of law. On the other hand, the jayhawkers and deserters were helpful to the Rangers for they made the northern frontier of Texas unsafe for the Indians. These two deterrents combined with an even greater factor--the outbreak of a Plains Indian War from Texas to Canada against the United States--enabled Texas to escape with very few Indian depredations during the final year of the war.¹¹¹

Although criticized as being "uniformly inefficient," the frontier Ranger (militia) organization filled an awesome vacuum throughout Northwest Texas.¹¹² It

¹¹¹One severe raid did occur in October 1864. Two hundred Comanches and Kiowas attacked "Fort" Murrah, a Confederate outpost near Fort Balknap, killing five troopers. Then the Indians struck the nearby Elm Creek settlement, taking seven lives and capturing seven women and children. Kenneth Neighbours, "Elm Creek Raid in Young County, 1864," West Texas Historical Association Year Book (1964), 89.

¹¹²Lester N. Fitzhugh, as quoted in Harold B. Simpson, ed., Texas in the War (Hillsboro: Hill Junior College Press, 1965), p. 129.

prevented the destruction of many settlements and served as a buffer for the established communities of Denton, Fort Worth, Weatherford, Cleburne, and Waco. Its effectiveness became apparent with the increase in Indian depredations after it was disbanded at the close of the war.¹¹³

As a member of the Frontier Regiment, C. C. Slaughter was better able to help his father and brothers protect their homes and cattle. And, because many of their neighbors sold or abandoned their herds during the time, the Slaughters were able to increase their holdings. One unfortunate frontier incident renewed for the Slaughters an old market. In mid-July 1863, a remnant of the Tonkawas, who had escaped a tragic massacre of their kinsmen by Plains Indians in the Indian Territory the previous year, aided by several Texas frontiersmen, returned to the old Brazos Reservation. Because of their previous success in dealing with the Indians, the Slaughters obtained the contract with Confederate authorities to supply cattle periodically for food to the Tonkawas at their village.¹¹⁴ The war-time prosperity created by the cattle sales naturally ended

¹¹³ Cochran, "Story of Early Day Indian Troubles," pp. 11-12.

¹¹⁴ It is not clear whether the Slaughters' "contract" was with the state or Confederate government. During the war, no official action was ever taken to establish a reservation for the Tonkawas, but several frontiersmen did provide financial assistance. Dayton Kelley, "The Tonkawas," Indian Wars of Texas (Waco: Texian Press, 1971), p. 163.

with the fall of the Confederacy. "We found the Confederate money received for the cattle furnished to the government for the Indians during the Civil War had no value," C. C.'s younger brother Bill recalled. "It was turned over to the children attending the school to use as thumb paper for old Blue Back spellers of those days."¹¹⁵ When the war ended in the spring of 1865, they were short on good money but long on cattle. For the Slaughters, however, it appeared for a time that their cattle were about as worthless as Confederate money. The cattle market was totally disrupted; Comanches and Kiowas renewed their raids against the unprotected ranches and settlements, causing frontier residents to retreat eastward; and deserters and outlaws roamed through the country almost at will.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, military or carpetbagger rule appeared imminent.

Obviously alarmed with the situation, C. C. Slaughter and several of his friends discussed alternatives. After several weeks of deliberation, the young Palo Pinto residents decided to locate a new cattle range, far from the thieving Indians and hated Yankees, possibly in Mexico.¹¹⁷ By the summer of 1865, the group, including

¹¹⁵ Hunter, Trail Drivers of Texas, p. 865.

¹¹⁶ Wallace, Texas in Turmoil, p. 244.

¹¹⁷ Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 103.

Slaughter, his brother-in-law, John Richard "Dick" Jowell, Kit Carter, George Lemley, Alfred Lane, and Lane's brother-in-law, Charles Goodnight, had made arrangements to scout for a suitable location.

From Palo Pinto, the young cattlemen rode southwest. For the first few days, they pushed rapidly through the familiar rolling prairies to the Colorado River near present-day Brownwood. After exploring the Colorado Valley briefly, they then turned south and crossed the San Saba River at the site of the old Spanish San Saba mission, near present-day Menard, that had been destroyed in 1757 by the fierce Comanches and their Wichita allies.

Although the San Saba Valley appeared promising, the young Texans felt that they were not yet safely beyond Yankee rule. Therefore, they turned west, followed the San Saba to its headwaters, and then plunged into the semi-arid broken country of Southwest Texas. Probably near present-day Sonora they crossed the El Paso-San Antonio road, found water in Granger Draw, and followed its meandering course southward through the rolling brush-covered hills of Val Verde County to the Devil's River,¹¹⁸ only a few miles from the Rio Grande and Mexico.

There an accident ended the adventure. While riding single file through the cedar breaks, Lemley

¹¹⁸ Ibid.; Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 332.

allowed his gun to become entangled in a low-hanging tree branch, causing the rifle to discharge. C. C. Slaughter, riding ahead of his friend, was in the line of fire.¹¹⁹ Striking him in the right shoulder, the ball lodged against his breast plate. Although they did not expect him to survive, his companions doctored the victim by pulling a silk handkerchief through the wound to stop the bleeding and then made camp on the banks of the inhospitable Devil's River, seemingly appropriately named, to await the outcome of the tragedy.

For almost four weeks, Slaughter lay in camp while his friends hunted food for the return trip. Finally, his wound healed enough, the group moved Slaughter on a litter to the nearest settlement, perhaps Camp Hudson, where he received medical attention. After an absence of several months, the adventurers arrived back in Palo Pinto in February 1866, more willing to face both Indians and carpetbaggers.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Prose and Poetry, p. 61.

¹²⁰ Goodnight's recollections of the incident vary. In an early account, he describes vividly the shooting accident, but in later memoirs he indicates that he left the group after two days on the trail, deciding that "after all it would be better to hunt a market for his cattle than a home for them." Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 104. See also Prose and Poetry, p. 61. A Shackelford County settler at Fort Davis noted in his diary on March 4, 1866, "that Parson Slaughter would not be up to preach because Lum [Slaughter] was wounded." Samuel Newcomb, Diary, March 4, 1866.

Slaughter remained an invalid for almost a year. Confined to his home, he helplessly watched his cattle herds dwindle through theft by both whites and Indians. Disgusted he offered to sell his entire holdings, including his home, cattle, land, and horses, for \$10,000, but no one would or could afford to buy his interests, even though priced most reasonably.¹²¹ Fortunately, he did not realize that his family's endurance of the frontier hardships soon would pay off. The war had created a new and expanded market for beef, and pecuniary rewards awaited those cattlemen who were fortunate enough to survive. He did not envision--even dare dream--that fifteen years later he would refuse a million dollars for his cattle empire.¹²²

¹²¹Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 333.

¹²²C. C. Slaughter to W. H. Harrison, interview, March 17, 1886, handwritten manuscript (2 pp.), Bancroft Library, University of California (microfilm copy).

CHAPTER III

CATTLEMAN AND BANKER

At the close of the Civil War the Northwest Texas ranching frontier was in a deplorable condition. For almost two years thereafter, the Slaughters and their neighbors attempted to recover and maintain their herds without the benefit of military protection. Furthermore, the collapse of the Southern economy destroyed wartime fortunes and cattle markets as well. "Cattle were almost worthless," one of the Slaughters' neighbors remembered. "During the auful [sic] severe winters we had . . . , the cattle drifted from the Red River to the Rio Grande."¹ Unbranded stock mingled with domestic herds throughout the frontier counties.

The situation invited what frontiersmen described as "the mavericking days." "It [branding unmarked livestock whose ownership was uncertain] was not considered stealing at that time," recalled one Palo Pinto pioneer. "Everyman that could get together a little bunch of horses . . . hired a few men and went to work rounding up and

¹Cochran, "Story of Early Day Indian Troubles," p. 39.

branding everything they could get and kept all they got."² Apparently, the Slaughters joined the scramble for unbranded animals. By the spring of 1866, Lum Slaughter had recovered from his wound sufficiently to join his father and brothers in rebuilding the family herd.

Indian raids, however, continued to reduce Slaughter stock. Comanches and Kiowas, attacking in small bands, struck at isolated ranches, driving away cattle and horses at will. Thirteen braves surprised George Slaughter east of present-day Graham in 1866 as he drove a small herd through the breaks of Dry Creek. By firing both his carbine and hand gun, the parson managed to escape.³ Such raids accounted for the loss of perhaps as many as 300,000 head of cattle from Texas during the eight years following the war. Jack County, bordering the Slaughters on the north, had 5,000 head of cattle in 1860 but only 78 a decade later.⁴ The Indians also prized horses and mules; in eight years they stole at least 6,255 head from 39 frontier counties, including 259 from Jack, Young, and Palo Pinto.

² Ibid.

³ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 305.

⁴ U.S., Eighth Census of the United States, Agriculture, Jack County, Texas, Texas State Library (Microcopy No. 8); U.S., Ninth Census of the United States, Agriculture, Jack County, Texas, Texas State Library (Microcopy No. 28).

The Indian attacks also prolonged the settler exodus from the frontier that had begun at the outbreak of the war. At least seventy-eight whites were killed in 1866 in fourteen North Texas counties.⁵ The onslaught drove the frontier eastward. Jack County's population declined from 1,000 in 1860 to 694 in 1870, and simultaneously Young County's even more, from 592 to 155.⁶

In 1867 frontier people finally got some relief. Federal troops were sent to North Texas to garrison posts at Belknap and newly-established Fort Richardson at Jacksboro. At the same time, the federal government in the Treaty of Medicine Lodge, created for the Southern Plains Indians permanent reservations in Indian Territory north of the Red River. The reservations, however, provided a sanctuary for marauding Comanches and Kiowas.⁷ In spite of the presence of the army, sporadic raids continued in North Texas until 1873.

Temporary restoration of order in 1867 gave the Slaughters an opportunity to seek new markets for their cattle. Pre-war outlets for Texas stock were no longer available. Missouri lawlessness, coupled with that state's

⁵ Wallace, Texas in Turmoil, p. 243.

⁶ Texas Almanac, 1972-1973, pp. 158-160.

⁷ Wallace, Texas in Turmoil, p. 249.

farmer opposition to the dreaded "Texas fever"⁸ carried by the longhorns, had disrupted the cattle drives from Texas. Although Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving had teamed to drive herds to New Mexico and Colorado in 1866, western markets were still hazardous. C. C. Slaughter, however, was desperate. Impressed with the Goodnight-Loving success, he suggested to his father that they combine to drive to Shreveport where cattle could be shipped by steamer to New Orleans. Reluctantly, perhaps, the elder Slaughter agreed.

Although previous drives to Shreveport had been successfully made by Palo Pinto cattlemen, the Slaughters always had relied on Oliver Loving to drive their cattle. Loving, however, had been killed by Indians while driving a herd of cattle up the Pecos River to Fort Sumner, New Mexico. Thus, the Slaughters initiated plans for their own drive. Agreeing to a two-thirds and one-third partnership under the name of Slaughter & Son,⁹ George and Lum rounded up nine hundred head for the drive.

⁸ Known in Texas as "Spanish fever," this livestock disease was carried by ticks, but its means of communication was not generally known. The Texas longhorns seemed immune to the fever, but northern herds were severely affected, even after grazing pastures a Texas herd had previously occupied. "Naturally, stockmen in the areas contaminated by the Longhorns began to clamor against allowing Texas cattle to pass through their counties." Wayne Gard, The Chisholm Trail (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), pp. 29-39.

⁹ Dallas Morning News, February 10, 1917, p. 5.

In addition to Lum and his father, four hands were hired for the long trip, including Lum's fifteen-year-old brother, Bill. In late spring, the drive began. The Slaughters followed a well-worn trail near Fort Worth and Dallas to the Trinity River. At Dallas, the drive was delayed by the flooded river, described by Lum Slaughter as being "a mile wide."¹⁰

Fortunately, the delay caused the Slaughters to change their destination, a decision that, perhaps, changed also their destiny. While waiting for the Trinity to recede, the Slaughters encountered Colonel T. H. Johnson who, with six hundred cattle, was likewise stranded. Johnson, who had a contract with a Jefferson, Texas, packing plant, was anxious to reach his destination before his time limit expired. The Slaughters were in an excellent position to bargain with Johnson. Not only did Johnson need their expertise in river crossing, but he also needed about nine hundred additional head to fulfill his contract. After some deliberation, Johnson's name was added to the Slaughter & Son partnership.¹¹

C. C. Slaughter got an opportunity to apply his boyhood training gained more than ten years before while helping drovers cross the Trinity River in Freestone County.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Hunter, Trail Drivers of Texas, p. 865.

His expertise paid off. With little loss, he got both herds across.

C. C. and Johnson then left the herd and traveled ahead to Jefferson to complete the contract. Slowly, the elder Slaughter traced their path through muddy East Texas fields and pastures. Bill Slaughter never forgot the experience: "As soon as we struck the piney woods, we would place the herds in the fields overnight in order to get crop grass for them and the rainy season being on, we were continually having to pull them out of the quicksand in the mornings. When we arrived at the packery, we held the cattle there about two weeks until they were killed."¹²

The sale at Jefferson made the Slaughters rich men in poverty-stricken Reconstruction Texas. Grossing \$24,300 for their share, the father-and-son partnership divided the funds, C. C.'s portion amounting to \$8,100. In spite of their fortune, the North Texas cowmen still faced a major problem. Because the Texas frontier was full of ruthless men--army deserters, robbers, and vagrants--the Slaughters knew well that their two-hundred-mile homeward trip would be exceedingly dangerous. Thus, they made careful preparations. Realizing that war-time shortages had created a good market for manufactured goods on the isolated frontier, the Slaughters converted part of their cash into new wagons,

¹² Ibid.

oxen teams, groceries, men's clothing, boots, shoes, other dry goods, and oranges, "the first I ever saw," recalled Bill Slaughter.¹³

Since the purchases amounted to only \$4,000 the remainder of the money presented a problem. To prepare it for transporting, the Slaughters spread a wagon sheet on the ground and on it stacked twenty-dollar gold pieces in equal amounts. "Together father and C. C. rolled every stack tightly with wrapping paper and stuffed each roll into a pair of new leather saddlebags, to within a few inches of the top," Bill Slaughter remembered. "When the flaps were buckled down, C. C. threw them across my little pinto pony, back of my saddle, and father told me to mount up and head for home."¹⁴

The Slaughter caravan then headed west, avoiding the main roads. A few miles from Palo Pinto, George and his sons left the wagon train, purportedly to visit a relative's ranch. Instead, they rode by horseback to within three miles of the Palo Pinto village where they cached their gold. Bill Slaughter later described this very unusual activity by his brother and father: "Under an overhanging bluff in the mountain . . . we . . . located a safe place

¹³W. B. Slaughter, as quoted in Cora Melton Cross, "Stories of Old Trail Drives of Long Ago," Semi-Weekly Farm News (Dallas, Texas), July 24, 1936, p. 4.

¹⁴Ibid.

to cache the gold under a large boulder," he said. "They tucked it in, rolled a stone to cover the entrance to the hiding place, put a mark on it . . . and started for home." Although mystified by his brother and father's actions, Bill later realized what their purpose was: "Banks were real curiosities in those days and I had no idea that C. C. was founding the first in our part of the country with that twenty thousand under that rock."¹⁵

The financial reserve gave young C. C. Slaughter an opportunity to develop his business skills. He spread the word among his neighbors that he had made arrangements with "a bank in the East" whereby he could offer small amounts of gold for cattle. Short of specie, the ranchers responded, eagerly trading their oversupply of cattle for small amounts of the scarce gold. Obviously, Slaughter never told his neighbors that his "bank" was a gold cache under a rock, and that the "East" was only three miles distant.¹⁶

C. C., with the aid of his father, also made a big profit on the mercantile goods that had been purchased in

¹⁵ Ibid. The Slaughter trail drive to Jefferson is mentioned in several accounts and is the most-repeated story in the Slaughter family annals. See Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 333.

¹⁶ W. B. Slaughter, as quoted in Cross, "Stories of Old Trail Drives," p. 4; Cora Melton Cross, "Up the Trail with Nine Million Longhorns," Texas Monthly, V (February, 1930), 143-144.

Jefferson. Enlisting the labor and financial support of a Palo Pinto merchant, John A. McLaran, he established a general store. For five years the firm of McLaran and Slaughter was a leading mercantile house in the county.¹⁷ A principal factor behind its success was its barter for cattle. As many as seven hundred head per year were acquired through the general store barter.¹⁸ Because the people in the area had cattle but no money, such trade enabled the Slaughters to increase their cattle holdings.¹⁹

The Slaughter's good fortune was not shared by many others in the cattle business. Kansas and Missouri continued to impose quarantines that blocked trail drives to important shipping points. A short corn crop in the Midwest forced farmers to market feeder cattle early, thereby driving down prices.

Late in 1867, however, the situation began to improve. Kansas relaxed its impositions against Texas cattle by opening a portion of the state for drovers. At the same time, the enterprising Joseph G. McCoy constructed

¹⁷ Slaughter to Harrison, interview, March 17, 1886; Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 348; Memorial and Biographical History of Dallas County, Texas (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1892), p. 520.

¹⁸ Cattle Record Book, 1870, pp. 102-116, Records, Palo Pinto County, Texas. In June 1870, McLaren and Slaughter recorded purchases of 690 head of cattle.

¹⁹ Dallas Morning News, February 2, 1917, p. 5.

shipping pens on the railroad at Abilene, Kansas, and sent circulars to every Texas cattleman whose address he could obtain. He also marked and posted the Chisholm Trail, thereby opening a new market for resourceful Texas cattlemen.²⁰ As a result, about 35,000 cattle were driven north out of Texas to Abilene in 1867.²¹

When C. C. Slaughter learned of McCoy's shipping facilities in Abilene, he promptly convinced his father that they should send a herd north as soon as possible. In spite of the promise of large profits and ease of delivery offered by the Kansas promoter, the Slaughters, nevertheless, approached the 1868 drive with cautious optimism. In addition to the natural dangers, especially floods and thunderstorms, they were also aware that Indians and outlaws could be even a more serious problem. Consequently, the Slaughters selected only eight hundred head for their first Kansas drive.²²

The Kansas drive, like that to Jefferson, was a family business operation. Both Bill and Peter accompanied

²⁰ William M. Raine and Will C. Barnes, Cattle (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1930), p. 74.

²¹ Wayne Gard, The Chisholm Trail, p. 55; Dee Brown, Trail Driving Days (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 8; Raine and Barnes, Cattle, p. 74. See also Harry Sinclair Drago, Great American Cattle Trails (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1965), p. 100.

²² Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 305.

trail boss C. C., who paid his younger brothers \$15.00 per month.²³ From Palo Pinto, the Slaughters drove their cattle north to Jacksboro, then to Buffalo Springs, in Clay County. There they turned east, followed the old California Emigrant's Trail twenty-one miles to Victoria Peak in Montague County near present-day Bowie, then pointed their herd in the direction of the North Star to Red River Station, twelve miles north of present-day Nocona and near the crossing on the Red River. Here, they struck the principal route of the Chisholm Trail. Averaging ten miles per day, they followed the Chisholm Trail across Indian Territory, entered Kansas near Caldwell, and completed the drive at Abilene without incident. Bill Slaughter's only noteworthy recollection of the trip was "an old fat merchant by the name of McClain who had a store made of cottonwood logs on the south side of the [Arkansas ?] river with the sign on the South reading 'The first Chance' and one on the north 'The Last Chance' to get supplies."²⁴

At Abilene, C. C. sold the cattle, which he had acquired for about \$7.00 per head, to an Illinois buyer for \$42.00 each. The combined profits from this sale and

²³ W. B. Slaughter, as cited in Hunter, Trail Drivers of Texas, p. 865.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 865-866; Although Bill Slaughter's account is comprehensive, his dating is apparently off by one year. For example, he indicated that Charlie Rivers' death occurred in 1872, but all other sources cite June 16, 1871. See Cox, Cattle Industry, pp. 305, 348.

from the 1,200 head sold that year to J. C. Loving, a neighbor and the son of the late Oliver Loving, netted the Slaughters almost \$40,000.00.²⁵

Such profits convinced the Slaughter partners that their risks were justified. In 1869, George Webb and C. C., in two separate herds, drove two thousand head of cattle to Abilene.²⁶ Having contracted for an early fall delivery, C. C. started north from Palo Pinto in late spring with the first herd. Near the Kansas border, he rode ahead to arrange the sale, leaving his younger brother Bill in charge. Soon after his departure, a party of Osage Indians intercepted the herd near present-day Kingfisher, but the younger Slaughter, after some delay, pacified the group with gifts, trail supplies, and cattle. Meanwhile, C. C. anxiously awaited the herd's arrival in Abilene. Several days passed. Finally, only three days before the contract was to expire, Bill arrived with the herd.²⁷

The second drive was already underway. Anxious to profit from the excellent market, George Webb Slaughter decided to risk a fall trek. Disregarding the possibility of an early winter blizzard, he enlisted the aid of his son

²⁵ Cross, "Stories of Old Trail Drives"; Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 305.

²⁶ Hunter, Trail Drivers of Texas, pp. 69-70.

²⁷ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 303. Before leaving Abilene, one of the Slaughter cowboys was gunned down in a dance hall fight.

Pete and at least one of his neighbors. The community school teacher, J. H. Baker, likewise anxious to share in the profits to be made in the cattle trade, joined the elder Slaughter. The combined herd numbered 1,200 head.²⁸

The second drive left Palo Pinto on September 1, 1869. Averaging ten miles per day and slowed only by heavy rainstorms, the herd by October 1 had reached the Arkansas River. In southern Kansas on the eighth, the Texans encountered other drovers who were holding more than twenty thousand cattle awaiting buyers. Unwilling to sell at the available low price, they turned their herd east to Walnut Creek Valley near El Dorado where they sold a portion to Kansas farmers.²⁹

A week later, George Slaughter cut out five hundred head for winter pasture, to be sold the following spring, and sent the remainder to Abilene with Baker and Pete Slaughter. Enroute, the drovers encountered C. C. Slaughter who was returning from his earlier drive. Retracing his trail, C. C. accompanied his brother and Baker to Abilene where he negotiated the sale of the cattle in this herd.³⁰ The year's work grossed \$90,000.³¹ On December 1, the two

²⁸ Baker, "Diary," p. 387.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 398.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 401.

³¹ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 303.

Slaughter trail parties departed for home. Riding southward, the men were an impressive sight. Heavily armed, they traversed rapidly the Indian Territory and by mid-December were back at their Palo Pinto homes, the first group having been gone for more than eight months.

The 1869 drives virtually depleted the Slaughters of breeding stock. But, because of the big demand for mercantile goods, they were able to acquire enough cattle through barter and purchase for another drive in 1870. That year, the family drove 3,000 cattle north, grossing \$105,000, the highest return ever for the Slaughters.³²

Such profits made the Slaughters (as well as many other Texas cattlemen) wealthy. In the early 1870s, Kansas City banks showed cattle earnings of \$3,000,000 annually, much of which was deposited to the credit of Texas drovers.³³ To maintain their profitable operation, the Slaughters made a number of adjustments. To control herds wintered in Kansas, George Webb, during the spring of 1870, moved with his wife and young children to Emporia, Kansas.³⁴ There, he was able to market the stock as it was driven north from

³² Ibid.

³³ Ernest S. Osgood, The Day of the Cattleman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1929), p. 46; U.S., Congress, House, Range and Ranch Cattle Traffic, H.R. Ex. Doc. 267, 48th Cong., 2nd sess., 1885, p. 31.

³⁴ Dallas Herald, July 18, 1874, p. 2.

Texas. Meanwhile, C. C. moved a herd from Texas to the Indian Territory for wintering,³⁵ and Pete and John remained on the home ranch at Palo Pinto. By the end of 1870, C. C. Slaughter had emerged as the dominant figure in the family operation. With approximately eight thousand cattle of his own and an additional four thousand held in partnership with his father, young Slaughter became the head of the business.³⁶

Profits from the trail driving business, however, soon declined. Renewed Indian raids in North Texas disrupted Slaughter roundups and north-bound drives. On May 16, 1869, twelve cowboys, most of whom were employed by C. L. Carter, were attacked by a large party of Indians near the Slaughter Dillingham Prairie Ranch near Rock Creek in Young County. After a six-hour battle, the Indians withdrew, leaving three dead and five wounded. The following spring, C. C.'s younger brother, John, was wounded at the Palo Pinto ranch when he surprised two Indians who were attempting to steal his horses. Although he lay

³⁵ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 305; Cora Melton Cross, "William B. Slaughter, Trail Drive of 1866," Frontier Times, VI (August, 1929), 466; Mary Whatley Dunbar, "Two Daughters of the Frontier," Frontier Times, XV (February, 1938), 186.

³⁶ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 305; Bill of Sale, Mortgage of Personal Property Record Book, 1872, pp. 103-106, Records, County of Palo Pinto, Texas.

incapacitated for six weeks, John fully recovered from the wound.³⁷

The next year, on April 19, 1871, George Slaughter, C. C., and twelve other men were attacked similarly by a raiding party in the same vicinity. Once under fire, the elder Slaughter sent six men toward Sand Creek with the cattle while he and the others fortified themselves behind their horses. He then had some of the men slip away into a small ravine, where they could not be seen by the Indians, and open fire from another point. Thinking that reinforcements had arrived, the Indians retreated.³⁸

There were other atrocities that spring. A Slaughter trail herd was attacked at Victoria Peak in Montague County. While attempting to round up the scattered cattle, the Slaughter trail boss, a Mr. Adams, and a young cowboy were killed. John Slaughter assumed control of the herd and continued the northward drive. Near Lookout Mountain in Indian Territory, fifteen Comanches again stampeded the herd and drove off all the horses except those being ridden by the cowboys. In spite of the adversity, a remnant of

³⁷ Hunter, Trail Drivers of Texas, p. 919.

³⁸ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 305; William Steele, "Report of Indian Depredations," November 1, 1875, Winfrey, Texas Indian Papers, IV, 381.

the herd reached Abilene.³⁹

Meanwhile, on May 18, a large party of Kiowas, led by Satanta, attacked a federal government contract wagon train near Salt Creek in Young County, killing seven of its twelve teamsters.⁴⁰ As a result, three of the Kiowa chiefs, Satanta, Big Tree, and Satank, were arrested at Fort Sill for the crime. Satanta and Big Tree (Satank was killed while trying to escape) stood trial at Jacksboro. This dramatic event, staged during the first two weeks of July 1871, heralded the beginning of the end of Indian depredations in Texas. Following recommendations by Indian Agent Lawrie Tatum and Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie that the United States Army be used to bring the Indians under control, General William T. Sherman sent troops into the field. For the next three years, the army methodically reduced the Comanches and Kiowas' ability to attack the frontier settlers, but the Indian attacks convinced the Slaughters that other adjustments in their operations were needed.

³⁹ Hunter, Trail Drivers of Texas, p. 919; W. B. Slaughter, "Relates Incidents of Many Drives," Hunter, Trail Drivers of Texas, p. 870.

⁴⁰ W. T. Sherman to W. H. Wood, letter, May 19, 1871, Ernest Wallace, ed., Ranald S. Mackenzie's Official Correspondence Relating to Texas, 1871-1873 (Lubbock: West Texas Museum Association, 1967), pp. 24-25. An interesting but partially fictionalized account of the Warren Wagon train massacre is contained in Benjamin Capps, The Warren Wagontrain Raid (New York: Dial Press, 1974), pp. 47-53.

In June 1871, George and C. C. sold their Jack and Young county cattle at Dillingham Prairie to J. C. Loving and Charles Rivers for \$6.00 per head.⁴¹ C. C. took his pay in feeder cattle, 1,065 head,⁴² and hired his brother Bill to drive them to an undisclosed leased pasture in the Indian Territory. After wintering the herd there, C. C. marketed the fattened cattle in the spring of 1872 for a sizeable profit.

Because winter feeding proved to be profitable, the Slaughters decided to dispose of the remainder of their Palo Pinto cow herds in order to devote more attention to buying and selling cattle. On April 9, 1872, they sold to a Stephens County rancher, M. P. Johnson, "all that certain stock or stocks of cattle now running and ranging in Palo Pinto and adjoining counties . . ." for \$16,000.⁴³ As the major partner, C. C. received \$14,000, or seven-eights of the total sale. Apparently, however, Johnson defaulted on his note, and, as a result, C. C., in partnership with his brothers John and Bill, returned to Palo Pinto County in 1873, reobtained the Dillingham Prairie Ranch, and stocked

⁴¹ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 305.

⁴² Cattle Record Book, 1871, pp. 45-63, Records, County of Palo, Pinto, Texas.

⁴³ Bill of Sale, Mortgage of Personal Property Record Book, 1872, pp. 103-106, Records, County of Palo Pinto, Texas.

it with improved cattle.⁴⁴

For the next three years, the Slaughter operation remained basically a family affair. C. C. and his younger brothers continued to operate the Texas ranches and to supervise the trail drives. George Webb Slaughter remained in Kansas. In 1873 and 1874, the Slaughters sent north two thousand head each year, but the 1875 drive numbered only one thousand.⁴⁵ Although they had grossed more than a quarter million dollars from trail driving, the family enterprise was dissolved in 1875. The Panic of 1873 and the extension of railroads to Dallas depressed range cattle prices. Fortunes, earned by the drives to Kansas, were wiped out overnight for those caught with large numbers of cattle. Prices fell from almost four cents per pound in 1873 to one cent by November 1873.⁴⁶

The market collapse also heralded a decline in the prominence of the rangy Texas longhorns. Even at depressed prices, corn-fed, well-bred cattle from northern feeders brought almost three times as much at the market place as Texas cattle. To meet such competition, Texas cattlemen began to look at new breeds of stock that required a heavier

⁴⁴ Deed Records, Vol. D., p. 502, County of Palo Pinto, Texas.

⁴⁵ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 305.

⁴⁶ Cuthbert Powell, Twenty Years of Kansas City's Livestock Trade and Traders (Kansas City: Pearl Printing Company, 1893), pp. 38-39.

investment. C. C. Slaughter, who in 1871 had begun selecting better quality Texas cows for his herd, however, did not immediately abandon the longhorn.⁴⁷ Believing that by cross-breeding he could retain the range quality and, at the same time, obtain a more desirable beef quality animal, he sought to upgrade his herds by purchasing purebred stock. In 1874, he imported from Kentucky a number of shorthorn Durham bulls, one of the first Texas cattlemen to do so,⁴⁸ and, in September 1875, he bought twenty shorthorn bulls. When the second shipment of bulls was herded through the streets of Fort Worth enroute to Dillingham Prairie, the Fort Worth Democrat observed that the shorthorn would "soon be as familiar on the Texas prairies as the Longhorn is now."⁴⁹ Within another year, C. C. Slaughter had imported more than one hundred shorthorn bulls.⁵⁰

George Webb Slaughter briefly joined his son in the new investments. Returning to Texas, he and his family lived for a short time in Dallas but returned to the Palo

⁴⁷ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 333.

⁴⁸ Gard, The Chisholm Trail, p. 307; Rupert N. Richardson, "William S. Ikard and Hereford Raising in Texas," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, XXV (1949), 45-46.

⁴⁹ Fort Worth Democrat, September 25, 1875, as cited in Gard, The Chisholm Trail, p. 222n.

⁵⁰ Chicago Livestock World, clipping, June 23, 1902, George M. Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

Pinto ranch in 1875 after there was no longer any danger of Indian attack. There, he built a \$25,000 mansion in which he lived out his final twenty years. He retired from ranching in 1884 and died eleven years later. In 1875, the younger Slaughter brothers dissolved partnership with their father and eldest brother and thereafter pursued other cattle interests.⁵¹

To attract other investors in the cattle business, C. C. Slaughter in 1873 formed the C. C. Slaughter and Company. Although the company was conceived to strengthen his cattle holdings, Slaughter soon found that he needed aid from a banking friend to establish successfully a sound financial base. After his own "banking" experience with the gold cache, he did business with J. R. Couts, an enterprising Weatherford banker. Couts probably introduced Slaughter to William E. Hughes, a young Weatherford attorney. Through Hughes' influence, young C. C. Slaughter, trail driver, eventually became "Colonel" C. C. Slaughter, capitalist.⁵²

⁵¹ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 305. George Webb Slaughter and his son Peter Slaughter continued to buy and sell cattle in partnership until 1878. Peter then moved to West Texas, joined his brothers, John and Bill, who had established a ranch in Crosby County, fifty miles east of present-day Lubbock. In 1882 Peter moved his cattle from Texas to the Black River Valley in Arizona where he ranched until his death in 1911. John and Bill remained in Texas for a number of years. Hunter, Trail Drivers of Texas, p. 388; Historical Society, "Scrapbook History of Mineral Wells and Palo Pinto County," n.p., unpublished collection, Mineral Wells Municipal Library, Mineral Wells, Texas.

⁵² Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 383. Although C. C.

Born in Illinois, Hughes had moved to Texas in 1859. When the Civil War broke out, he returned to his native state briefly but slipped back into the South and served in the Confederate Army. After Appomattox, he returned to Texas, settling in the frontier village of Weatherford, thirty miles west of Fort Worth, where he taught school while completing study for admittance to the bar. From 1865 to 1873, he practiced law in Weatherford. His success in helping teamster Henry Warren recover from the federal government losses incurred during the 1871 Salt Creek massacre won him a reputation as an excellent attorney.⁵³

C. C. Slaughter, Couts, and Hughes were the epitome of the new wealth of Texas--young enterprising men who took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the South's struggling but resurging economy. Having long realized Texas' desperate need for capital, the three decided to pool their resources to establish a new banking venture. The rapidly growing city of Dallas seemed to offer the greatest promise.⁵⁴

Slaughter was never a Colonel, his friends and acquaintances, in Southern fashion, rewarded his rapid rise to wealth by referring to him as the "Colonel." In later years, his children even referred to him as the "Colonel."

⁵³ Prose and Poetry, p. 383.

⁵⁴ Slaughter and Hughes may have already been in a cattle partnership. Laura V. Hamner, "Life Began in the Seventies," unpublished and undated typescript (488 pp., microfilm copy), p. 315, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

By 1873, Dallas was ascending as the shining star of a reborn Texas. Heralded by its newspaper as "the commercial center of north Texas," the not-long-since frontier village doubled its population in 1872 to reach seven thousand residents.⁵⁵ The arrival that year of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad, the city's first, caused, more than any other factor, the tremendous boom. Then, in 1873, the Texas and Pacific Railway laid tracks from the east into the city, thereby establishing important economic links in that direction. At the crossroads of the two lines, Dallas virtually became the northern and western terminus of Texas. Merchants, shopmen, mechanics, speculators, and traders came from everywhere. The most conspicuous of these were the "terminus" storekeepers who followed the lengthening railroad from one new town to another. When they realized that the Houston and Texas Central was to go into Dallas, they bought in one day seventy lots on Elm Street.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Dallas Herald, May 24, 1873, p. 1; A. C. Greene, Dallas: The Deciding Years (Austin: Encino Press, 1973), p. 23.

⁵⁶ Ruby Keith, "Early History of Dallas" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1930), p. 126. The Houston and Texas Central Railroad did extend its tracks to Denison, but the portion between Dallas and Denison was never of prime importance. Westward expansion of the Texas and Pacific beyond Dallas was delayed for three years by the Panic of 1873. Green, Dallas: The Deciding Years, p. 24.

With the arrival of a second railroad in Dallas, the Texas and Pacific, Slaughter and his banking partners concluded that Dallas was the place to invest. In league with an established insurance man, T. C. Jordan,⁵⁷ Hughes, Slaughter, and Couts obtained from the Texas Legislature on May 31, 1873, a charter for the creation of a Dallas state bank, capitalized at \$250,000.⁵⁸ From Weatherford, Hughes, Couts, and Slaughter secretly moved in a buckboard \$42,000.00 in gold and silver across sixty miles of frontier roads to their new, modest banking facilities in Dallas.⁵⁹ Named the City Bank of Dallas, the new business attracted investors.⁶⁰ For a few months, Slaughter, Couts, and Hughes remained in the background as directors. Jordan, who had practiced banking in connection with his insurance business, became the first president, and R. P. Aunspaugh was named

⁵⁷ Historical Chart Depicting the Ancestry of the First National Bank in Dallas, Half A Century of Constructive Service (N.p.: n.p., 1939), n.p.

⁵⁸ Gammel, Laws of Texas, VII, 1436-1438; Joseph M. Grant and Lawrence L. Crum, The Development of State-Chartered Banking in Texas (Austin: University of Texas System, 1978), p. 28.

⁵⁹ W. E. McAnally to David Murrah, interview, June 25, 1970; Prose and Poetry, p. 383. Seventeen thousand dollars of the fund belonged to Hughes; C. C. Slaughter and W. E. Couts contributed \$12,500 each. W. E. H. Gramp [William E. Hughes], The Journal of a Grandfather (St. Louis: by the author, 1912), p. 138.

⁶⁰ Dallas Herald, June 7, 1873, p. 1.

the cashier.⁶¹

Despite the Panic of 1873, City Bank soon moved into a remodeled building, described as "an honor and ornament to Dallas."⁶² Financial troubles, however, forced President Jordan to sell his interest in the infant enterprise, and Hughes succeeded Jordan as president. C. C. Slaughter persuaded his father in 1874 to buy into the venture, and the elder Slaughter immediately moved from Kansas to booming Dallas to watch over his money.

C. C. Slaughter had already moved to Dallas. During October 1873, he had transported his family from Palo Pinto to "a mansion in the woods" and the "finest in the city," a new two-story frame house located on a twenty-acre tract on the northeast side of Dallas.⁶³ Slaughter purchased the home from his banking partner, "Colonel" Hughes, for \$15,000.⁶⁴ True to his frontier background, Slaughter soon made his new homestead self-sufficient, complete with a large garden, cows, chickens, fruit trees, and a cotton

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Directory of the City of Dallas for the Year 1875 (St. Louis: Democrat Lito and Print Company, n.d.), pp. 68-69.

⁶³ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 303; Dallas Herald, October 24, 1874, p. 1.

⁶⁴ R. G. Dun & Co. to A. M. Averill, October 5, 1876, letter, Carrie Averill Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock (hereafter referred to as CAS).

patch.⁶⁵

Slaughter's young family adapted rapidly to its new environment. Within two years, Cynthia Jowell Slaughter had achieved a measure of prominence among Dallas society. Seemingly recovered from an 1873 illness, she became active in community activities. The five children, ranging in age from two to fourteen, kept busy with school and chores.

Tragedy, however, struck during the spring of 1876. In May, Cynthia became ill with what was termed a "complication of diseases." Though she gradually weakened, her illness for a time was not considered serious, but on May 16, while on business in Fort Worth, C. C. was suddenly called home to be with his wife. The following evening, Cynthia died quietly in her sleep at the age of thirty-two years. "Her sudden death was a terrible blow to the afflicted husband and five motherless children," reported the local newspaper, "and a large circle of friends [were] left to mourn her loss. Mrs. Slaughter was a most estimable lady in all the relations of life, and her loss is a serious one to her family, her friends, and the community."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Dallas Herald, January 27, 1877; John William Rogers, The Lusty Texans of Dallas (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1960), p. 105. In 1880, the Slaughter home-
stead produced five bales of cotton on twelve acres. U.S., Tenth Census of the United States, Agriculture, Dallas County, Texas, Texas State Library (Microcopy No. 23).

⁶⁶ Dallas Weekly Herald, May 20, 1876, p. 3.

Although grief-stricken, after an appropriate period, Slaughter soon sought a new mother for his children. While on a trail drive to Kansas during the summer of 1876--his last time to herd cattle north--Slaughter attended a church social in Emporia.⁶⁷ There, he noticed an attractive and eligible young lady, Miss Carrie Averill, the twenty-four-year old daughter of the Baptist minister. When he returned to Texas, he coaxed from a younger sister, who had lived in Emporia, a picture of Carrie.

In August, Slaughter wrote Carrie, requesting the pleasure of a correspondence with her. She curtly replied that "she was not in the habit of corresponding with strange men." "I am acquainted with a C. C. Slaughter of Dallas, Texas, but he is a married man and I would not consent to correspond with such a party," she wrote. "If you can see fit to let me know more fully who you are, and if connected with G. W. Slaughter's family who used to reside here, I may consent to open a correspondence."⁶⁸

Slaughter quickly complied with the request and

⁶⁷ According to family tradition, Slaughter asked some of the local Emporia residents to introduce him to the lovely young lady, but none did. Finally, he sought the help of a local preacher, A. M. Averill, a friend of Slaughter's father. Averill reluctantly agreed to introduce the bearded Texas cowman to his daughter! George A. Wallis, Cattle Kings of the Staked Plains (Dallas: American Guild Press, 1957), p. 25.

⁶⁸ Carrie Averill to C. C. Slaughter, letter, August 8, 1876, CAS.

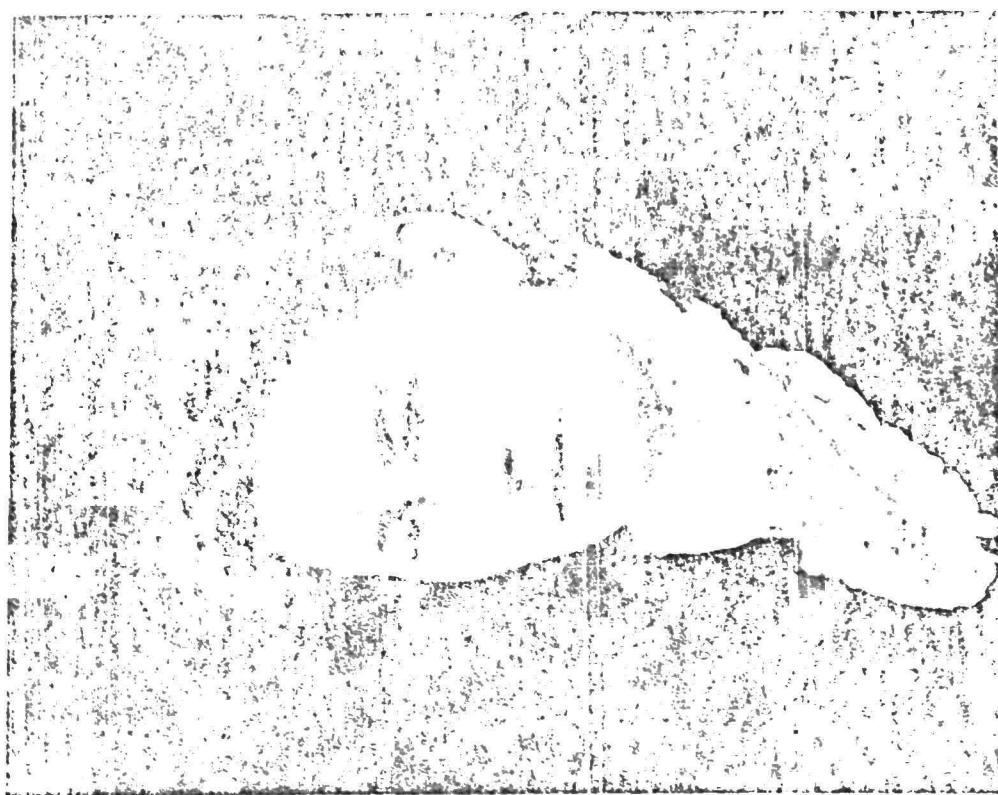
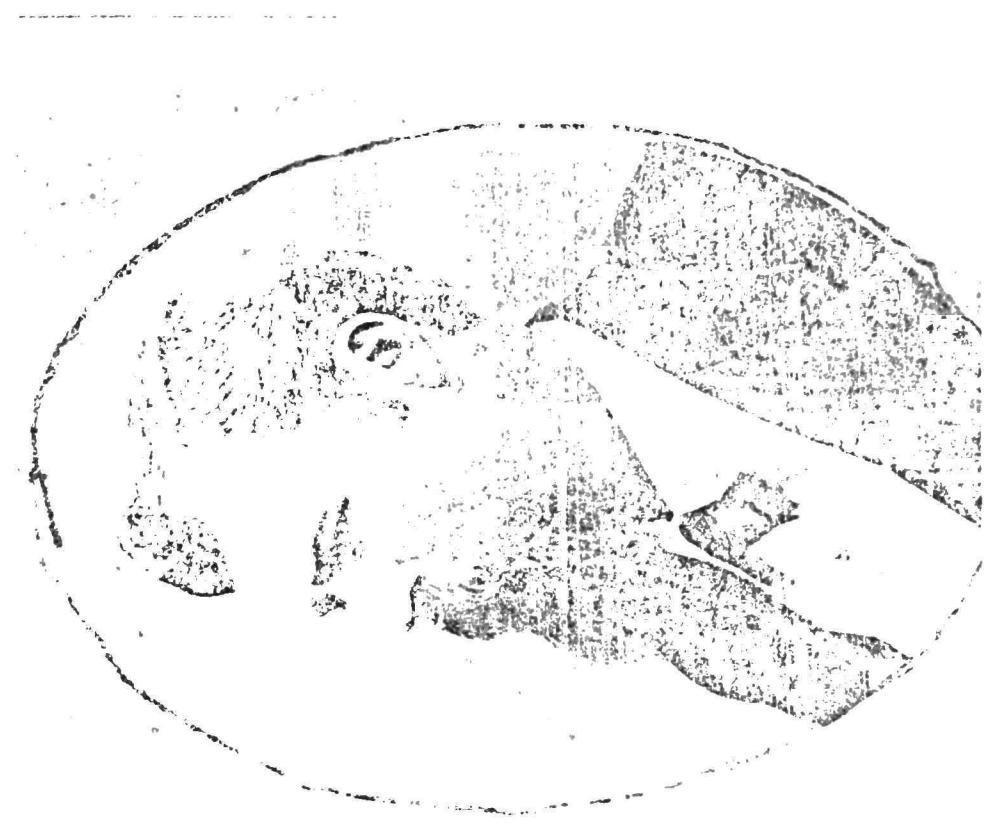


Fig. 3
Carrie Averill and C. C. Slaughter, c. 1876.

explained his wife's death. Soon, the two were writing frequently. In mid-September, Slaughter visited Carrie in Kansas, and, late that month, he inquired of her father whether he could ask Carrie to marry him. The Reverend A. M. Averill first asked Slaughter for credit references.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Averill discreetly made several inquiries. In response, R. G. Dun and Company of Dallas informed Averill that Slaughter was one of Dallas' leading citizens. "Mr. Slaughter is estimated worth from 80,000\$ to 100,000\$. . . , and his "moral character above reproach. Commercially no one stands higher in this section."⁷⁰

The courtship progressed rapidly. Wedding plans were announced in early November, but before the final arrangements were made Slaughter assured his future father-in-law that Carrie was to be in good hands and be a good mother. "No doubt we will find some thorns as we travel down life's uneven road," he wrote. "In regard to my children, . . . I believe her adequate to the task, no doubt she will make some mistakes, their own mother would do the same."⁷¹

⁶⁹ Ibid., September 27, 1876, CAS.

⁷⁰ R. G. Dun & Co. to A. M. Averill, letter, October 5, 1876, CAS.

⁷¹ C. C. Slaughter to A. M. Averill, letter, December 20, 1876, CAS. This letter is the earliest extant correspondence of C. C. Slaughter.

In mid-January, Slaughter returned to Kansas to claim his bride. At the Averill home in Emporia, after an all-night wedding party, he and Carrie Averill were married early in the morning on the seventeenth and immediately boarded a train for Dallas,⁷² Carrie's home until her death in 1928.

Cynthia's death and C. C.'s resulting marriage to Carrie Averill seemed to have little effect on Slaughter's business activity. During the summer of 1876, he increased his purebred stock by importing an additional one hundred shorthorn heifers from Kentucky. One-third of the new herd he drove to open-range pastures in Mitchell County on the frontier along the Colorado River, near present-day Colorado City, and placed with a larger herd he had moved there from South Texas. The remainder of the improved breed he held at Dillingham Prairie Ranch in Jack County.⁷³

C. C. Slaughter's utilization of purebred cattle was at first tragic but it soon led to an important discovery. After the first season on the Slaughter pastures in Palo Pinto and Jack counties, the purebred Durham cattle began to die at an alarming rate. Slaughter diagnosed the disease as the dreaded "Texas fever." Long a scourge for Kansas and Missouri after the appearance there of the hardy

⁷² Dallas Herald, January 27, 1877, p. 1.

⁷³ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 334.

South Texas longhorns, the malady, for a reason then unknown to cattlemen, took a heavy toll of all other cattle wherever they grazed.

Amazingly, the purebred cattle in Mitchell County were not affected. Slaughter knew not why, but apparently, he concluded, the pastures in far West Texas were safe from the disease, and he soon began seeking additional West Texas land. "I did not know at this time it was the tick that caused the fever," he reflected twenty years later, "but I did know that they were even then accused of it. I made sure to take my cattle where I knew there were no ticks, moving away from them as they advanced, until I opened up ranches where they cannot come."⁷⁴

Until 1876, cattlemen had little opportunity to obtain large tracts of West Texas prairies. Most of the vast unsettled region west of the hundredth meridian was closed by natural and man-made barriers. For many years Comanche and Kiowa Indians roamed the fertile prairies, frightening away any potential ranchers or settlers. Vast buffalo herds were also an obstruction to cattle raising. During the 1870s, however, both of these barriers were eliminated. Following a large scale attack by Plains Indians on June 27, 1874, on a small party of intruding buffalo hunters encamped at Adobe Walls on the Canadian

⁷⁴ Ibid.

River in the Texas Panhandle, the federal government dispatched five columns of troops into the region. In a strenuous and hazardous fall campaign, the army successfully routed the Indians from their traditional hunting grounds.⁷⁵ After the surrender of Kwahadi Chief Quanah Parker and his small band of Comanches in June 1875, the Plains Indians no longer offered a barrier to white settlement in West Texas. Within another three years, the buffalo hunters had virtually eliminated the shaggy beasts from the Texas Panhandle-Plains.

With the removal of the Indians and the buffalo, cattlemen faced little competition for use of the millions of acres of nutritious grass. Because of its semi-arid climate, its treeless topography, and its isolation, western Texas offered little promise to prospective homesteaders; the farmers' frontier was not far enough advanced to move into the region. Only a few scattered sheepmen, most of whom were New Mexicans, grazed their flocks along the few running streams.

Likewise, only a few cattlemen rushed to take advantage of the excellent prairie grass because ranching there required a heavy investment. In addition to cattle costs, an open-range operation required a maintenance crew of ten or more men, and necessary supplies had to be

⁷⁵Wallace, Texas in Turmoil, p. 260.

transported by wagon over hundreds of miles of poor or non-existent roads. Furthermore, military and civil protection for life and property was minimal. Under such conditions, only wealthy and enterprising capitalist-cowmen initially dared to go there. Those who first took the risk were most often experienced cowmen who, already aware of the region's excellent suitability for ranching, formed a partnership with an investor. Invariably, these men included former buffalo hunters, trail drivers, military scouts, or others who had seen first-hand the expansive prairies, sheltered canyons, and lush grasses. C. C. Slaughter's neighbor, Charles Goodnight, combining an investor's capital with his own intimate knowledge of the region, was the first to penetrate the heartland of the Panhandle-Plains of Texas. He preceded Slaughter there by only one year.⁷⁶

With Oliver Loving, Goodnight had trailed cattle to Colorado following the Civil War, establishing the famous Goodnight-Loving Trail. In 1869 he settled in Pueblo, Colorado, and invested his trail-driving fortune in banking and in an ambitious water diversion project, but the Panic of 1873 destroyed his investments. Undaunted, Goodnight obtained a \$30,000 loan from John Adair, an Irish capitalist, and reinvested in cattle. In 1875 he pastured his newly-

⁷⁶ Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 277; "Ranching," unpublished typescript (9 pp.), p. 4, John McCarty Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University (microfilmed copy).

purchased herd along the Canadian River in northeastern New Mexico, and the following spring he moved eastward into Texas on the mysterious Llano Estacado, described as the "only uninhabitable portion of Texas."⁷⁷

Goodnight knew differently. As a military scout, he had visited the beautiful Palo Duro Canyon, located on the headwaters of the Red River in the heart of the Panhandle. Remembering that the canyon and adjacent region was an ideal site for ranching, he returned in the summer of 1876 with his cattle and located in a park, a thousand feet below the level of the surrounding plains and only a few miles below where Ranald S. Mackenzie's troops two years before had surprised and routed Comanche, Kiowa, and Cheyenne Indians in the decisive battle of the Red River War. In partnership with Adair, Goodnight there established the famous JA Ranch.⁷⁸

Apparently unaware of Goodnight's movements, C. C. Slaughter followed a similar pattern in his penetration of West Texas. In 1876, in partnership with South Texas cattleman John Scarborough, Slaughter moved two thousand head of cattle to the Colorado River near present-day Colorado

⁷⁷ Haley, Charles Goodnight, pp. 263, 267.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 301-302.

City.⁷⁹ Slaughter knew the range, having visited it with his father more than twenty years before. There, he added to the herd, as previously noted, the shorthorn cattle. The following year, Slaughter and Hughes purchased an interest in five thousand South Texas steers and heifers. In league with John Hullem, they moved this herd also to the Colorado valley, wintering the cattle at Renderbrook Springs, fifty-two miles north of present-day San Angelo.⁸⁰

Briefly, a remnant of the Southern Plains once-enormous buffalo herd prevented Slaughter from moving his cattle farther northward up the Colorado River Valley. During the summer of 1877, however, the last major segment of this herd was slaughtered by hunters only a few miles north of where Slaughter's cattle ranged, and in the spring of 1878 the survivors fled northward, never to return.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Rufus O'Keefe, Cowboy Life (San Antonio: Naylor Company, 1936), p. 106; Texas Livestock Journal (Fort Worth, Texas), October 28, 1882; p. 4; Carrie Averill to C. C. Slaughter, letter, August 8, 1876, CAS.

⁸⁰ Jack Alley, as told to Frank P. Hill, "Fifty-Four Years of Pioneering on the Plains of Texas," Lynn County News, April 28-August 4, 1931 (xeroxed copy), Jack Alley Reference File, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock (hereafter cited as Alley, "Fifty-four Years of Pioneering").

⁸¹ Mrs. J. Lee Jones and O. W. Cline, "Frontier Days in Mitchell County and Colorado City," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, XVI (1940), 35; R. H. Looney, "A History of Colorado, Texas," unpublished and undated typescript (65 pp.), p. 14, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

Without the Indians and the buffalo, the valley of the Colorado was an ideal cattle range. Safe from tick fever, with adequate water, and with a mild climate, it provided Slaughter and his partners a vast expanse for a cattle range. To prevent others from laying claim first, Slaughter and Hughes immediately moved there a herd of 2,000 head from Palo Pinto. Apparently following a portion of the old Goodnight-Loving Trail, this herd, under the guidance of drover C. W. Foor, struck the Colorado River at present-day Colorado City. From there, the cattle were moved up-river ten miles to the mouth of Deep Creek,⁸² where some were left to graze the lush mesquite grass and the remainder driven to the head of Tobacco Creek, a tributary of the Colorado, in Dawson County, nearly eighty miles northwest of where the Hullem cattle grazed.⁸³ The sheltered valley along Tobacco Creek, known as Indian Canyon, lay between extensions of the Caprock which marked the southeastern extremity of the Llano Estacado. Between Tobacco Creek and the New Mexico border, seventy miles westward, there was no stream nor body of fresh water.

During the spring of 1878, Slaughter and Hughes moved their Hullem cattle from Mitchell County fifty miles

⁸²C. W. Foor to J. Evetts Haley, interview, September 23, 1927, unpublished typescript (16 pp.), in possession of J. Evetts Haley, Canyon, Texas, p. 4.

⁸³Texas Livestock Journal, October 28, 1882.

northwest to Rattlesnake Creek, a tributary of the Colorado, in southern Borden County. Other cattle were purchased and placed along nearby Bull Creek. Branded HS, OS, O, and HU, the cattle totaling ten thousand head represented at least three different partnerships involving Slaughter.⁸⁴ Then, in May, to upgrade the herd, Slaughter added thirty purebred shorthorn bulls.⁸⁵

Slaughter's new venture into West Texas was more than an experiment in cattle raising. Prompted by heavy loss to his North Texas herds and tempted by the immediate availability of large tracts of land, he slowly relinquished his Palo Pinto and Jack County pastures. He fully realized the many risks involved in a move to West Texas. Renewed Indian outbreaks were quite possible. Since the new ranch lay nearly three hundred miles from a railroad or reliable transportation facilities, the maintenance of supply and communication lines would be costly. But, he knew the country was well-suited for the cattle industry, and he agreed wholeheartedly with an editorial in a South Texas newspaper concerning its potential: "With railroad facilities rapidly increasing by the extension of the Texas

⁸⁴ Ibid.; Alley, "Fifty-four Years of Pioneering"; O'Keefe, Cowboy Life, pp. 32-48.

✓⁸⁵ Dallas Herald, May 11, 1878, p. 1.

Pacific railway through the magnificent stock region lying between Fort Worth and El Paso, the business of cattle breeding must become one of great profit and national importance. . . ." ⁸⁶ Rising cattle prices cheap land, and developing railroads would put an end to cattle trailing and give rise, in its stead, to even a bigger business--the breeding of fine herds. C. C. Slaughter was already taking steps for that transition.

⁸⁶ Pleasanton Stock Journal, as quoted in Fort Worth Democrat, July 31, 1875, p. 4.

CHAPTER IV

ESTABLISHING AN OPEN RANGE EMPIRE IN WEST TEXAS

Three men strolled out of the small ranch house. In quiet tones they discussed the dry weather and the alarming increases in cattle thefts. For nearly twenty years, the three veteran cowmen had been neighbors along the Brazos River breaks, together surviving ravaging Indian attacks, collapsed cattle markets, the Civil War, and other frontier misfortunes. Independently, each had accumulated a small fortune during the boom days of the cattle trailing industry.

C. L. "Kit" Carter and James C. Loving had ridden horseback several miles to pay more than a social visit to their neighbor, C. C. Slaughter. On his Dillingham Prairie Ranch to make an inspection of his Jack County cattle in the late fall of 1876, Slaughter warmly welcomed his long-time friends whom he rarely had seen since he moved to Dallas. A war veteran who had accompanied Slaughter on the ill-fated venture to the Devil's River, one of the earliest settlers in Palo Pinto County, and a brother-in-law of Lawrence Sullivan Ross, Carter had fought

in the Indian campaigns in North Texas. His son Shapley had been killed in a May 1869 raid along Rock Creek near Slaughter's ranch. Loving, a son of Oliver Loving and a partner of Charles Goodnight at the time of his death in 1867, had taken over his father's cattle-trailing business. Slaughter and Loving had traded in the cattle business for many years.

Adversity had once again drawn the three cowmen together. Although Indian attacks in North Texas had ceased, cattle rustling by white marauders had worsened. The proximity of nearby railheads now made it easy for the thieves to dispose of stolen cattle, and the rising prices provided a lucrative return. Because of the unusually dry weather during the summer and fall of 1876, the North Texas stockmen had scattered their herds for better forage over pastures too large to guard against theft. As a result of this combination of factors, cattle stealing had become intolerable.¹

Coincidentally, by 1876, the Texas cattle industry had begun to enjoy its greatest stability since the Civil War. The 1873 market collapse had driven many out of the industry, and increased trailing and shipping costs had

¹Gilbert Webb, ed., Four Score Years in Jack County (N.p.: n.p., n.d.), p. 25; Chester Kielman, "The Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association Minute Book," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXXI (July, 1967), 92n, 93n; Frontier Echo (Jacksboro, Texas), January 19, 1877, p. 2.

forced survivors to become efficient business managers. Although the open range still prevailed, cattlemen could no longer recuperate their losses by rounding up unbranded "mavericks." No longer were the North Texas prairies stocked with unclaimed longhorn cows and calves, and high-priced shorthorn cattle were being gradually replaced by the hardier native stock.²

Perhaps a more subtle threat to their business had also drawn Carter, Loving, and Slaughter together. For many years, these ranchers had relied upon the code of the open range--mutual respect for one another's range and water rights. Range boundaries were still delineated by nothing more than streams and hills. But, in the wake of recovering economy, following the Panic of 1873 and the end of Indian depredations, thousands of settlers moved into the North Texas frontier and challenged the cattlemen's open-range privileges. The population of the Palo Pinto-Young-Jack-County area, which numbered less than 1,000 in 1870, was annually increasing by 1,700 and by 1880 would total 17,237.³

When the three cattlemen emerged from the Slaughter

²Cochran, "Story of Early Day Indian Troubles," p. 39.

³Crouch, History of Young County, p. 137; Texas Almanac, 1966-1967, pp. 131-132. Jack County's population in 1870 was 694, Young's 135. There is no 1870 listing for Palo Pinto County.

ranch house, they had decided to try to get all area stockmen to make a cooperative effort to solve their problems. They drafted a call, obtained the signatures of ten other cattlemen, and published a notice in the regional paper calling for all the cattlemen of northwest Texas to meet at Graham on February 15, 1877, "for the purpose of determining the best method of gathering cattle and otherwise protecting the interest of all concerned."⁴

On the appointed day, in response to the call, about forty men met at the courthouse in Graham and organized what eventually became one of the most powerful stock associations in the United States. C. C. Slaughter apparently did not attend the meeting but sent a representative.⁵ Called to order by J. N. Simpson of Parker County, the group as its first order of business elected Carter as chairman and Loving as secretary. Bill Slaughter introduced a resolution proposing that the convention outline its objectives and purposes, and Carter responded by appointing for that purpose a committee of seventeen that included John N. Simpson, J. C. Loving, Bill Slaughter, Joseph Graham, and D. B. Gardner, who later became manager

⁴ Frontier Echo, January 19, 1877.

⁵ Clarke, Palo Pinto Story, p. 88; Graham Leader (Graham, Texas), March 16, 1877, p. 1; Kielman, "Association Minute Book," p. 92n.

of the famed Pitchfork Ranch.⁶

The committee completed a draft of resolutions late that night. On the morning of the sixteenth, the resolutions were read to the assembled cattlemen. The preamble called upon the ranchers to "work together for the good and common interest of the Stock Raisers of Northwestern Texas, and to do all in their powers for the promotion of the stock interests."⁷ One resolution provided for the division of the North Texas cattle country into six districts for the purpose of conducting cooperative roundups. District I included the Slaughter ranching interests.

Other resolutions suggested solutions to common problems. One proposed that, when removing a herd from a range, the owner or manager of the company must give notice to three nearby stockmen within the district and authorize them to examine the herd. All the animals belonging to others found by the examiners, the rancher was to "cut out and hold the same and give the owner thereof notice at the earliest practical moment." The most important resolutions sought to deal with blatant theft of cattle, "intentional or otherwise," by preventing stockmen from selling their

⁶ Minute Book, 1877-1892, Cattle Raisers Association of Northwestern Texas, p. 12, Records, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, Archives, University of Texas at Austin (hereafter cited as Minute Book, Cattle Raisers Association).

⁷ Ibid.; Kielman, "Association Minute Book," p. 95.

neighbor's cattle without permission.⁸ The cattlemen's convention approved the resolution and adjourned, having laid the foundation for the Northwest Texas Cattle Raisers Association, which eventually became the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association. Although Slaughter limited his participation in the Association for several years, his name is firmly linked with its founding.⁹ His close friends, Loving and Carter, were elected its first officers and his desires were presented in a resolution to the convention through his brother Bill.¹⁰

The organization, designed to accommodate established North Texas cattlemen, afforded C. C. Slaughter excellent opportunities. Because it provided for cooperative roundups and anti-theft measures and its jurisdiction encompassed Palo Pinto, Jack, Young, and other counties westward to Throckmorton County, the organization meant that Slaughter and the other major ranchers could operate with fewer men and less risk and thus could expand westward.¹¹

⁸ Minute Book, Cattle Raisers Association, p. 14.

⁹ Fort Worth Gazette, March 7, 1883. Most accounts of the founding of the Cattle Raisers Association state that the original meeting was held under an oak tree in Graham, but the evidence indicates that it was held in the courthouse. In his 1883 address to the convention, Slaughter recalled the oak tree meeting was the 1876 preliminary gathering at Dillingham Prairie, his Jack County ranch.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Crouch, History of Young County, p. 141.

As a result, Slaughter increasingly devoted more time to his newly-established Long S Ranch, the second largest ever in West Texas.

By 1878, the Long S had begun to take definite shape. Situated along fifty miles of the Colorado, its range included the rolling breaks of four livewater tributaries, Bull, Rattlesnake, Tobacco, and Sulphur creeks. The ranch's eastern border lay in the shadow of Muchaque [Muchakooga] Peak in Borden County, long a distinct land mark and rendezvous point for nomadic Indians and Comancheros. To the northwest, the ranch's prairie gave way to the sharp rise of the Caprock Escarpment that divided the rolling plains from the level Llano Estacado. Because he was among the first to push his cattle to the unclaimed lands above the Caprock, Slaughter, in accordance with the code of the open range, was able to claim as much land as he wanted.¹² Before long, his stock were ranging over much of Howard, Martin, Dawson, Borden, and Gaines counties, or from present-day Gail and Stanton on the east to Seminole on the west, and from approximately ten miles north of Big Spring and Midland on the south to Indian Springs, northeast of Lamesa, on the north. The range land included Cedar Lake in northern Gaines County and Bull, Rattlesnake,

¹²Jack Allison Rickard, "Ranch Industry of the Texas South Plains" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1927), p. 180; Hunter, Trail Drivers of Texas, p. 901.

and Tobacco creeks.¹³ Long-time Slaughter cowboy Jack Alley estimated the boundaries to be about forty by eighty miles, a size second only to the vast XIT Ranch.¹⁴

Apparently by design, Slaughter's new ranch lay directly in the path of the proposed Texas and Pacific railroad route.¹⁵ And, although virtually waterless, the adjacent High Plains afforded excellent summer pastures. Temporary headquarters for the sprawling ranch was first located at the mouth of Bull Creek, near some old rock corrals, thirteen miles southwest of present-day Snyder in

¹³ Alley, "Fifty-four Years of Pioneering."

¹⁴ Ibid. C. W. Foor, who accompanied the Slaughter herd from Palo Pinto to the Colorado, estimated the range to be about fifty miles "north to south and the same distance east to west. Our cattle ranged west through the Plum Creek country [southwest Borden County] and clear down to the Big Spring. We located a camp on Bull Creek, about 20 or 25 miles west of headquarters [Deep Creek camp], and a camp on Morgan Creek [eastern Howard County] about fifteen miles south of the headquarters. We had a camp at German Springs [southern Borden County] to catch the heavy drifts and also a camp at Rattlesnake Springs [southern Borden County]. Our cattle ranged clear up to the Colorado. We called it fifty miles from the headquarters of the ranch to the headwaters of the river. Our ranch ran from Muchaway Peak [Borden County] to Big Springs. . . ." Foor to Haley, interview, September 23, 1927.

¹⁵ Revised Map of the State of Texas (N.p.: Houston and Texas Central Railroad, 1876), Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University. While walking his railroad survey in 1853, Captain John Pope passed within a few miles of Slaughter's first headquarters on the Colorado. See U.S. Pacific Rail Road Exploration and Survey Geological Map, U.S., War Dept., Reports of Explorations and Surveys, 1853-54, Vol. 2, 33d Cong., 2nd Sess., Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 78, 1854, Attachment.

Scurry County. Concluding that the pens had been abandoned, Slaughter and his partners made immediate use of them. A hole dug in a clay bank and covered with mesquite poles and dirt was the first ranch house. A dried bullhide hanging from the rafters by the tail served as the door.¹⁶ Although it was primitive, the site had been occupied the previous year by two other cattlemen. To Slaughter's surprise the initial claimants were his younger brothers, John and Bill, who returned with cattle in 1877. "A little matter of this kind caused no hard feelings between the brothers, for there was so much land left . . . ,"¹⁷ reported Jack Alley, an observer of the scene. The younger brothers thereupon drove their cattle north another hundred miles to Blanco Canyon in Crosby County.¹⁸

Although their cattle were three hundred miles from a railroad, Slaughter and his partners visited the ranch as often as possible. During the spring of 1878, Slaughter and Hughes, accompanied by a Negro cook, drove from Dallas to the ranch in a hack pulled by a team of fine matched

¹⁶ Wynonna Jones, "History of Colonel C. C. Slaughter and His Lazy S Ranch," unpublished and undated typescript (38 pp.), Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

¹⁷ Alley, "Fifty-four Years of Pioneering."

¹⁸ Hank Smith, as quoted in Fort Griffin Echo, December 20, 1879. Smith was one of the earliest settlers on the South Plains.

mules. From Dallas to Fort Griffin, the cattlemen followed established stage roads by way of Fort Worth and Weatherford. At Fort Griffin, they turned west-southwest, following a little used but established trail through central Jones and Fisher counties (approximately the route of U.S. Highway 180). Their road carried them into southern Scurry County near present-day Hermleigh to their ranch headquarters on the Colorado.¹⁹

Although the trip was uneventful, a party of Indians who had slipped from the reservation in Oklahoma created some excitement for the Dallas bankers. Under the cover of darkness, the Indians slipped into the unsuspecting camp of Slaughter and Hughes during the roundup and stole the cowboys' saddle horses and Slaughter's mule team. Left afoot, the two businessmen had to take two work oxen at the ranch to pull their wagon back.²⁰

The return trip took ten days to Fort Griffin where the cattlemen had to deal with a new difficulty. "The hack seat was pretty hard and the constant exposure finally wore the seat of Hughes' trousers out," remembered one Slaughter cowboy. "Hughes was a fastidious dresser, and when they got within a few miles of Fort Griffin, he hid in the brush

¹⁹ See James L. Rock and W. I. Smith, Southern and Western Texas Guide for 1878 (St. Louis: A. H. Granger, 1878), p. 240, and accompanying map.

²⁰ Prose and Poetry, p. 383.

while Colonel Slaughter went into town for a new pair of trousers."²¹

The inconvenience did little to discourage the West Texas venture. In 1878, Slaughter and Hughes purchased Hullem's interest in the cattle. Profits were insured by an excellent calf crop, adequate rainfall, and an absence of Indian threat. However, in 1879, Slaughter and Hughes decided to divide their banking and cattle partnership; Hughes wanted to develop his own ranch and Slaughter had the greater investment along the Colorado. A simple division was effected: Slaughter traded his interest in the City Bank of Dallas for Hughes's share of the cattle.²²

For the first time in his life, C. C. Slaughter was in the cattle business without a partner. No longer did he need financial and physical support which previously had been supplied by his father, brothers, or banking partners. With virtually unlimited grass, adequate water, and a fine herd of ten thousand cattle, he was now in a position to determine his own destiny. And, as his leases expired in Jack and Young counties, he consolidated his holdings along the Colorado tributaries.

The 1880 calf crop bore a new brand. To replace the multitude of other marks acquired in the various

²¹Alley, "Fifty-four Years of Pioneering."

²²Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 303; Foor to Haley, interview, September 23, 1927.

partnerships, Slaughter devised a brand that was representative of his name and his immense ranch. Henceforth, on the left side of all his cattle he placed an elongated reclining "S" (S).²³ The 2,400 square miles of West Texas where his cattle grazed was known simply as "Slaughter country" and the new Long S Ranch was firmly established.

Slaughter immediately began to improve his new domain. In 1881 he moved the headquarters from Bull Creek westward to German Springs, twenty miles north of Big Spring. The new site, more centrally located, afforded better access to the newly-completed Texas and Pacific Railway. The scattered sheepherder dugouts, which had been used as the camp's first dwellings, were replaced with a long box house. Constructed with a wide hall in the center and a full length porch on the front, this building served as the ranch's headquarters for the next twenty years.²⁴

Slaughter separated the ranch into four divisions. German Springs, the main headquarters, served as headquarters of the Rattlesnake division, a large pasture bordering Rattlesnake and Plum creeks in southwestern Borden County. Indian Springs, ten miles east of present-day Lamesa, became headquarters for the Tobacco Creek division. At this site a small frame house was the home of a cowboy

²³ Texas Livestock Journal, October 28, 1882.

²⁴ O'Keefe, Cowboy Life, pp. 46-47.

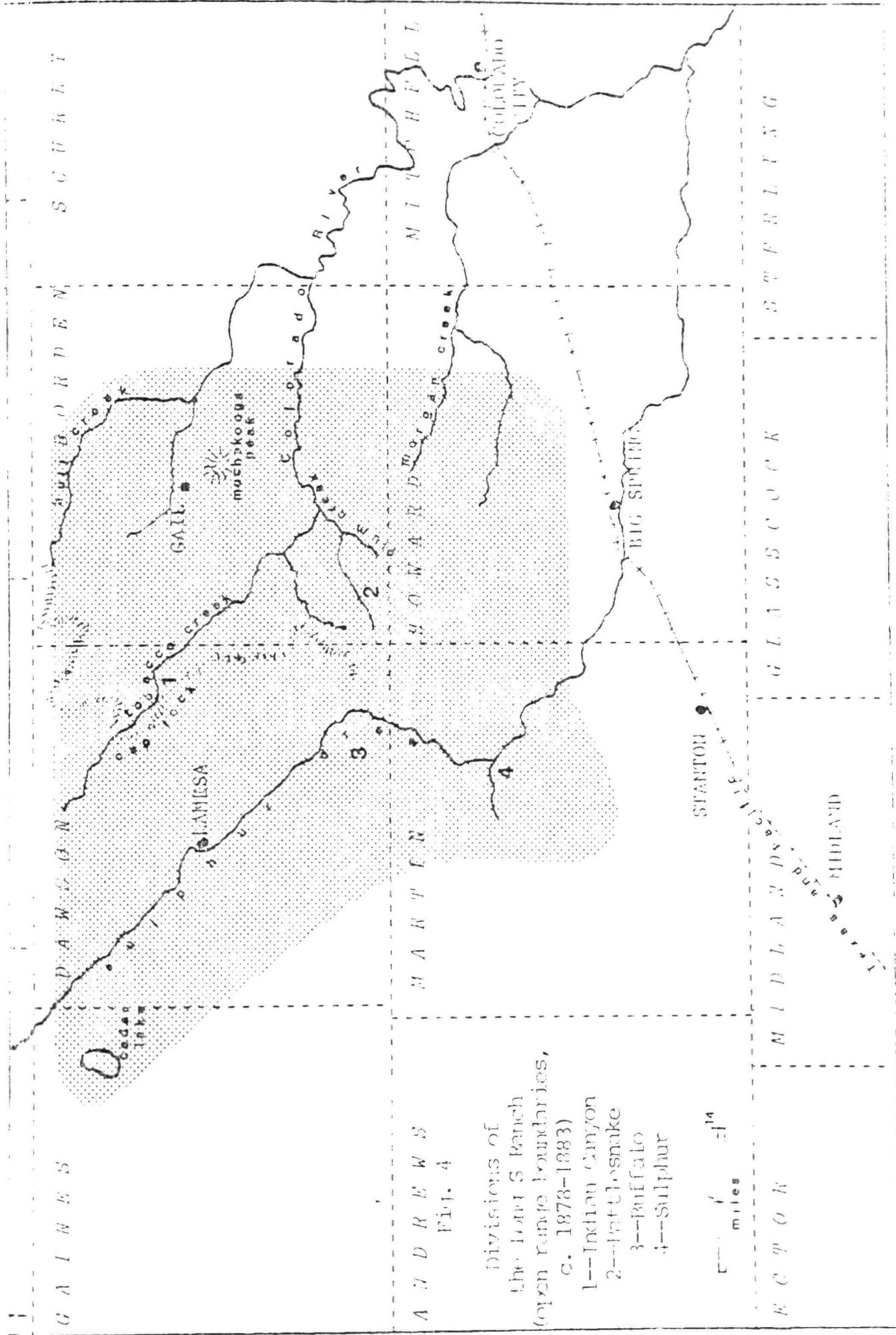
and his wife. This division encompassed the eastern half of Dawson County and a small portion of northwestern Borden County. Fifteen miles south of Lamesa, at a large spring near the Dawson-Martin county line, Slaughter had erected a large frame house to serve as the headquarters for the Buffalo division.²⁵ Obtained from the Buffalo Sheep Company, this range extended north along Sulphur Draw and encompassed the southern portion of Dawson County. The Sulphur division, watered by a large spring on Sulphur Draw twenty miles north of present-day Stanton, lay south of the Buffalo division and encompassed most of eastern Martin County. Sulphur Springs, a well-used watering site on the Fort Worth-El Paso trail, was at the center of the division.²⁶

For several years Slaughter maintained complete control of his four open-range divisions. Because he had occupied the principal water supply in each, no competitor could effectively intrude. By means of leases and purchases of small tracts, Slaughter operated without fence or without having to purchase any large acreage.²⁷ Leases were

²⁵ Unidentified newspaper clipping, undated, Ranching File, John L. McCarty Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University (microfilmed copy); Leona Marguerite Gelin, "Organization and Development of Dawson County to 1917" (M.A. thesis, Texas Technological College, 1937), p. 39.

²⁶ O'Keefe, Cowboy Life, p. 51.

²⁷ Dallas Morning News, November 7, 1885, p. 4.



made with the state for as little as three cents per acre.²⁸ And, because the majority of his ranch lay within the bounds of the Texas and Pacific railroad grant, Slaughter utilized free the state's alternate sections by leasing the other alternate sections from the railroad.²⁹ Thus, Slaughter grazed almost uncontested an area of West Texas encompassing more than 1,500,000 acres, an area twice the size of the state of Rhode Island.³⁰

By 1882 the cattle industry in West Texas was booming. Rising cattle prices inspired a wave of South and East Texas cattlemen to seek a site for a "beef bonanza" on the West Texas Plains. Between 1878 and 1882, the Spade, XIT, T-Anchor, Mill Iron, Shoe Bar, Frying Pan, Quarter Circle Heart, LS, and Diamond F ranches were established in the region north of Slaughter's Long S.³¹ Then, as the result of a report in eastern and British newspapers on the lucrative American range cattle industry, eastern and British capitalists moved in. By 1883 eighteen major companies had been created in Scotland and England for

²⁸ Alley, "Fifty-four Years of Pioneering."

²⁹ Texas Livestock Journal, February 17, 1883, p. 5.

³⁰ Eugene H. Price, Open Range Ranching on the South Plains in the 1890's (Clarendon, Texas: Clarendon Press, 1967), map (inside file pocket). Price's sketch map of the cow outfits on the South Plains was drawn from memory in 1936.

³¹ Panhandle Plains Chronology, unpublished and undated typescript (1 pp.), John L. McCarty Papers.

investment in American cattle ranches. Some of these and others obtained range privileges and acquired title to land in western Texas.³² New ranches in the Panhandle and South Plains included the Scottish-owned Matador Land and Cattle Company, Limited, the Francklyn Land and Cattle Company, the St. Louis Cattle Company, the Pitchfork Land and Cattle Company, and the Kentucky Cattle Raising Company.³³

The influx of capital led to inflated prices. Slaughter, like several other pioneer cattlemen, was tempted to sell out for high profits. In 1881, he was approached by two English investors who offered him a half million dollars for his West Texas ranch interests. Without much deliberation, Slaughter accepted the offer. Getting from Slaughter an order instructing the foreman to turn the ranch over to them, the Englishmen left for West Texas. Three days later, Slaughter learned that the buyers did not have the money. To block the transfer, he

³² W. Turrentine Jackson, The Enterprising Scot (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968), pp. 74-78.

³³ W. C. Holden, The Espuela Land and Cattle Company (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1970), pp. 42-43; Lester Fields Sheffy, The Francklyn Land and Cattle Company (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), pp. 1-140; "The Two-Buckle Ranch," unpublished and undated typescript (10 pp.), p. 3, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock; William M. Pearce, The Matador Land and Cattle Company (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), pp. 3-226; J. Fred Rippy, "British Investments in Texas Land and Livestock," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LVIII (January, 1955), 338.

dispatched his ten-year-old son, Bob, by horseback to warn the ranch foreman. Using three horses and without rest, Bob made the "half-million dollar ride," more than three hundred miles, in forty-one hours to the German Springs headquarters, arriving there ahead of the Englishmen.³⁴

The Long S brand soon gained nationwide attention. From Colorado City, on the Texas and Pacific Railway line, Slaughter shipped in 1882 the best of his improved cross-bred cattle. For this shipment, he loaded on eleven cars 350 head of three-year-old Durham-longhorn steers, personally rode with them to St. Louis, and sold the lot for seven cents per pound, reportedly the highest price ever paid for grass-fed beef. The steers averaged 1,090 pounds per head, even after six days in transit, and grossed nearly \$27,000. The sale attracted nationwide attention, and henceforth Slaughter was increasingly referred to as the "Cattle King of Texas."³⁵

³⁴Al Hill, "Bob Slaughter's Half-Million Dollar Ride," Lubbock News, January 20, 1932, Bob Slaughter Reference File, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University; Curtis Bishop, "Race for a Half-Million," True West, II (August-September, 1954), 22-23; R. L. Slaughter, "How the Big Springs Ranch was Saved," The Big Springs Country of Texas, pamphlet (1909), pp. 23-27, W. P. Soash Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock. Bob Slaughter's dramatic "half-million dollar ride" is legendary in West Texas history and is substantiated by family sources. Jess Slaughter to David Murrah, interview, December 10, 1976.

³⁵Slaughter to Harrison, interview, March 17, 1886; Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 333; Dallas Morning News, February 10, 1917, p. 5.

The sale also invited prospective investors to his door. During the summer of 1882, Slaughter was approached by another English group who offered him one million dollars for his West Texas holdings. He declined. The cost of establishing a new ranch would be excessive, and the five to ten thousand calves produced annually provided unparalleled profits on his investment.³⁶

His large profits and the growing competition by this time convinced Slaughter that he needed to insure permanent control of his West Texas domain. Despite the growing public opposition to ownership of large amounts of land by cattlemen, he set out to acquire as much as possible. "I began to buy [additional] land with the profit [from the 1882 sale]," Slaughter testified several years later. "[The high cattle prices] gave me a big start and from that time on I kept moving on."³⁷

The invention of barbed wire, the extension of the Texas and Pacific railroad into West Texas, and competition for grazing land spurred Slaughter to enclose portions of his range. Barbed wire, invented in 1874, enabled cattlemen to construct crude inexpensive fences capable of holding large and small cattle alike; the railroad

³⁶ Slaughter to Harrison, interview, March 17, 1886; Chicago Livestock World, June 23, 1902; Foor to Haley, interview, September 23, 1927.

³⁷ Dallas Morning News, February 10, 1917, p. 5.

provided cheap transportation of posts and wire to within twenty miles of the ranch; and high prices for cattle increased competition for grass. As a result, Slaughter invested heavily in fencing. His initial fence, probably constructed in 1883, was primarily a drift fence to keep cattle from encroaching on Slaughter grass. It extended from fifteen miles south of Gail, in Borden County, north and west to the Lynn County line, ten miles south of Tahoka.

Wire and posts for Slaughter's fencing were freighted from Colorado City or Big Spring. Posts cost ten cents, wire, fifteen cents per pound, and labor, ten cents a rod.³⁸ Construction costs were approximately \$250 per mile. By mid-1885, Slaughter had built approximately one hundred miles of fence at a cost of \$25,000.³⁹

Even though the range was partially fenced, more than eighty men were required for the ranch's semi-annual roundups.⁴⁰ These events, staged in May and September, were planned cooperatively through the auspices of the Colorado and Brazos Cattlemen's Association. Created in March 1880 and patterned after the Northwest Texas Cattle Raisers Association, the Colorado and Brazos Association

³⁸ Texas Livestock Journal, January 13, 1883, p. 3. The figures are based on 1883 fencing costs in the Texas Panhandle.

³⁹ Dallas Morning News, November 7, 1885, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Hunter, Trail Drivers of Texas, p. 346.

existed primarily for the coordination of roundups.⁴¹ Divided into five roundup districts, the Association in its twice-yearly meetings determined rules, time, meeting place, and superintendent for the roundup in each district. Each participating ranch supplied a wagon and from five to ten men. Each man was allowed six horses, but was instructed to "leave all race horses at home."⁴² And, at the 1885 roundup, the superintendent was given authority to discharge "any man who introduces card playing in any outfit."⁴³

In May 1884 one of the largest roundups ever in Texas was made. Fifteen thousand Slaughter cattle were gathered in one pasture a half-mile square. The scene made a vivid impression on Slaughter's young son Bob:

He [the roundup boss] ordered each group of men to make a dry camp ten miles away and each in a different direction like the spokes of a wheel. The wing of each outfit was to get in touch with the wing of the next outfit at sunup. . . . This covered a country twenty miles square. The next day the cattle streamed into the roundup ground. . . . By ten a.m. fifteen thousand head were milling in the flat. . . . All through the

⁴¹ Fort Griffin Echo, January 21, 1880. The Brazos and Colorado Cattlemen's Association became the South Panhandle Cattlemen's Association in 1888 and later merged with the Northwest Texas Cattle Raisers Association. Texas Livestock Journal, February 25, 1888, p. 11.

⁴² Texas Livestock Journal, March 7, 1885, p. 4.

⁴³ Ibid.

long afternoon the cutting kept on until our number had finished in the afterglow of a western sunset. I'll say it was some roundup.⁴⁴

Large roundups were typical for Slaughter in the early 1880s. He retained most of his 1882 calf crop, and, as a result, his herd at the end of that year numbered 40,000 head.⁴⁵ Annual calf production had reached 12,000.⁴⁶ With such increase Slaughter sought to expand his million-acre holdings. In 1884 he entered into two separate partnerships, thereby getting access to an additional 700,000 acres. In one of the partnerships, early that year, he acquired half interest in a large ranch situated fifteen miles west of present-day Plainview. There T. W. and J. N. Morrison in 1881 had purchased 81,000 acres along both sides of Running Water Draw in the corners of Lamb, Hale, Swisher, and Castro counties. An additional 100,000 acres of school land were available in the alternate sections. Extending from South Tule Draw, west to near present-day Dimmitt and south to Hart's Camp near Olton,⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Bob Slaughter, as quoted in Jones, "C. C. Slaughter."

⁴⁵ Texas Livestock Journal, September 30, 1882, p. 3.

⁴⁶ J. T. Small, Daugherty Land and Cattle Company pamphlet, 1891, Munson Papers, Archives, Panhandle-Plains Museum, West Texas State University, Canyon; Dallas Morning News, February 10, 1917, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Mary Kiser Pinkerton, "The Running Water Community," Hale County History, III (May, 1973), 7.

the ranch was the only one on the High Plains between the vast XIT on the west and Charles Goodnight's JA to the northeast. Its headquarters was on the south side of Running Water Draw, seventeen miles northwest of Plainview. While stocking their range with 3,000 cattle, the Morrisons sold a portion of their interest in their Cross L Ranch to Iowa financier W. D. Johnson. Needing additional cattle, J. N. Morrison negotiated a partnership whereby Slaughter traded 3,000 head of Long S cattle for half interest in the ranch.⁴⁸

For Slaughter, it was an excellent deal. Not only did it give him half interest in 6,000 cattle and access to 181,000 acres, but it also brought immediate relief to his overstocked Long S. "It was mighty bleak open country and not much protection," remembered a Slaughter cowboy who drove the cattle to the new ranch, but "it was the best grass [I] had seen lately . . . compared to that Big Springs [sic] country where I had just come from."⁴⁹ The first cattle in the new partnership were branded with a circle; for several years the ranch bore the name Circle and was eventually stocked with twenty thousand head of cattle.

⁴⁸ Mary L. Cox, History of Hale County, Texas (Plainview: Mary L. Cox, 1937), p. 8; O'Keefe, Cowboy Life, p. 32; Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 498.

⁴⁹ O'Keefe, Cowboy Life, p. 32.

Slaughter entered into an even larger venture in 1884 when he obtained a partnership with R. D. Hunter and A. G. Evans in a one-million-acre lease on the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation in the Indian Territory. He had done business with Hunter for many years. A Texas cowman, Hunter in 1873 had established a livestock commission business in Kansas City. There, while at market, Slaughter became acquainted with Hunter and in 1877 sold him cattle to be grazed on the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation.⁵⁰ Successful in his venture on Indian lands, Hunter worked tirelessly to obtain additional leases. Finally, after the Department of the Interior had reduced Cheyenne-Arapaho beef rations in 1882, the Indians requested through their agent that a few herds of cattle be permitted in the remote portions of their reservation with the lease proceeds designated to supplement beef rations. On December 12, 1882, a council of Cheyenne and Arapaho chiefs approved the leasing policy, charging two cents per acre, half to be paid in breeding stock and the remainder in money.⁵¹

Among the first lessees were Hunter and Evans, each

⁵⁰ Hunter, Trail Drivers of Texas, p. 872.

⁵¹ Edward Everett Dale, "Ranching on the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation, 1880-1885," Chronicles of Oklahoma, VI (March, 1928), 35; Edward Everett Dale, "Ranching on the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation," Cattleman, XV (December, 1928), 22-23; Donald J. Berthrong, "Cattlemen on the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation, 1883-1885," Arizona and the West, XIII (Spring, 1971), 8-11.

of whom had obtained 500,000 acres. Granted permission in January 1883 by Agent John D. Miles and the chiefs to stock the leases, the partners invited several cattlemen to enter into partnerships. C. C. Slaughter accepted their invitation by selling them a two-thirds interest in eight thousand two-and three year-old steers.⁵²

By April 1, 1884, the cattle from the Long S were enroute for the Indian Territory. Divided into three herds, they were trailed east from Tobacco Creek by way of present-day Snyder and the Pease River Valley to a point near Vernon. Enroute, the herds passed near the site where Slaughter had witnessed the rescue of Cynthia Ann Parker twenty-three years before.

At Doan's Store on the Red River, the Slaughter cowboys turned the cattle north. Following the Great Western (Dodge City) Trail across the Red River, the drovers moved the herds northeast across the Kiowa-Comanche Reservation to the Hunter and Evans leases, about forty miles northwest of Fort Reno. There, the cattle grazed, under the supervision of Slaughter's superintendent, G. W.

⁵² Minute Book, 1885, Records, Hunter and Evans Land and Cattle Company, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University; Texas Livestock Journal, April 26, 1884, p. 6. Neither of these sources indicate how much Slaughter received for the cattle. Market prices in April 1884 averaged six cents per pound for Texas beef. If Slaughter's cattle averaged 600 pounds per head, his gross price would have been \$268,000. Texas Livestock Journal, April 5-19, 1884.

Wolfe, on pastures of bluestem grasses six to eight inches tall, described by a Long S cowboy as "the finest grass I ever saw."⁵³

As a result of the new partnership, Slaughter now had available nearly 1,500,000 acres of grass and cattle spread from the South Plains of Texas deep into the Indian Territory. With such extensive holdings he logically became a major leader in Southwestern cattle activities and associations.

In February 1880, Slaughter joined his neighboring cattlemen along the Colorado and Brazos rivers in forming the Stock Raisers Association of the Clear Fork and Colorado. Meeting at Buffalo Gap, south of Abilene, on February 23, 1880, the group patterned its organization after the three-year-old Northwest Texas Stock Raisers Association. Influenced especially by Slaughter and C. L. Carter, the Colorado and Clear Fork cattlemen established five roundup districts⁵⁴ and called "for the better protection of our

⁵³ O'Keefe, Cowboy Life, p. 64; Jimmy M. Skaggs, "Cattle Trails in Oklahoma," Jimmy M. Skaggs, ed., Ranch and Range in Oklahoma (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1978), p. 14.

⁵⁴ District 1 comprised Slaughter's and all other cattle on the headwaters of the Colorado; District 2, all those on the Clear Fork of the Brazos above the mouth of Sweetwater Creek; District 3, all those on the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos above the Matthews and Reynolds ranch in Shackelford County; District 4, all those on the Clear Fork between the mouths of Sweetwater and Deadman creeks; District 5, all those on Pecan Bayou. Fort Griffin Echo, February 28, 1880, p. 2.

stock interests."⁵⁵ Slaughter was named to the first executive committee.

Slaughter also remained active in the Northwest Texas Stock Raisers Association. At its fourth annual convention at Jacksboro, March 8-9, 1880, he was appointed to the spring and fall roundup committee by President C. L. Carter. Evidently very popular among his peers, he was "loudly called for" to address the convention. Secretary J. C. Loving recorded the scene: "Colonel C. C. Slaughter . . . responded in his usual easy way with a lengthy speech, which was listened to with marked attention by the entire assemblage."⁵⁶ He briefly recounted the history of cattle raising in North Texas and the many disadvantages, "troubles," and losses incurred in ranching. The Association had brought about many wonderful benefits to the region, Slaughter continued, and he urged its members to continue the good work.⁵⁷ "I lived and worked in this country when, if we got our cattle or any cattle, we had to 'go for 'em,' and we did it. Often we did not get them . . . That day, thanks to this association, has passed."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Fort Griffin Echo, January 21, 1880.

⁵⁶ Minute Book, Cattle Raisers Association, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Fort Griffin Echo, March 13, 1880, p. 2.

He also urged the members to work for lower rail rates.

"His whole speech was received with enthusiasm by the entire audience as was evidenced by the applause. . . ."⁵⁹

At the March 14-16, 1881, convention at Fort Griffin, Slaughter was reappointed to the roundup committee, was nominated as first vice president,⁶⁰ and was named to a special committee charged with drafting resolutions protesting pending legislation which threatened ranchers' free use of the public domain.⁶¹ At the March 20-22, 1882, convention at Gainesville, Slaughter was appointed to the Association's committee on resolutions and finance. As a member of that committee, he was largely responsible for a proposal that a Protective and Detective Committee be formed to employ inspectors to watch shipping points, feed and butcher pens, and herds moving throughout the bounds of the Association.⁶² Adopted by the convention, the resolution marked the beginning of the Association's inspection process.

Slaughter became an ardent supporter of the detective system. At the March 6-8, 1883, convention, which met in Fort Worth, he insisted that what was needed to make

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Minute Book, Cattle Raisers Association, p. 21.

⁶¹ Fort Griffin Echo, March 19, 1881.

⁶² Minute Book, Cattle Raisers Association, p. 44.

the Association an effective body against lawlessness was "less laws and more money."

What we want is something to meet the demands of a growing and increasing business. What we want now is to raise a fund that is sufficient to put men in the field that will protect our stock. As a member of this association I am in favor of reorganization. I am in favor of a tax on stock belonging to the members of the association to raise a fund to employ the very best inspectors to examine the herds of the country. . . . Put enough men and enough money around cattle and you protect them.⁶³

Slaughter's stirring speech not only assured the passage of such a resolution, but it also got him on a committee for the reorganization of the Association and on its prestigious executive committee. Then, in May, the executive committee appointed him as chief of inspectors and detectives.⁶⁴

Slaughter immediately chose several deputies to watch the pens and shipping points. In his annual report to the 1884 convention, he stated that his inspectors had checked 970,000 head at trails and markets, had caught and saved 500 head of Association members' cattle, and had "good cause to believe that they had saved many more hundreds or probably thousands of cattle that would have been illegally taken from the owners had it not been for the fact they . . . were keeping watch at the markets. . . ."⁶⁵

⁶³ Fort Worth Gazette, March 7, 1883, p. 9.

⁶⁴ Minute Book, Cattle Raisers Association, p. 44.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

Slaughter's growing influence on the Northwest Texas Stock Raisers Association was evident in another area. At the 1882 conference in Gainesville, he began promoting Dallas as a future convention site, an unlikely choice since the Association's jurisdiction lay in a region sixty miles or more from the city. Slaughter's plea was rejected but his words did not go unheeded. At the 1883 convention in Fort Worth, he renewed his plea and Dallas was selected for the 1884 convention "by acclamation and loud applause." Secretary Loving recorded that "Colonel Slaughter is promising to Set'em up lively when the Cow-men come."⁶⁶ Slaughter did not disappoint his friends. The Dallas convention, held March 11-13, 1884, attracted 500 cattle raisers and guests and was highlighted by an elaborate banquet and ball, "complete with ten electric lights" and "G. H. Mumm's extra dry [whiskey], bottled and labeled 'expressly for the Texas Stockmen's Convention.'"⁶⁷

At the March 10-12, 1885, convention, in Sherman, cattlemen paid Slaughter a high honor. President Carter unexpectedly announced his retirement. Slaughter and two others were nominated to replace him, but the other two withdrew their names and Slaughter was elected

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 56.

⁶⁷ Texas Livestock Journal, March 15, 1884, p. 2.

unanimously.⁶⁸ Editor George B. Loving of the Texas Livestock Journal was highly pleased with the choice: "The members of the N.W.T.C.R.A. did honor to themselves and this organization. No man has done more for the cattle interests of Texas and there is no man who will do more for the same great industry in the future."⁶⁹

As president, Slaughter presided over the tenth annual session of the Association at its March 10, 1886, convention at Weatherford. During its short history, the attendance had grown from forty at the first meeting at Graham to more than five hundred at Weatherford. Opening the convention, Slaughter inserted a new feature by having a prayer offered by a local pastor, unique because, as Slaughter told an interviewer a week later, "praying cattlemen are the exception and not the rule in Texas."⁷⁰

Nominated at Weatherford for a second term, Slaughter declined to serve. In what was termed "a [sic] eloquent speech," he told the convention that C. L. Carter had served with great ability for nine years and deserved to be president again. Slaughter continued, however, as a favorite speaker. Following the March 7, 1887, convention

⁶⁸ Minute Book, Cattle Raisers Association, p. 91; Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 220.

⁶⁹ Texas Livestock Journal, March 14, 1885, p. 4.

⁷⁰ Slaughter to Harrison, interview, March 17, 1886; see also Dallas Morning News, March 11, 1886, p. 3.

in Fort Worth, a local reporter remarked, "For a man who shoots from the shoulder, C. C. Slaughter is a crack marksman."⁷¹

Slaughter's ascendancy in the Northwest Texas Cattle Raisers Association closely paralleled the development of his West Texas cattle empire. During the decade following 1876, he had consolidated his holdings, developed one of the largest single-unit ranches in West Texas, abandoned the ancient open-range system in favor of enclosure, and expanded into the Panhandle and into Indian Territory. Such success did not go unnoticed by his peers.

Slaughter's recognition as a great cattleman was enhanced by his success in banking. Although he had disposed of his interests in the City Bank of Dallas in 1879, when he and W. E. Hughes had dissolved partnership, he reinvested in the bank in 1881 when it reorganized as City National Bank. As its vice president, Slaughter restricted his role primarily to soliciting business of "stock raisers and Western merchants."⁷²

Because of its rapid growth, Slaughter was convinced that Dallas could support still another bank, even though it already had five. Thus, in March 1884, in partnership

⁷¹ Fort Worth Gazette, March 10, 1887, p. 5.

⁷² Texas Livestock Journal, November 28, 1882, p. 1; Dallas City and County Directory, 1881-1882 (Dallas: Carter and Gibon Printers, 1881), p. 85.

with the private banking firm of Thomas and Gannon, he obtained a charter for the American National Bank. Established with a paid-in capital of \$200,000 and with an authorized capital of \$500,000, Slaughter assumed the post of vice-president, a position he would hold in banking until his death. W. H. Thomas was the first president, and W. J. Gannon was the first cashier.⁷³

Thus, by the mid-1880s, C. C. Slaughter had become a person of national stature. He was a famous cattleman, he was president of one of the largest regional stock associations, he was owner or had under lease immense areas of land, he was a prominent banker, and he was the owner of perhaps more cattle than any other single individual in Texas. The future appeared bright, but for Slaughter, and the western cattle industry in general, dark days lay ahead. The fact that C. C. Slaughter was able to survive impending drouth and depression during the next decade was an even greater success story than that of the previous decade.

⁷³ Morrison and Fournay's General Directory of the City of Dallas, 1884-1885 (Galveston: Clarke and Courts, 1884), p. 49. Subsequent mergers created the American Exchange National Bank. See Henry Camp Harris, Sr., Dallas: Acorn Planters of Yesteryear, 1862-1964 (N.p.: n.p., n.d.), p. 10; and James Howard, Big D is for Dallas (Austin: Edwards Brothers, 1957), p. 52.

CHAPTER V

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Until 1885, cattlemen in West Texas enjoyed an almost ideal situation. A free range, freedom from Indian raids and from taxation, favorable weather conditions, and constantly rising prices allowed most to prosper. Far from the line of permanent settlement, the thriving cattle business in West Texas operated with little interference from two traditional opponents, farmers and town promoters. Thus, it is no wonder that the era was known as the "beef bonanza."¹

The West Texas situation was duplicated throughout the Great Plains. In Colorado, John Wesley Iliff built a herd of 40,000 head that ranged over a 150-mile area along the South Platte River.² Alexander Swan established a

¹Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 196; see also James S. Brisbin, The Beef Bonanza, or How to Get Rich on the Plains (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1882), pp. 69-70. One contributor to Brisbin's book estimated that, utilizing an initial \$7,875 investment, a person could within eleven years become worth \$100,000 and be the owner of a fine ranch.

²Agnes Wright Spring, "A Genius for Handling Cattle: John W. Iliff," Maurice Frink, W. Turrentine Jackson, and Spring, When Grass Was King (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1956), p. 335.

similar empire in Wyoming with herds approaching 120,000. Like C. C. Slaughter and other cattlemen on the Southern Plains, they enjoyed handsome profits.³

Contributing to the cattle bonanza in Texas was the state's generous land policy. On July 14, 1879, the legislature passed a law, designed to generate revenue, providing for the sale of unappropriated non-school lands in fifty-four West Texas counties for fifty cents per acre.⁴ And, under the provisions of the Constitution of 1876, railroads were granted up to sixteen sections of land for every mile of rail construction.⁵ The Texas and Pacific received for its 994 miles of road 5,173,120 acres, most of which lay in West Texas. Because he had located the Long S within the boundaries of the Texas and Pacific survey, C. C. Slaughter perpetuated his hold on a vast tract of West Texas land by securing from the Texas and Pacific in 1881 a five-year lease of 192,000 acres, located primarily in the four corners of Dawson, Howard, Martin, and Borden counties.⁶ This land included a corresponding

³ Lewis Atherton, The Cattle Kings (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), p. 208.

⁴ Gammel, Laws of Texas, IX, 80-81.

⁵ Ibid., VIII, 823.

⁶ Gelin, "Organization and Development of Dawson County," p. 29; Texas Livestock Journal, February 17, 1883, p. 5.

amount of public school land which Slaughter used for free until 1882.

In November of that year, however, a farmer-oriented Texas legislature sought to end the cattlemen's free use of state land. West Texas stockmen responded through the newly-created Texas Livestock Association. C. C. Slaughter and others pressured the legislature to enact a law that would allow cattlemen to lease large blocks of land for ten to twenty years at a minimal price. Although he was unable to attend the Association's initial meeting in Austin in February 1883, Slaughter sent to Chairman George B. Loving a long letter to be read to the assembled convention in which he expressed his concerns for the future of West Texas ranching.

. . . there seems to be general sentiment among them [the Texas legislators] to break up the large stock interests of the West. . . . Who drove the savages from our frontier and brought it to civilization? The Stockmen. Who have made the lands in Western Texas valuable? The stockmen. . . . Nature has designed Western and Northern Texas for a great pasture. It is the finest grazing country in the world and fit for little else. . . .⁷

Slaughter also asked that the new law require cattlemen to take leases "in such bodies as will prevent them from taking the watered and leaving the unwatered lands----say take the lands in a square or as nearly as may be----the

⁷ Texas Livestock Journal, February 17, 1883, p. 5.

bad with the good."⁸ The convention agreed with Slaughter and adopted a resolution calling upon the legislature to permit the leasing of school land at two cents per acre for not less than twenty years.⁹ On April 12, 1883, the legislature enacted the lease legislation, but it took a more realistic position than that of the cattlemen by providing for ten-year contracts at four cents per acre.¹⁰

In spite of the four-cent price, the ranchers rushed to take advantage of the lease law. Under its provisions, Slaughter in January 1884 leased from the state all the alternate sections contained in his Texas and Pacific lease and additional land in Dawson and Martin counties totaling 340,000 acres.¹¹ Most cattlemen, including Slaughter, refrained from competing with each other for leases and continued to honor "range rights."¹²

Because the ranchers did not compete for the land, the lease act did not create as much revenue for the state

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Gammel, Laws of Texas, IX, 395.

¹¹ Slaughter to Harrison, interview, March 17, 1886.

¹² Galveston News, February 7, 10, 1883; Edmund Thornton Miller, A Financial History of Texas (Bulletin of the University of Texas, 1916, No. 37), pp. 333-334; Lester Fields Sheffy, The Life and Times of Timothy Dwight Hobart, 1855-1935 (Canyon, Texas: The Panhandle Plains Historical Society, 1950), p. 74; Gammel, Laws of Texas, IX, 391-395.

as expected. As a result, the Land Board in February 1885 raised the minimum charge to eight cents. Many of the cattlemen refused to pay and went into court, claiming that the Board had no authority to increase the lease price.¹³ After a lengthy fight, the state supreme court ruled the action of the Board unlawful because it had set a price higher than that stipulated by law.¹⁴

The introduction of barbed wire complicated the situation. With the new invention, cattlemen enclosed portions of the public domain, and this led to fence cutting. Although he had fenced much of his holdings, Slaughter fortunately enjoyed relative freedom from both the leasing and fence-cutting conflicts, largely because of the isolation of his West Texas ranch, far west of the frontier of the distraught farmers and disgruntled small stockmen.¹⁵

Meanwhile, Slaughter's five-year lease of 192,000 acres of railroad land expired in 1886. Faced with the possibility of losing his lands to prospective purchasers, Slaughter bought from the Texas and Pacific 128,000 acres

¹³ Sheffy, Timothy Dwight Hobart, p. 79; J. Evetts Haley, "The Grass Lease Fight and Attempted Impeachment of the First Panhandle Judge," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVIII (July, 1934), 2.

¹⁴ Report of the State Land Board, 1885, as cited in Miller, Financial History of Texas, p. 335.

¹⁵ Slaughter to Harrison, interview, March 17, 1886.

in the corners of Howard, Martin, Dawson, and Borden counties for \$220,485.82. However, by redeeming the railroad's bonds he had purchased on a glutted market, he reduced the actual cost by more than half.¹⁶ The acquisition, combined with previous smaller purchases, gave Slaughter title to approximately 140,000 acres, that, added to the leases and non-lease land in use, totaled more than 600,000 acres, an area about the size of an average West Texas county.¹⁷

Because of the opposition, largely from East Texans, to the Land Laws of 1879 and the resulting acquisition of millions of acres in large blocks by corporations, especially foreign, the legislature in 1887 attempted to settle both the problems of the sale and lease of public lands. A new law, passed April 1, 1887, provided that up to four sections could be purchased by "actual settlers" for \$2.00 per acre for unwatered land and \$3.00 for watered. Designed to prevent cattlemen from acquiring large holdings, the law required the purchaser to reside on the land for three consecutive years and to prove such residency.¹⁸ Also, the Lease Law was revised. Lands classified as grazing could be held for the duration of the lease without fear of sale,

¹⁶J. T. Small, Daughtery Land and Cattle Comapny, pamphlet, 1891, Munson Papers, Archives, Panhandle-Plains Museum, West Texas State University, Canyon, Texas.

¹⁷Price, Open Range Ranching, map (in file pocket).

¹⁸Gammel, Laws of Texas, IX, 883-884.

but length of rental was reduced to five years at four cents per acre.¹⁹ On April 8, 1889, the legislature again modified the law to allow lands north of the Texas and Pacific Railway, which included the Long S Ranch, to be leased for six years.²⁰ Under these conditions, Slaughter periodically renewed many of his leases for the next twenty years, and thereby was able to maintain a solidified ranch despite growing competition.

The tremendous growth of ranching in West Texas soon led to overstocking. By the early 1880s, even the virgin grass of the upper Colorado and Brazos valleys had been depleted. Slaughter and others then sought relief on vast expanses of the Llano Estacado, where adequate water was available only by the use of windmills.

Slaughter may have been the first of the large ranchers in West Texas to use windmills.²¹ Other ranches began relying on wells for watering cattle in 1885, but Slaughter probably constructed windmills soon after fencing his land in 1883. By the end of 1885, he had eight wells

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 885-886.

²⁰ Gammel, Laws of Texas, IX, 1080.

²¹ On October 21, 1887, Slaughter wrote to the Star Windmill Company, stating that he had "used windmills for years." Texas Livestock Journal, May 12, 1888, p. 18. The XIT first used windmills in 1885, the Matador in 1886, the Spur in 1887, and the Pitchfork in 1900. Carolyn Bledsoe Goebel, "The Role of Water in the Ranching Industry in the Southwest" (M.A. thesis, Texas Technological College, 1969), pp. 134-165.

in Dawson County, ranging in depth from sixty to eighty-four feet.²² The investment--approximately \$400 to \$700 per well--proved to be wise for it enabled him to survive some later drouths.²³

Meanwhile, with favorable weather conditions, most West Texas ranchers had continued to overstock their ranges. The years 1880 and 1881 had been relatively dry, averaging only sixteen inches on the South Plains, but 1882 through 1885 were wet. Nearly twenty-five inches were measured at Fort Elliott in Wheeler County in 1882; three years later, thirty-seven inches fell at the same location, seven inches in the month of June.²⁴ On that basis, ranchers expected annual precipitation to be twenty-eight inches or more, not realizing that normal rainfall was approximately eighteen to twenty inches.²⁵ As a result, West Texas cattlemen continued to add cattle to already crowded ranges.

Three years of ideal weather dramatically came to an end in West Texas on January 16, 1885. A Slaughter

²² Texas Livestock Journal, March 20, 1886, p. 8.

²³ Goebel, "Role of Water," pp. 137-144.

²⁴ Fred Horsborough to J. T. Hodges, letter, September 1887, Press Book, II [1887-1888], Spur Ranch Records, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

²⁵ Texas Almanac, 1976-1977 (Dallas: A. H. Belo Corporation, 1975), p. 164.

cowboy herding cattle on the Long S could hardly believe what he saw when the storm struck:

One evening about three o'clock a great black cloud appeared in the north. We knew a blizzard was coming and that a drift [of the cattle] was certain. In less than an hour the storm was raging, but it was nearly midnight before the lead of the herd began to pass. We were on the very center of the line of the drift and the ground was covered with six or seven inches of snow. . . . All night the blizzard raged and all night the mighty avalanche of cattle moved before it.²⁶

Surviving cattle from the Panhandle joined by those of the Long S pushed through drift fences and moved with the driving blizzard as far south as the Pecos and Devil's rivers. The situation was dismal. Thousands piled up against fences and perished; other hundreds drowned in rivers; and still many others died in bog holes or of thirst on the open prairies.²⁷

In early February, a number of the South Plains cattlemen met at Colorado City and laid plans to retrieve the scattered herds. Cooperatively, each of twelve ranches contributed a wagon and ten to fifteen men for the task.

²⁶ Lan Franks [Don H. Biggers], History That Will Never Be Repeated, as reprinted in Seymour V. Connor, ed., A Biggers Chronicle (Lubbock: Texas Technological College, 1961), pp. 22-23. This description is attributed to a December 1883 storm, but contemporary sources do not substantiate it. "The worst spell of weather ever known in this part of Texas," according to an Abilene, Texas, reporter, occurred on January 16, 1885. See Texas Livestock Journal, January 24, 1885, p. 7, January 17, 1885, p. 4, and January 31, 1885, p. 4.

²⁷ Franks, History That Will Never Be Repeated, p. 23.

Gus O'Keefe, Slaughter's Long S foreman, was chosen to coordinate the roundup. From Big Spring, the cow outfits moved south to the Pecos and then turned north to drive the stock back.²⁸

Colonel Slaughter was on hand at Big Spring to help tally the cattle as they crossed the Texas and Pacific tracks. There, he persuaded the railroad to provide water at one of its large tanks for 25,000 head until owners could claim them.²⁹ From Big Spring, Slaughter's cattle, about 10,000 head, were driven north to Sulphur Springs, then to the Rattlesnake division. Troughs had to be constructed along the trail to provide water. "Cattle were poor, and not much grass, horses pretty well ridden down, and all those things put together made it mighty bad," wrote Rufe O'Keefe, brother to the Slaughter foreman.³⁰ The storm took a heavy casualty in Slaughter cattle; many years later, Rufe O'Keefe estimated the loss at five thousand head, but Bob Slaughter, who afterwards became manager, set the figure at ten thousand, or 50 percent of the Long S herd.³¹ Regardless, the number lost was

²⁸ O'Keefe, Cowboy Life, p. 99.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ O'Keefe, Cowboy Life, p. 101.

³¹ Ibid., p. 98; Jones, "C. C. Slaughter," p. 16. Slaughter never acknowledged such a loss. The Texas Livestock Journal for January 1885 reported a severe snow storm in West Texas, but did not mention losses as severe as indicated by O'Keefe and Bob Slaughter.

significant.

The following spring brought some relief. The heavy winter snow provided green grass, the surviving cattle quickly fattened, and prices turned upward, enabling Slaughter to recuperate some of his loss at the market place. Meanwhile, he restocked his range with ten carloads of bulls acquired in Denver³² and dispatched fencing crews to enclose the range permanently. A welcome rain in June brought additional relief.

Unfortunately, the June rain was the last moisture of significance in West Texas for over a year.³³ As the drouth persisted, ranchers were forced to market their herds prematurely, a move which, of course, drove prices downward. Although there were a few showers on the South Plains in late summer of 1886, the drouth continued into 1887.³⁴

Meanwhile, the situation was much worse on the northern Great Plains. There, the winter of 1886-1887 was for many cattlemen a final disaster. A deep snow in November and a raging blizzard in late January destroyed the

³²Jones, "C. C. Slaughter," p. 17.

³³Franks, History That Will Never Be Repeated, p. 24.

³⁴J. W. Williams, "A Statistical Study of the Drouth of 1886," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, XXI (1945), 96; Fifth Annual Report, Matador Land and Cattle Company, 1887, Matador Records.

already weakened drouth-stricken cattle by the thousands.

"When spring finally came," according to historian Ray Allen Billington, "cattlemen saw a sight they spent the rest of their lives trying to forget. Carcass piled upon carcass in every ravine, gaunt skeletons staggering about on frozen feet, heaps of dead bodies along the fences, trees stripped bare of their bark--those were left as monuments to the thoughtless greed of ranchers."³⁵ The hard winter signaled the end of the open-range cattle industry.

Although the South Plains of Texas was spared from severe weather during the winter of 1886-1887, Slaughter and other cattlemen were not as fortunate the following year. A blizzard that struck on January 14, 1888, took a heavy toll. Three hundred head of Slaughter cattle froze to death, piled against new barbed wire fences, and hundreds of others, for the second time in three years, drifted southward to the Pecos River. On January 28, Slaughter sent fresh horses and corn from Dallas to the ranch and then headed west himself once again to supervise the roundup.³⁶ There, he found that most of his herds had been able to drift through fences but were scattered

³⁵ Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1974), pp. 596-597.

³⁶ Texas Livestock Journal, January 28, 1888, p. 11.

across one hundred miles of West Texas prairies to the south of the Long S. And, on his own ranch, he found "cattle by the thousands" that, after breaking down fences, had drifted from ranches even as far north as the Canadian River. Although immense, the death loss on the Southern Plains was not as high as it had been on the Northern Plains during the previous winter.³⁷

If disastrous weather were not enough of a problem, the situation for ranchers was worsened by national policy changes. On July 23, 1885, President Grover Cleveland ordered the immediate removal from the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation the 210,000 head of cattle placed there by Texas and other cattlemen, including the 8,000 head owned by Hunter, Evans, and Slaughter.³⁸

Trouble on the reservation had been brewing almost from the beginning of the lease period. Dissident bands of Indians opposed the cattlemen's presence. On May 4, 1884, Cheyenne Chief Running Buffalo was murdered while trying to extract a toll from Texas drover E. M. Horton; theft from both whites and Indians was prevalent; and, in addition to 160 cowboys employed on the reservation by

³⁷ Ibid., February 18, 1888, p. 11.

³⁸ Dale, "Ranching," Cattleman, p. 31; Minute Book, Hunter and Evans Land and Cattle Company, pp. 205-296, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

cattlemen, at least 200 whites roamed at will.³⁹ When convinced that the removal of the cattle would quiet the Indians, Cleveland, on July 23, 1885, ordered the stockmen to remove their herds from the reservation within forty days. For those involved, the order was a major setback, for apparently they faced the alternatives of returning their herds to overcrowded and drought-stricken ranges of Texas or going to a depressed market.⁴⁰ Hunter, Evans, and Slaughter, however, sought other alternatives and were the first to leave. They sent a portion of their eight thousand head to market in late August⁴¹ but drove the remainder to a lease they secured approximately fifty miles north of the Cheyenne-Arapaho pasture and along Medicine Lodge Creek southeast of Kiowa, Kansas.⁴² There, they held their herd in anticipation of a more favorable market.

By then, the price of cattle, which had hit an 1882 high of seven cents per pound, had slipped to three

³⁹ Donald J. Berthrong, "Cattlemen on the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation, 1883-1885," Arizona and the West, XIII (1971), 22-29.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 29-31; Second Annual Report, Matador Land and Cattle Company, Ltd., 1884, Matador Records; Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 150; Cuthbert Powell, Twenty Years of Kansas City's Livestock Trade and Traders, p. 43.

⁴¹ Texas Livestock Journal, August 15, 1885, p. 8.

⁴² Ibid., June 11, 1887, p. 8, October 22, 1887, p. 3.

cents.⁴³ The forced marketing, as a result of the exodus from the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation and the drouth in Texas, drove the price downward even further. Then, following the bitter winter of 1886-1887, the market bottomed in October 1887 at less than one cent per pound, and, at the end of 1888, the price had climbed to only two and two-fifths cents.⁴⁴

The disastrous weather, and the price collapse ruined many cattlemen, both big and small. Worst affected were the investor-owned land and cattle companies that had rushed into the industry following the 1879-1882 bonanza. The 600,000-acre Francklyn Land and Cattle Company, headquartered in the Texas Panhandle, although stocked with 75,000 head of cattle, folded in 1886 because it could not meet its land and bond payments.⁴⁵ The Kentucky Cattle Raising Company, located in Crosby County, publicized as a "model Texas ranch" in 1885,⁴⁶ sustained severe financial losses and ultimately collapsed in bankruptcy in 1893.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid., August 1, 1885, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Powell, Kansas City's Livestock Trade and Traders, pp. 43-44; Dale, The Range Cattle Industry, p. 110.

⁴⁵ Sheffy, The Francklyn Land and Cattle Company, p. 140.

⁴⁶ Texas Livestock Journal, August 8, 1885, p. 2.

⁴⁷ "The Two-Buckle Ranch," unpublished and undated typescript (4 pp.), p. 3, Reference File, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

Similarly, the English-owned Espuela Land and Cattle Company never fully recovered from heavy losses sustained during the January 1888 blizzard.⁴⁸ The T-Anchor Ranch, in Randall County, began in 1888 to sell its land as a result of its losses.⁴⁹

Among the survivors of the severe weather and depression was C. C. Slaughter. Throughout the ordeal, he remained optimistic. "I do not regard the outlook as gloomy as many of you seem to believe," he told a reporter in January 1886. "The rise and fall of beef is periodical in its nature. . . . A rise in the market causes everything in the shape of beef to be shipped in . . . and the price gets lower and lower. . . . At about the period when everyone has about made up his mind that there is more money in hogs, sheep, horses, mules, and small grain than anything else, . . . the production of beef is neglected and very naturally the prices go up."⁵⁰

As prices continued to decline in 1886, however, Slaughter saw the collapse in a different light. By October, he and other cattlemen were blaming a "Beef

⁴⁸ Holden, Espuela Land and Cattle Company, pp. 59-60.

⁴⁹ Charles Boone McClure, "A History of Randall County and the T-Anchor Ranch" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1930), p. 81.

⁵⁰ Texas Livestock Journal, January 30, 1886, p. 8.

Trust."⁵¹ Defined as "a few individuals whose power of purchase and ease in combining to regulate the price of beef cattle everywhere and prevent to a large extent wholesale competition,"⁵² the "trust," to Slaughter, was the major villain. Slaughter explained to a reporter his opinion of how the trust functioned. The price of beef, he said, was not regulated by demand and supply but by the "sweet will" of the "Big Four," Armour, Swift, Hammond, and Morris. Even though cattle prices were the lowest in many years, consumers were still paying as much for beef as when cattle were selling at \$7.00 per hundred:

Gregory, Cooley, and Company, for instance, may have a consignment of cattle for which they are desiring to get their very best for the consignor. Early in the day Armour sends a man to them who offers a price below that they can sell for. Late in the day, Swift's man goes and offers a still lower price. He is followed by an agent from Nel Morris who offers a still smaller figure. Hamlin's [sic] man brings up the rear with a still smaller offer and gets the cattle for next to nothing. In this way they control the beef market of the United States and the cattlemen are powerless against them. The 'Big Four' are greater enemies to the cattle business than all the drouth, pleuro-pneumonia, and Texas fever, for these three come and go, are intermittent, but the 'Big Four' go on forever.⁵³

⁵¹ James A. Wilson, "Cattlemen, Packers, and Government: Retreating Individualism on the Texas Range," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXXIV (April, 1971), 526.

⁵² Third Annual Report, Matador Land and Cattle Company, 1885, Matador Records.

⁵³ Stock Grower (Las Vegas, New Mexico), October 23, 1886, p. 1; Wilson, "Cattlemen, Packers, and Government," p. 526; see also Charles Edward Russell, The Greatest Trust in the World (New York: Ridgway-Thayer Company, 1905), p. 10.

On February 9, 1887, Slaughter attended the International Range Association in Denver where he was elected a director. There, he heard Edward M. McGillin, a Cleveland, Ohio, merchant and heavy investor in the western livestock industry, charge that the meat packers were responsible for control of the market and were bankrupting the cattle raiser. McGillin advocated the creation of a huge cattle trust as the best means for coping with the packers' monopoly. Calling for the creation of a hundred million dollar corporation, he claimed that such a trust could "arrange, manage, [and] sell every animal from the time it was dropped a calf until it was beef in the consumer's basket."⁵⁴

McGillin's idea struck a harmonious chord with the assembled cattlemen. Within three months, the stock raisers had formed the American Cattle Trust, an organization patterned after that of the Standard Oil Trust.⁵⁵ Slaughter was named to its board of directors.

Meanwhile, Slaughter personally continued the fight against the meat packing combination. On March 9, he told the Northwest Texas Cattle Raisers Association in

⁵⁴ Rocky Mountain News, February 10, 1887, as cited in Gene Gressley, Bankers & Cattlemen (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), p. 160; Fort Worth Gazette, March 10, 1887; Stock Grower, February 19, 1887.

⁵⁵ Gressley, Bankers and Cattlemen, p. 261.

Fort Worth that "If there ever was a time in [the] history of the association when the interests of the stockmen demanded thorough organization, it is now, since we stand face to face with a combination east that makes the outlook look gloomy indeed. A closer organization among ourselves and joint organization with other associations is the only hope of safety."⁵⁶ Slaughter felt that an all-Texas trust could control "a home market from which Texas could send out to the world dressed meat instead of steers. . . ." In conclusion, he challenged his fellow cattlemen with the statement that "Providence only helps those who help themselves. . . . What are you going to do?"⁵⁷

Slaughter also carried on the fight against the beef trust to a national level. At St. Louis on November 20, 1888, he was named the first president of the National Beef Producers and Butchers Association, organized to present a unified front against the "Big Four" packers.⁵⁸ As president of the newly-formed Association, he circulated newsletters urging the passage of livestock inspection laws and attacking the "Beef Combine." The Chicago packers were

⁵⁶ Fort Worth Gazette, March 17, 1887, p. 1; Texas Lifestock Journal, April, 1887, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Fort Worth Gazette, March 17, 1887, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Stock Grower, December 1, 1888.

undercutting local butchers, he insisted, and "We appeal to the cattle raisers to stand by the butcher interest in their struggle against the great packing house monopoly, not for the purpose of destroying the packing houses, but to keep alive the butcher competition and protect ourselves."⁵⁹

While in St. Louis, Slaughter had opportunity to testify before the United States Senate's Select Committee on the Transportation and Sale of Meat Products. Created by the Senate on May 16, 1888, the Committee had traveled throughout the midwest seeking evidence to support the cattlemen's argument that a combination existed. Headed by George G. Vest of Missouri, on November 18, 1888, the Committee heard the testimony of several prominent cattlemen, including Texas stock raisers Dudley Snyder, A. P. Bush, and Slaughter. Slaughter testified that the cattle depression was the direct result of the beef combine. He pointed out that the Chicago-based packers had destroyed an excellent market at St. Louis. "I sold cattle there in 1882 for the highest price I ever sold in my life," he told the Committee. "Soon after that, I found that those [St. Louis] establishments were weakening . . . that if my

⁵⁹ Stock Grower, January 19, 1889.

cattle were sold here they went to Chicago."⁶⁰ Slaughter said he then shipped cattle to Kansas City, tested the market there, and often went on to Chicago: ". . . if I offered my cattle at Kansas City for sale, and did not sell them, as soon as I would go to Chicago, before the cattle arrived, it would be known what I was offered at Kansas City, and it naturally brought me to thinking this is a strange coincidence; these fellows tell me just what I was offered at Kansas City. . . ." The price he was offered, Slaughter said, was "just . . . enough more to pay the freight." Then he would try St. Louis and encountered the same results. "If I did not sell in St. Louis, and if I went on the passenger train to Chicago ahead of my cattle, the next morning, before their arrival, I would find that the offer was known that was made for them in St. Louis."⁶¹

Impressed with the testimony gathered, particularly Slaughter's, the Committee reported to the Senate that stockmen could find "no competition among buyers, and if they refused to take the first bid are generally forced to accept a lower one."⁶² Denying that

⁶⁰ U.S., Congress, Senate, Report of the Select Committee on the Transportation and Sale of Meat Products, S.R. 829, 50th Cong., 1st sess., 1889, pp. 91-92; Cox, Cattle Industry, pp. 148-149.

⁶¹ Report of the Select Committee, p. 6.

⁶² Ibid., p. 35.

overproduction was a major factor in the cattle depression, the Committee concluded that the cattlemen's plight was caused by the abnormal and "ruinous centralization of the cattle market," and that it "is impossible that the Chicago market should continue to control the cattle interest of the whole country as it does now. . . ." On the other hand, it continued, the overmarketing of cows and calves had driven prices downward, but, that with the continued growth of population and the decrease in availability of range land, the price would eventually improve.⁶³

In 1890, in spite of the Committee's report, Slaughter was still attacking the packers. In mid-March he and his brothers John and Will attended the Interstate Convention of Cattlemen at Fort Worth. There, they heard read a letter from Texas Governor Lawrence Sullivan Ross which echoed C. C. Slaughter's sentiment that something must be done about the beef trust. Ross stated that something "permanent and radical" was needed to alleviate the "syndicate" that dominated the cattle market for "The price of every cow in the land is settled by its decree. . . ."⁶⁴ Ross lauded "the cordon of fearless

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 34-35.

⁶⁴ U.S., Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Husbandry, Proceeding of an Interstate Convention of Cattlemen, Held at Fort Worth, Texas, Special Bulletin (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1890), p. 16.

cattlemen like the Slaughters, Goodnight, Browning, Reynolds, Mathews, Carter, Harmisons, Braggs, Gholson, Elkins, Lovings, and a Score of others . . . who for years have been the exemplars of a chivalrous generosity and bravery which made them the hero of tales recounted the world over, [but] in many instances they have been dealt with as men who have no claim to protection."⁶⁵

The cattlemen's national organizations did little to halt the decline in cattle values. The American Cattle Trust purchased a packing plant and feed pens and negotiated canning contracts with the French and Belgian governments, but did not long survive. Dissension among directors and management, overvaluation of stock certificates, and lack of support from cattlemen doomed it to failure. By the summer of 1890, its trustees were forced to absorb large losses.⁶⁶ However, because Slaughter's role in the business affairs of the Trust was minimal, his losses were apparently not severe.

Slaughter's efforts as president of the National Producers and Butchers Association also brought little result. After circulating a newsletter condemning the Beef Trust, the association apparently did little else and may not have met again. It was not until 1921, two

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

⁶⁶ Gressley, Bankers and Cattlemen, pp. 263-267.

years after Slaughter's death, that his work was rewarded when Congress curtailed the monopolistic practices of the big packers by the Packers and Stockyards Act.⁶⁷

There is no evidence that, at the time, Slaughter or the other cattlemen fully understood the complexities behind the depression. Obviously, during the early 1880s, they were responsible for considerable overproduction. This, combined with premature marketing of low grade cattle, as a result of the drought and the necessity to withdraw from the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation, led to rapidly dwindling market prices. Demand simply did not keep pace with supply.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the cattlemen failed to recognize the "boom-bust" nature of economy. James A. Cox, writing eight years after the price collapse, best explains what actually happened:

The magnificent prices . . . in the early eighties were succeeded by prices which, while in some instances . . . left a nominal margin of profit, took away the gold-mine appearance and reputation of trade and made the earning of a livelihood much more common than the amassing of a fortune. . . . Undue haste to become rich and to find the road to wealth led to the killing of the goose to secure the golden egg, which it was apparently willing to lay at respectable intervals.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 268; Wilson, "Cattlemen, Packers, and Government," p. 532.

⁶⁸ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 139.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 136.

In spite of droughts, blizzards, the packers' trust, price collapse, and depression, some long-time cattlemen survived, including C. C. Slaughter. Throughout the ordeal, Slaughter saw the depression as temporary. He told a reporter in May 1886 that, in spite of the 20 percent decrease in the price of a steer, "still there is money in him, if a man understands his business."⁷⁰ Even when prices for his cattle tumbled to \$2.15 per hundred in November 1887,⁷¹ he remained optimistic. "I can raise a good beef steer," he said, "for \$20 and make a living,"⁷² but, even so, he anticipated a sharp increase in prices during 1888.⁷³

To survive the cattle depression, however, Slaughter had to utilize all of his resources, experience, and skill. When pressed by creditors, he would wire his manager Gus O'Keefe, to gather the necessary fat cattle and young heifers and ship them to market, a practice one Slaughter cowboy, at least, could not understand:

I wondered why a man like Lum [C. C.] Slaughter would ever get in a tight for money. . . . I could never see why they bought a herd of cattle, pay some cash and make notes on the balance. They were buying cattle all the time, that is for several years. I knew those

⁷⁰ Dallas Morning News, May 5, 1886.

⁷¹ Texas Livestock Journal, November 12, 1887, p. 3.

⁷² Ibid., November 26, 1887, p. 8.

⁷³ Ibid., October 1, 1887, p. 6.

notes had to be paid with fat cattle, Steer money, as far as it would go, and then make a run on fat cows and heifers, which they did not want to do, especially on young heifers for they were trying to build up this herd. . . . When Slaughter used to come to the outfit, he and Gus would sit up half the night and talk and plan how they would manage.⁷⁴

To have the fattest cows possible for sale, Slaughter in April 1887 employed a veterinarian to teach his cowboys how to spay cows. (Spayed cows usually gained extra weight.) The spaying operation on two thousand cows was completed in two weeks.⁷⁵ The following November, Slaughter shipped from Big Spring four trains of fattened cows to market.⁷⁶ Unfortunately, in December, his steer herd, gathered at Big Spring for shipment, stampeded and was not shipped.⁷⁷

Slaughter's survival also was partially because he was in position to take advantage of an unusual opportunity. In March 1886 he contracted to the newly-established XIT Ranch ten thousand head of one and two-year-old steers and heifers for a reported \$14.00 per head.⁷⁸ The largest fenced ranch in the world, the XIT stretched over 3,000,000 acres along the western side of the Texas

⁷⁴ O'Keefe, Cowboy Life, p. 104.

⁷⁵ Texas Livestock Journal, April 16, 1887, p. 10, April 30, 1887, p. 10.

⁷⁶ Ibid., November 26, 1887, p. 11.

⁷⁷ Ibid., December 10, 1887, p. 4.

⁷⁸ Texas Livestock Journal, March 27, 1886, p. 8.

Panhandle.⁷⁹ Its immediate need for large numbers of stock cattle and its close proximity to the Long S meant that there would be no expensive freight rates to pay and provided Slaughter a good market.

Before delivering any of his own herd to the XIT, Slaughter, acting as a middle man, contacted several cattle suppliers for additional cattle. One company, Webb and Webb Cattle Company of Albany, Texas, pleaded with Slaughter for the opportunity to fill exclusively his request: "We know of your standing as one of the leading cattlemen of the state, and if you will give us half a chance . . . we can fill your order for you to your entire satisfaction."⁸⁰ Webb's prices, however, apparently did not allow the margin of profit Slaughter desired, and by March he had concluded to supply the XIT with cattle from his own range.⁸¹

The Slaughter-XIT deal attracted statewide attention. "The terms of the foregoing trades are among the most carefully guarded secrets of the mysterious cattlemen and it would require the craft of a mind reader to get at

⁷⁹J. Evetts Haley, The XIT Ranch of Texas (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), p. 3.

⁸⁰Webb & Webb to C. C. Slaughter, letter, January 10, 1886, Louis Hamilton Hill Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

⁸¹Dallas Morning News, March 27, 1886.

them," reported the Dallas Morning News on March 27, 1886.⁸² "The oldest inhabitant even hasn't the ghost of an idea as to the price received," stated the Texas Livestock Journal.⁸³ Slaughter, however, reportedly received \$140,000 cash for the ten thousand cattle.⁸⁴

Slaughter scheduled delivery of the cattle to the XIT in June, July, and September 1886.⁸⁵ Winter losses and dry weather during the spring, however, made it difficult to meet the time table. It was not until summer that the cowboys were able to assemble the cattle. Most of the herd were from the Long S, driven to the Running Water Ranch by way of Tahoka Lake and Yellow House Canyon near present-day Lubbock. Slaughter, the Morrison brothers, and W. D. Johnson met at the Running Water to supervise the stock selection. Johnson's presence soon caused a row. When Slaughter ordered Rufe O'Keefe to deliver the cattle, Johnson wanted to go along to supervise the job, but, fearing his presence would delay the final transfer,

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Texas Livestock Journal, March 27, 1886, p. 7.

⁸⁴ Dallas Morning News, May 22, 1886. Another account implies that the \$14.00 price was a "give-away" figure; however, by May 1887, one and two-year-old cattle were selling for only \$7.50 to \$12.50 each. See Marie Sandoz, The Cattlemen (New York: Hasting House, 1958), p. 270, p. 316, and Texas Livestock Journal, May, 1887, p. 4.

⁸⁵ Texas Livestock Journal, March 27, 1886, p. 8.

Slaughter persuaded his partner instead to help him move a small herd to Tule Canyon, northeast of the Running Water Ranch. "That would keep Johnson busy and keep him from going with me and the boys," recalled O'Keefe. "He [Slaughter] did not want to hurt Johnson's feelings."⁸⁶

With the main herd on its way to the XIT, Slaughter, the Morrisons, and Johnson set out for Tule Canyon. "You fellows are getting too old to turn cowboy," O'Keefe chided.⁸⁷ Perhaps they were. While on the twenty-five-mile drive, Slaughter and Johnson clashed: "After awhile, Slaughter looked down the creek where Johnson was, and instead of Johnson riding fast and trying to hold the cattle up so they could round them up, he was just poking along letting the cattle pass him and scatter down the creek," reported a Slaughter cowboy who witnessed the scene. Slaughter then took a "slicker" in his hand, got ahead of Johnson's cattle and "ran into them with that slicker hollering and yelling at the top of his voice . . . and liked to run the cattle over Johnson. I expected that was what he wanted to do. . . . [Slaughter] told him to get back home and stay there and told him he should not have anything to do with the management of that

⁸⁶ O'Keefe, Cowboy Life, p. 140-141.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 142.

ranch."⁸⁸ Slaughter later apologized to Johnson, but their relationship thereafter remained strained.

While delivering the second herd to the XIT, the drovers had to send for Slaughter to come to their aid--unfortunately. The thirsty cattle stampeded into the dry bed of the alkaline Tahoka Lake, about five miles northeast of the present town of Tahoka, and began milling about. Unable to control the herd, trail boss Gus O'Keefe quickly sent word of the situation to Slaughter, who was at the German Springs headquarters of the Long S. Gathering all the available cowboys, Slaughter armed them with guns and hastened to Tahoka Lake. Under his command, the cowboys rode to the edge of the herd, fired their guns to frighten the cattle, and coaxed from the bed about a hundred at a time. After many hours of desperate work, all the cattle were finally driven from the lake and started north again. Slaughter, however, nearly lost his eyesight; he never recovered entirely from the injury caused by alkali dust, stirred by the milling cattle.⁸⁹

In spite of the delivery problems, the XIT deal assured Slaughter's survival of both the drouth and depression. By clearing his range of ten thousand head, or one-fourth of his herd, he was in position to handle the

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 163-164.

⁸⁹ Alley, "Fifth-four Years of Pioneering."

three-year drouth. The sale also provided him with needed revenue, and, when that proved deficient, his strong banking ties provided him with credit lines. As a result, Slaughter was able to wait out patiently the end of the drouth and depression. In early September 1888, he sold eighty fat steers for \$3.10 per hundred, a price which signalled an upturn in the long-depressed market.⁹⁰ At the same time, September rains ended the prolonged three-year drouth.⁹¹ Encouraged by a mild winter, and a gradual increase in price, Slaughter in the spring of 1889 shipped five thousand head of cattle to Kiowa, Kansas, to fatten for marketing.⁹²

The end of the depression also coincided with a major change in Slaughter's ranch management. His long-time capable manager of the Long S, Gus O'Keefe, taking advantage of cheap land and cattle prices, left Slaughter's service in 1888 to run his own ranch.⁹³ Named to replace him was Slaughter's eighteen-year-old son, Robert L. ("Bob") Slaughter.

The first of his boys to assume a management position, the headstrong and sometimes boisterous Bob was

⁹⁰ Ibid., September 8, 1888, p. 3.

⁹¹ Ibid., September 22, 1888, p. 11.

⁹² Ibid., March 9, 1889, p. 14.

⁹³ O'Keefe, Cowboy Life, pp. 181-182.

well-suited to the rugged outdoor ranch life of West Texas. George, the eldest, continued to play an active part in the directorship and management of the Running Water Ranch. As soon as they were old enough to ride horses, the three younger brothers, E. Dick, Alexander, and C. C., Jr., worked as cowhands on the ranches during the summers. Unlike Bob, each subsequently earned college degrees and became secretaries for their father.⁹⁴

The disagreements with his partner W. D. Johnson made the Slaughter operation a family business. On July 16, 1890, Slaughter dissolved the six-year-old partnership in the Running Water Land and Cattle Company by trading his half interest in the cattle, horses, and equipment for Johnson's interest in the land, approximately 89,000 acres in patented holdings and a similar amount in leases.⁹⁵ George Slaughter was appointed manager, a

⁹⁴ Slaughter's sons attended public school in Dallas. George attended Bingham's Military School in North Carolina; E. Dick graduated from the University of Texas in 1893, C. C., Jr., and Alexander from Baylor University in 1902 and 1906, respectively. Encyclopedia of Texas (Dallas: Texas Development Bureau, 1922), pp. 240, 243, 290-291. While in college, both E. Dick and C. C. served as coaches of their school's football teams. Scrapbook, Carrie Averill Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University (microfilmed copy); Walter E. Long, "B Hall of Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXII (April, 1959), 418.

⁹⁵ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 498; Jones, "C. C. Slaughter," p. 12.

position he would hold for the next twenty-five years. The ranch was soon restocked with cattle from the Long S. Although the future of the cattle business was still uncertain, Slaughter correctly surmised that the worst had passed. Retrenchment in the face of the financial crisis produced fenced ranges, strong leases, and a completely family-oriented management operation. And, with the elimination of a number of competitors by the depression, prices slowly recovered. The next two decades more than made recompense for the tribulations of the last half of the 1880s.

CHAPTER VI

ROYALTY ON THE RANGE: ANCIENT BRITON AND SIR BREDWELL

Ranching in West Texas and on the Great Plains has passed through only two major phases during its one hundred year history--the open range and controlled stock farming. Technical developments, especially barbed wire and the windmill, combined with the steady intrusion of the farmer's frontier, hastened during the 1890s the transition of open-range ranching into modern stock farming. Many of the plains ranches did not survive the decade, but C. C. Slaughter's cow empire not only survived, it also became one of the largest producers of fine beef cattle.

For nearly forty years, Slaughter had utilized the open range. Cheap land, free grass, and vast unrestricted prairies had contributed to the building of his vast West Texas empire. By 1890, however, hundreds of miles of tightly-strung barbed-wire fences and scores of windmills had brought to an end the cattleman's bonanza. Furthermore, the advancing farmer's frontier heralded a promising agricultural future. In the West Texas-Panhandle region, thirty-four counties were organized from 1888 to

1892.¹ Although deeply involved in the expansion of his bank, real estate acquisition in Dallas, industrial investments, and philanthropic activities, adapting to the transition on his West Texas ranches, combined with another drouth and troublesome family management, continued to claim much of C. C. Slaughter's attention.

Unpredictable weather on the plains was a constant problem. Although a mild winter and adequate rainfall insured a good year for the region in 1890, short spells of drouth began to plague West Texas early the next year.² Rainfall in September forestalled a severe drouth, but the dry weather damaged winter feed grasses.

The drouth continued into 1892. Although the Long S was not severely affected, the Running Water Ranch received little or no rain throughout the spring.³ In the summer, the drouth spread throughout the entire South Plains, and by the spring of 1893 West Texas pastures were barren and cattle were dying by the thousands.⁴ The result was dramatic. Calf production on ranches dropped by as much as

¹Roy Sylvan Dunn, "Drouth in West Texas, 1890-1894," West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, XXXVII (1961), 122.

²Texas Livestock Journal, April 4, 1891, p. 10.

³Ibid., June 17, 1892, p. 10.

⁴Looney, "A History of Colorado, Texas," p. 41.

40 percent.⁵ The neighboring ranch on the south of the Long S, the Magnolia Ranch, which branded 6,000 calves in 1893, ceased operation after branding only 160 head the following year.⁶

The drouth was the worst in the history of the Slaughter range. Nearby Colorado City, where the average rainfall was twenty-two inches annually, had only eight and a half inches in 1893. In 1894 no rain fell until May.

The drouth forced Slaughter to seek grass elsewhere. In April 1893 he sent five thousand head by rail to Glasgow,⁷ Montana,⁷ and contracted with a Council Grove, Kansas, feeder, Frank Lower, to place several hundred head in feedlots.⁸ Other cattle were driven to leased pastures in New Mexico and the Panhandle where the drouth was not as severe. By 1895, Slaughter had ten thousand head on leased ranges in Montana and Wyoming.⁹ Such movements helped to minimize

⁵ Dunn, "Drouth in West Texas," p. 131.

⁶ John Allison Rickard, "The Ranch Industry of the Texas South Plains" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1927), p. 167; Dunn, "Drouth in West Texas," p. 131.

⁷ Texas Livestock Journal, April 4, 1893, p. 6.

⁸ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, February 21, 1896, George M. Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock (hereafter cited as GMS). The George Slaughter Papers, 1893-1959, contain the largest extant collection of letters written by C. C. Slaughter. Numbering approximately one thousand pieces, the correspondence, primarily between C. C. and George, dates from 1893 to 1910.

⁹ Ibid., September 8, 1894.

Fig. 5--Handwritten Slaughter Letter
American National Bank

Designated U.S. Depository

Capital \$ 200,000.

Funds \$ 125,000.

Dallas, Texas Nov 24th 1894

Dear George my two teams
of cows struck a hard demoralized
market they were both sold in
Chicago yesterday 2⁰⁰ & 2⁰⁵ at
800. wire me when you can for
trans city or I can write to
you in care Green Mills & Co.
I am some better with my
cold but am so very busy
I hardly think I can get off
to assist you on the bulls
so you go right on and
do the best you can to get
2 cows. nothing more & it from
Mr. Elay suppose he will not
deliver if he does Green Mills also
will receive and pay for
them heard nothing from Gillett
and don't think him up
having any letters by this time
Yours affec George

his losses.

Following a June 1894 tour of the Long S, Colonel Slaughter reported a dismal, but not hopeless situation to his son George: "The grass in the Rattlesnake [pasture] and especially in German [Springs] seems too gone. Thousands of acres show no sign of either grass or weeds. The grass in the ballance [sic] of the range looks as though it will be good."¹⁰ For the spring of 1894, the Colonel estimated his losses at 3 percent, or one thousand head, due primarily to a lack of water.¹¹

In spite of the drouth, Slaughter marketed a large number of cattle. In the fall of 1894, he sold \$100,000 worth of cattle, including 210 head which averaged 1,212 pounds each.¹² Although the Long S Ranch lost money, perhaps for the first time in its history, sales from cattle fed in Kansas, from the Running Water, and from leased pastures in Montana offset the damage caused by the drouth.¹³

The dry weather ended dramatically on the Slaughter range. In May 1894 a vicious thunderstorm raked the Long S

¹⁰C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 11, 1894, GMS.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., January 27, 1895.

¹³Ibid., January 27, 1895.

ranch, destroying the headquarters at German Springs. The storm "blowed the old office all to pieces . . . , " reported Slaughter to his son George. "Twisted all the trees off at the ground, broke the corral down, took off the windmill I don't know where."¹⁴ By the time the drouth-breaking rains came, most of West Texas had been cleared of cattle (and prospective homesteaders as well).¹⁵ Grass on the unstocked ranges grew back rapidly; by October 1894, cattlemen were indicating that both cattle and winter pastures were in excellent shape.¹⁶

In addition to coping with a severe drouth, Slaughter simultaneously had to deal with a number of family problems. By 1893, his twenty-three-year-old son Bob, who had managed the Long S for five years, was married and seemingly settled into the comfortable life of a West Texas ranch manager. Likewise, his thirty-one-year-old son George, manager of the Running Water Ranch, who married on February 1, 1893, the daughter of a prominent Plainview merchant, J. N. Donohoo, was settled in a comfortable home on his ranch.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid., June 11, 1894.

¹⁵ Texas Livestock Journal, May 11, 1894, p. 1.

¹⁶ Ibid., October 19, 1894, p. 6.

¹⁷ Scrapbook, George M. Slaughter Papers [microfilm copy], Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock. The original material of this collection is in possession of Mrs. George M. Slaughter II, Roswell, New Mexico.

However, for reasons never explained, the two brothers had developed drinking habits not acceptable to their father. Vowing to reform, they and younger brother Dick went to Kansas City in January 1894 to take the "Kealy cure" for overindulgence in alcoholic drinks. Colonel Slaughter admonished them to get a thorough treatment and at the same time revealed his own obsession for frugality:

Whatever is worth doing should be done well. As you have all undertaken this cure as it is called, go the whole hogg [sic] or none. Of course you ought to have been men enough to let it alone without this. . . . Keep a memorandum of every cent you spend and don't spend anything you can do without.¹⁸

A day later, Slaughter learned that Bob had taken his wife on the trip. Angrily, he wrote George (with whom he could communicate best) that he could not tolerate expense-paid vacations:

You are well aware that I am very easy with my children. Again you know I am very determined when I get roused up and I tell you now I am determined to run my business in the best business principles I can and to master it too. . . . I never dreamed I would have to furnish the money to take familys [sic] on a trip. A hint to the wise is sufficient.¹⁹

Whatever the purpose of the trip, the Slaughter brothers were back on the job by the end of February, apparently cured either by the treatment or by their father's reprimand, since there is no further mention of the alcohol

¹⁸C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, January 16, 1894, GMS.

¹⁹Ibid., January 17, 1894, GMS.

problem in Slaughter's correspondence with his sons.

Pressured financially by the national depression which followed the Panic of 1893, Slaughter continued to monitor expenses carefully. Wages for cowhands were kept to a minimum. Son Bob earned only \$75.00 per month as manager of the vast Long S.²⁰ George wanted a loan of \$5,000 to establish a bank in Plainview, but his reluctant father tactfully replied that, due to loss of money loaned to C. C.'s brothers, John and Bill, his son should look elsewhere: "I can't loan you the five thousand without borrowing. . . ." As an alternative, he suggested a plan which had worked well for him in two previous banking ventures. "You might make up a small co. and the Banking plan, say your Father-in-law [J. N. Donohoo], [R. P.] Smythe, & 2 or 3 others and put in 2 or 3,000 dollars on a safer way. Be a director and attend to your own affairs, etc. If you wish I think I can arrange for \$2,000.00 for you."²¹ In January 1895, Colonel Slaughter separated the personal and ranch banking accounts of his sons and ordered George and Bob to submit to him monthly statements of expenditures for payroll and provisions and quarterly summary statements. "I think by doing this I can keep expenses straight without so much work," he explained to George, "and this is the

²⁰ Ibid., January 2, 1895.

²¹ Ibid., January 27, 1895.

best business way I can think of giving in detail what is bought and what for, also what is sold and what for. I wish to get our matters arranged on as easy a basis as possible."²²

By early 1895, conditions had improved significantly for Slaughter. Owning title to more than 250,000 acres of land, with 37,000 head of cattle on his ranches, and with his own bank in Dallas, he admitted, conditionally, that he was doing well. In a letter to George concerning the Plainview banking venture, he modestly related: "From all appearances we are all ok financially, and as this is the first year for a long time I felt this way, don't you think we had better lay on our oars this year and let developments show us which way the financial tide is drifting us [?]"²³

Slaughter ignored his own advice. In 1895, he increased shipments of cattle to Montana and Wyoming ranges, stocking those pastures with three and four-year-old steers. Angered at rising costs of rail shipments and losses of cattle in transit, Slaughter in 1896 threatened to trail-drive his northern-bound cattle. Perhaps due to that and the loss of 120 head during the April 1896 shipment,²⁴ he was able to obtain from the railroads a guarantee of \$2.00

²² Ibid., February 14, 1895.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., April 21, 1896.

per head rate for shipments to northern pastures, a reduction from a high of \$5.90 in 1885.²⁵ Because of the rate reduction, Slaughter expanded his cattle feeding operations in Kansas and other midwestern points. In February 1896, he proposed to furnish Kansas feeder Frank Lower cattle at \$27.00 per head to feed and pasture for six months prior to sale with each to share equally the profit or loss.²⁶ In a letter to George he explained the advantage of such an arrangement:

We cannot get our cattle down here [to Dallas] to the cotton seed meal [because of the threat of tick fever] and if we have them fed which I think we will have to do in the future we must look to Kansas, Nebraska and Montana. . . . By this we will obtain the feed cheaper than we could any other way. . . . If those men make any money we will get 1/2 of it and a fair price for our cattle.²⁷

Through similar arrangements, Slaughter supplied Kansas and Nebraska feeders for a number of years.

Ironically, Slaughter was able to use the national depression of 1893 and the drouth of 1893-1894 as a means for the expansion of his own holdings. As a creditor, he sometimes obtained pasture leases at low rates through partnership deals or made foreclosures and bargain purchases

²⁵ Ibid., May 5, 1896; Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 126.

²⁶ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, February 21, 1896, March 19, 1896, GMS.

²⁷ Ibid., March 19, 1896. See also ibid., March 23, 1896.

on leases, cattle, and land. His bank in Dallas, specializing in loans to West Texas cattlemen, made notes for land or cattle purchases at 10 percent interest. If Slaughter co-signed the note, he personally held the lease, cattle, or land as collateral. At least in one instance, he expanded his holdings through foreclosure. In 1897 he acquired the lease of the 140,000-acre Tahoka Lake Ranch in Lynn County through foreclosure on a note held by A. J. Harris.²⁸ Although the ranch contained little patented land, the transaction gave Slaughter a badly-needed pasture that was well-watered. That year, for an undisclosed amount, he also bought the 64,000-acre T J F Ranch in northeastern Dawson County after its owner, Jesse Evans, went broke.²⁹ This acquisition, which bordered the Indian Springs division of the Long S, gave Slaughter control of almost the entire eastern half of Dawson County and increased his patented holdings to nearly 300,000 acres.

The depression and the drouth of the 1890s forced West Texas cattlemen to change from raising native longhorns to producing purebred breeding stock. The transition was gradual, but far-reaching. Like other stockmen in West Texas, Slaughter had for many years primarily crossbred

²⁸ Donald Abbe, "A History of Lynn County" (M.A. thesis, Texas Tech University, 1974), p. 21.

²⁹ Leona Marguerite Gelin, "Organization and Development of Dawson County to 1917," p. 57.

Durham shorthorns with native stock. In 1880, however, he began a limited use of other blooded cattle, particularly Herefords. Hereford cattle, less suited to rigorous trail drives, became popular after railroads extended into the West. Charles Goodnight, however, began building his Hereford herd on the JA in 1883, six years before the Fort Worth and Denver laid its rails in the vicinity of his range, paying \$250 per head for twenty registered Hereford bulls. This purchase founded the JA's famous JJ herd.³⁰

The next year, Slaughter followed Goodnight's example. He purchased ten carloads of Hereford bulls for the Long S and turned them onto the open range with crossbred shorthorn-longhorn cattle.³¹ Unlike Goodnight, however, he was not yet ready to risk purebred stock. Instead, he purposely continued to crossbreed to prevent regression in size and quality. In October 1894, he sent George to Missouri and Illinois to buy shorthorn bulls to breed to his already admixture of longhorn-shorthorn-Hereford cows. "After a few years, we will probably go back to Herefords," George explained to a reporter as he left for his trip. "I believe in breeding up, without giving the cattle any chance to go

³⁰ Donald R. Ornduff, The Hereford in America (Kansas City: by the author, 1957), pp. 134-135; "A Texas Pioneer," Cattleman, II (May, 1916), 43.

³¹ Jones, "C. C. Slaughter;" Texas Livestock Journal, September 14, 1894, p. 2.

backward."³² With the extension of railroads into the plains and the disappearance of cattle trailing, the range cattle industry was poised to adopt a new breed.

The Hereford emerged as the cowmen's favorite breed. As early as mid-1880s, it had begun to supplant the shorthorn in midwestern fat stock shows,³³ and in 1886 Herefords won key shows in Kentucky, the heartland for shorthorn breeders.³⁴ Thereafter, shorthorn and Hereford breeders competed fiercely at stock shows until the Panic of 1893 slowed the purchases of expensive purebred stock. As cattle prices began to recover in the mid-1890s, the demand for purebred stock correspondingly increased. By the end of 1896, with cattle prices at 1885 levels³⁵ and with the enclosure of range lands (which allowed the utilization of controlled breeding), purebred stock for the American West became practical and more profitable. The spring of 1897 marked a major turning point in this aspect of the western cattle industry.³⁶

³² Texas Livestock Journal, October 5, 1894, p. 6, and October 19, 1904, p. 6; C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, September 17, 1894, GMS.

³³ Alvin H. Sanders, The Story of the Herefords (Chicago: Breeder's Gazette, 1914), pp. 524-525.

³⁴ Ornduff, The Hereford in America, p. 71.

³⁵ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, September 17, 1897, GMS.

³⁶ Sanders, Story of the Herefords, p. 628.

C. C. Slaughter was at the forefront of the change. Anxious to become a "gentleman breeder," he took the first opportunity to add purebred Hereford cows to his herd. In January 1897, he learned from a longtime friend and debtor, Fount G. Oxsheer, that a prized herd of Hereford cows was available for purchase. A long-time West Texas cattleman, Oxsheer, while visiting his Diamond Ranch in Hockley County the previous year, had examined closely a herd of 1,900 Herefords previously owned by Charles Goodnight. This herd was well-known in the Texas cattle industry. Begun by Goodnight in 1874 in Pueblo, Colorado, the cattle had been improved and bred to imported Hereford bulls since 1883. When Goodnight established the JA Ranch in 1876, in partnership with John Adair, the herd was branded JJ. Following Adair's death, Goodnight and Mrs. Adair divided the herd in 1888, Goodnight's portion becoming the $\mathfrak{J}\mathfrak{J}$ (Cross-J) cattle.³⁷ Goodnight later claimed that he "topped" his herd after the division, keeping only the best. He told Slaughter that the remnant was "much better than the JJ herd owned by Mrs. Adair."³⁸ "This herd of cattle," Goodnight boasted, "taking them for vitality, for form, color and beef making . . . are the best herd of cattle now in the round world."³⁹

³⁷ Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 318.

³⁸ Charles Goodnight to C. C. Slaughter, typescript interview, February 10, 1897, GMS.

³⁹ Ibid.

In 1895, Goodnight sold the Cross-J herd to a Midland, Texas, rancher, John Scharbauer, who placed them on his Hockley County pasture adjacent to that of Oxsheer's. Soon after his acquisition, for reasons unknown, Scharbauer decided to sell the herd. Oxsheer negotiated for the cattle but could not meet Scharbauer's price. In January 1897, while doing business with Slaughter at his Dallas bank, Oxsheer mentioned that Scharbauer wanted to sell the herd. Relying entirely on Oxsheer's statement about the quality of the herd, Slaughter thereupon purchased the cattle sight unseen for \$50,000.⁴⁰

With undisguised glee he reported his find to George:

Well, I presume you will think when you read further on in this that I have done it now. I have bot [sic] \$50,000.00 dollars [sic] worth of female cattle and 60 registered bulls. I think this is the best trade I ever made. There is not a drop of Texas blood in those cattle and I don't think there is any such a herd with 1/2 the number in the U.S. Now this throws us to front and there is enough she cattle in them to stock the plains in 20 years. . .⁴¹

Planning to receive the herd in May, Slaughter faced an immediate dilemma. Should the Herefords be placed on the Long S with Durham-longhorns? Would the Running Water Ranch accommodate them and at the same time provide adequate shelter? Oxsheer offered a solution that Slaughter accepted.

⁴⁰C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, January 15, 1897, GMS.

⁴¹Ibid.

Oxsheer agreed to pasture the herd on his Hockley County ranch for three to four years at \$1.00 per head per year and, as a commission, would receive a quarter of the herd.⁴²

Slaughter then hastened to improve his herd even more. In company with pioneer Hereford breeder W. S. Ikard, who introduced Herefords to West Texas in 1876, Kansas stockman O. H. Nelson (whose cattle had formed the nucleus of the improved JJ herd), and son Bob, he visited Hereford farms in Missouri, Iowa, and Illinois in search of new bulls to service his prized herd. From Chicago, he reported to George on April 3 that "I had bought for our use 57 head of the best bulls in America if not the world headed by Ancient Britten [Briton], the world's champion Hereford bull."⁴³ For Ancient Briton, the first place winner at the 1893 Columbian Exposition and the Chicago World Fair and perhaps the most famous Hereford bull in the world, Slaughter paid \$2,500, a new record price for a bull. Imported from England specifically to be shown at the international cattle exposition, the animal was acclaimed as "the best bull that has gone out of the country [Great Britain] for a good many years,"⁴⁴ and at close of the exposition the Breeder's Gazette reported that "American breeders are fully prepared

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., April 3, 1897.

⁴⁴ Sanders, Story of the Herefords, p. 609.

to concede that [owner] Mr. Clough has in Ancient Briton the best bull of the breed now on this side of the pond."⁴⁵ Then, in May 1897, Slaughter purchased from breeder T. F. B. Sotham additional expensive bulls. One animal, Protection, had won first place ribbons at state fairs in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois and at the St. Louis fair in 1896. Slaughter considered Protection to be "a beautiful type of the Hereford breed and [as] near perfection as one could wish."⁴⁶ The Texas Stockman and Farmer reported that, after the purchase of Protection and three other bulls, Slaughter had "in the estimate of many cattlemen topped what is undoubtedly the best collection of bulls ever owned by one man."⁴⁷ Slaughter agreed. With the addition of the prized bulls, he estimated that the total worth of the Goodnight herd was at least a half million dollars.⁴⁸

Slaughter's rapid purchases amazed the livestock breeders. Previous use of thousand-dollar bulls had been limited to the midwest and Kentucky. Slaughter's dramatic introduction of award-winning Herefords to the plains of West Texas not only marked an important change for his

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 609-610.

⁴⁶ Texas Stockman and Farmer (San Antonio, Texas), July 14, 1897, p. 8.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, April 2, 1897, GMS.

operation, but also for the entire Texas cattle industry.⁴⁹ Furthermore, it signaled a major victory for the Hereford breeders over the shorthorn.⁵⁰

In May, Slaughter visited the South Plains to see his new acquisitions. While there, the whitefaced cattle were received from Scharbauer and turned into Oxsheer's Diamond Ranch. Slaughter then persuaded Oxsheer to rename the Diamond as the Ancient Briton Hereford Ranch and to subdivide the range into six pastures so each class of bulls could be bred to a corresponding grade of cows. An unimposing lean-to located six miles west of present-day Levelland served as headquarters.⁵¹

Slaughter's purebred herd provided him considerable publicity as a breeder of fine cattle. Pictures of his bulls were published in leading stock journals, and The Texas Stockman and Farmer printed a full front page engraving of the famous Protection.⁵² Slaughter even designed his stationery anew, bearing a color etching of Ancient Briton and emblazoning its owner as the "Champion Hereford

⁴⁹ Sanders, Story of the Herefords, p. 628, 676; Ornduff, The Hereford in America, p. 136.

⁵⁰ Sanders, Story of the Hereford, p. 676.

⁵¹ Hiley T. Boyd, Jr., to David Murrah, interview, June 1, 1970, Oral History File, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

⁵² Texas Stockman and Farmer, July 14, 1897, p. 1.



Dallas, Texas. June 21, 1892.

George M. Slaughter,

Roswell, N. M.

Dear George:

I received your telegram this morning saying you had sold Hagerman 300 Zavalla heifers out of the 500 at \$23.00, which I suppose means the 5 sired heifers that Jack carried up last fall. Immediate delivery. I consider this a good price but a very large cut, from the fact that the heifers were selected by Jack first at the Tahoka Lake pasture and a gain of 400 lbs by you, which is equal to a 20 cent head less. But as I think the price is good, I am satisfied with it. Hagerman ought to get a fair lot of heifers. You did not say how

Fig. 6--Letterheads

Herd of the World." "I want Ancient Briton indelibly associated with the name C. C. Slaughter," he explained to George. "We are on top, if we can just stay there."⁵³

But, Slaughter's claim to supremacy did not go unchallenged. In April 1897, the JA Ranch, through its manager Richard Walsh, wrote Slaughter:

I was very much surprised to see a statement of yours published in the Kansas City Drovers Telegram to the effect that your herd of F cows [Cross-J] were selected from the Paloduro [JA] Herd. I have also been told by my friends at Fort Worth that you state there is no comparison between the Adair [JA] Herd & yours as yours were topped out of the Adair Herd. These statements are not correct. . . .⁵⁴

Walsh explained that, at the time the JJ Herd was divided there was no difference in the two. "I must ask you not to circulate such a report any further and to contradict it as far as you are able," Walsh warned, "or I shall feel constrained to publish a statement of facts contradicting it for no one has ever topped a cow out of her [Mrs. Adair's] Herd and wont sic either as long as I have charge of it."⁵⁵ After this communication to Slaughter, Walsh informed Mrs. Adair that: "There is going to be great

⁵³C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, January 21, 1898, GMS.

⁵⁴Richard Walsh to C. C. Slaughter, letter, April 10, 1897, JA Letter Press Book, 1893-1900, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, Texas.

⁵⁵Ibid.

rivalry in the Hereford business as Col. C. C. Slaughter of Dallas an old time cow thief now a rich banker has bought the Goodnight share of the JJ herd which if you remember Goodnight sold them two years ago & now Slaughter has bought them & is advertising them every way he can."⁵⁶

Undaunted by Walsh's threat, Slaughter continued to boost his herd and to seek the best Hereford bulls available. When he learned that Sir Bredwell, the champion Hereford bull of the 1898 Omaha Exposition, was for sale, he determined to buy it. "There is going to be a Champion Bull sold by Sotham, the only Champion in my mind that has risen since the great Columbian Exposition at Chicago," Slaughter confided to George in February 1899. "This is Sir Bredwell, four years old on the day of the sale. I am fully persuaded in my mind that we ought to own this bull, although we have some of the same stock, from the fact that we have so many champion bulls on our ranch."⁵⁷ Although somewhat concerned about the bull's age, Slaughter felt that no price would be too high, and that the new bull would not only enhance the value of his herd through new production, but would also create new favorable publicity. "We can . . . show the world we mean what we say . . . that

⁵⁶Richard Walsh to Mrs. John Adair, letter, April 10, 1897, JA Letter Press Book, 1893-1900.

⁵⁷C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, February 21, 1899, GMS.

we are determined to raise the best Hereford herd in America," Slaughter declared. The only place for a "Champion" bull, he said, was with the "Champion Herd":

These facts will go down the annals [sic] of history,-- Where is the Champion Bull of the world, Ancient Briton? Where is the Champion bull of America in 1898, Sir Bredwell? On the Plains of Texas. Who owns them? C. C. Slaughter. To my mind, we had better pay ten times the value of this bull alone, than to let him go to another herd.⁵⁸

T. F. B. Sotham's annual Hereford sale at Kansas City on March 1, 1899, attracted widespread attention and a thousand cattlemen. Included were Slaughter, Kirk B. Armour, meat packer and president of the American Hereford Breeders Association, and several other wealthy breeders. Sensing that history was to be made, observers packed into the auction arena, and, reported a Kansas City newspaper, when Sir Bredwell was led into the ring, "men took their hats off in deference to as fine a specimen of bull as one might see in a lifetime."⁵⁹

Slaughter opened the bidding at \$1,000. Armour and others quickly followed; each bid ranged from one to five hundred dollars higher. When the bidding reached \$2,000, the crowd cheered; when it topped \$3,000, the sale ring erupted. Never had there been such a bid. "The \$3,000 mark was the signal for throwing hats in the air, jumping up

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Kansas City Drover's Telegram, as cited in Texas Stockman and Farmer, March 15, 1899, p. 15.

and more cheers," reported the Drover's Telegram, "and as each additional bid was made, no matter how small, the crowd became more frantic."⁶⁰

When the bidding reached \$4,000, several breeders were asked to testify as to Bredwell's quality. One man, who had visited England, stated that Sir Bredwell was a finer specimen than any of the bulls in Herefordshire. Colonel Slaughter then announced that the person who wanted Sir Bredwell more than he would have to pay dearly.⁶¹

The bidding then resumed. Armour dropped out, leaving only Slaughter and a Mr. Keyt, representing Hereford breeder Frank Nave of Attica, Indiana.⁶² Keyt bid \$4,100, Slaughter, \$4,500. A reporter carefully described the scene when Slaughter bid \$5,000, the highest ever for a bull at public auction. At this point Edmondson, the sale master, announced that he would give every person an opportunity to decide if he wanted to bid above \$5,000. Keyt said he was through, and the auctioneer sold the bull to Slaughter. At this point the spectators resembled the operators in a board of trade pit when the market had "gone crazy. The tears were streaming down Mr. Sotham's face as Col. Slaughter and Mr. Kyte [sic] were compelled to embrace

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Sanders, Story of the Hereford, p. 675.

each other in the sale ring amid the shouts and hat throwing of the throng which packed the room. It was a sight never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it."⁶³ A spectator at the auction attempted to capture the spirit of the drama in Shakespearean verse:

Slaughter cries. . . .
 "Come on my braves; to horse! to horse!
 We'll see who bears the stoutest purse!
 For, know, Sir Bredwell said to me,
 'I crave your hospitality;'
 Nor will I pause until he reigns
 The Monarch of the Texas plains.
 Lay on, Macbeth! Lay on, McDuff!
 Damned be the first who cries 'enough!'
 But warily his thrust they meet,
 For valor oft must be discreet.
 At "forty-nine" at last they pause,
 While Slaughter jeers their hopeless cause,
 And boldly shouts, "A hundred more!"
 None answer, and the fight is o'er.
 With cheers the very welkin rings,
 As to his prize the victor springs,
 And, supple as a bounding boy,
 Leaps on his back and weeps for joy.
 No bull fight this side of ancient Spain,
 No gaping wounds, nor heroes slain;
 This verse is but the
 halting tale
 Of Sotham's annual Hereford sale.⁶⁴

After the shouting subsided, Slaughter explained to the crowd the reason for his expensive purchase. He was pursuing the policy of pioneer Illinois breeder John D. Gillett who used thoroughbred bulls on grade cows, and added

⁶³ Texas Stockman and Farmer, March 15, 1899, p. 15.

⁶⁴ Unidentified newspaper clipping, undated, George M. Slaughter II Papers, in possession of Mrs. George M. Slaughter, Roswell, New Mexico.

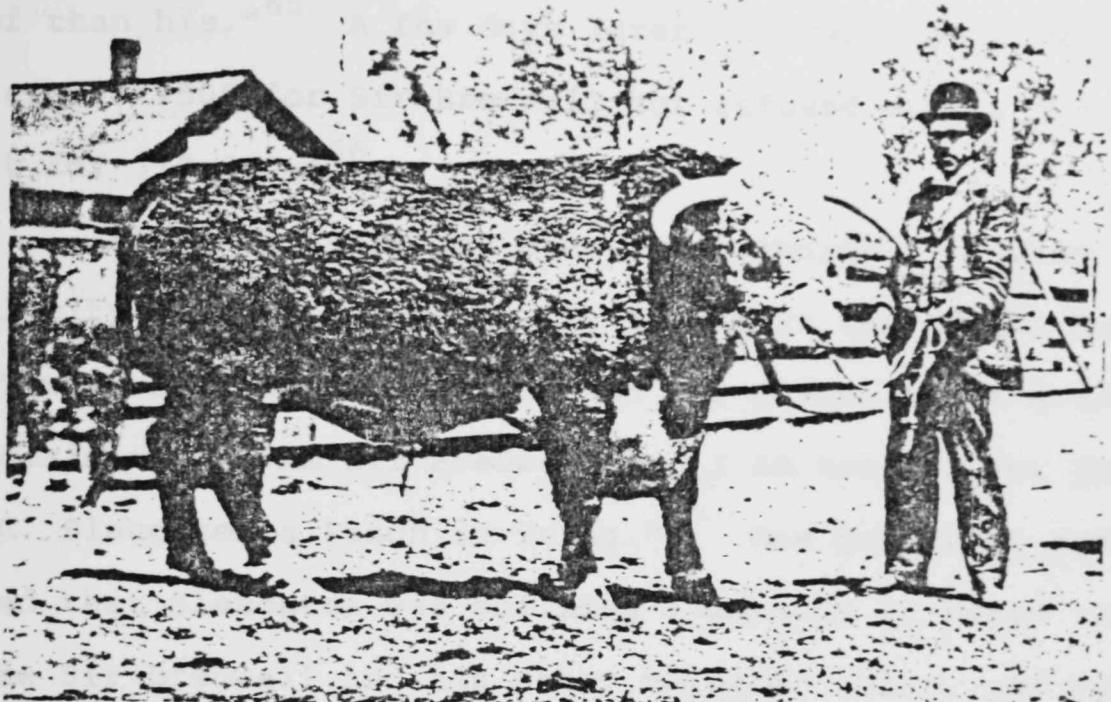
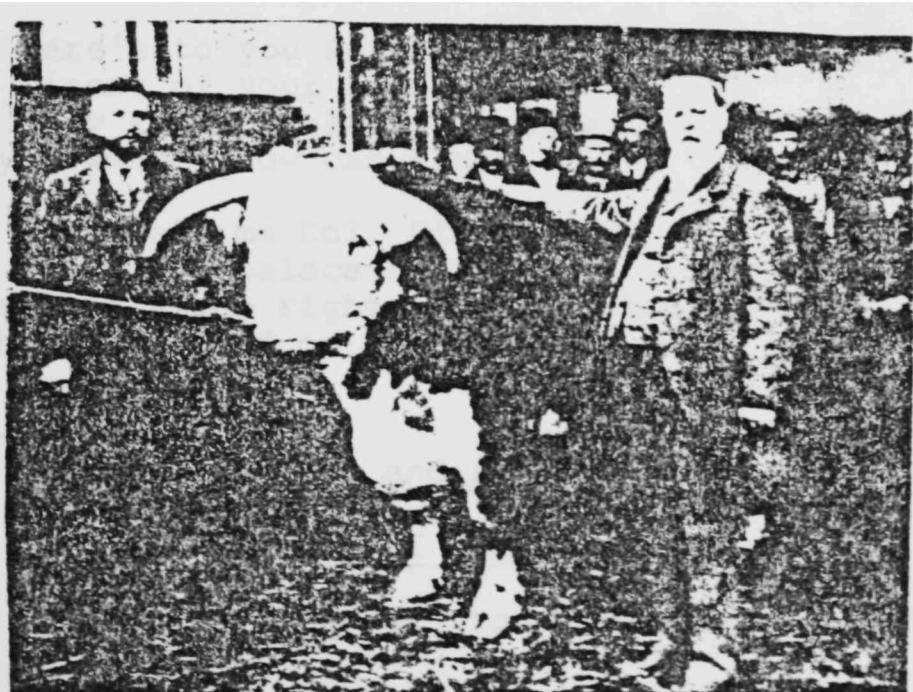


Fig. 7

Ancient Briton (above)

C. C. Slaughter (below right) and T. F. B. Sotham
with Sir Bredwell following 1899 sale



that he "defies the world to produce a better specimen of beef than his."⁶⁵ A few days later, he reportedly was offered \$7,500 for Sir Bredwell but refused with a curt "not for \$10,000."⁶⁶

Slaughter utilized every opportunity to garner publicity for Sir Bredwell. To transport the famous bull to Texas, he rented a box car and had placed on it a sign proclaiming, "I Am Sir Bredwell and I Am Heading For Colonel C. C. Slaughter's Ranch in Texas."⁶⁷ One newspaper speculated that Slaughter was building a mansion in Texas to house Sir Bredwell and his other valuable bulls. An ex-cowboy, after watching the famous bull pass through Amarillo on the way to the ranch, expressed in a long poem his resentment that Sir Bredwell would receive better treatment than the cowboys who herded longhorns:

But here's to you Sir Bredwell,
The finest of your kind,
For they tell me that your equal
They nowhere now can find.

And they tell me Col. Slaughter
Has for you a palace built,
I used to sleep right near your house
With neither bed or quilt.

⁶⁵ Texas Stockman and Farmer, March 15, 1899, p. 15.

⁶⁶ Sanders, Story of the Hereford, p. 675.

⁶⁷ Morton Tribune (Morton, Texas), August 13, 1970, p. 2.

I've bivouacked herds upon the spot,
 And the Indian bushwhacked me,
 And now you have a kingdom there--
 The change is great, you see.⁶⁸

Slaughter soon learned that expensive bulls required far more care than range bulls. He was forced to rent special pastures for the animals where proper feed and shelter were readily available. Rollie Burns, a Lubbock County stock raiser, boarded several Slaughter bulls for \$250 per month.⁶⁹ Unaccustomed to paying rent, the Colonel soon sought other arrangements. In 1900, he purchased a 2,000-acre alfalfa farm in the Pecos Valley two miles east of Roswell, New Mexico.⁷⁰ The new acquisition, in addition to giving Slaughter a well-protected breeding farm, also lent prestige to his entire operation. Appropriately named "The Slaughter Hereford Home," the farm was managed by George Slaughter, who that same year moved from Plainview to Roswell. At this new site, he placed Ancient Briton, Sir Bredwell, and a number of other selected bulls and cows. As with all his projects, Slaughter intended the farm to be the best. "You must exercise your best judgment and when you feel anything should be done, go at it," he instructed a pessimistic

⁶⁸ Western Advocate (Amarillo, Texas), June 29, 1899, GMS.

⁶⁹ C. C. Slaughter to R. C. Burns, letters, December 4, 1897, February 2, 1898, R. C. Burns Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

⁷⁰ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letters, October 15, 1899, April 17, 1900, GMS.

George who was concerned about the cost involved. "We want a model farm and it costs money to get it."⁷¹

Once the Slaughter Hereford Home was operational, it produced not only purebred calves but badly-needed hay for winter feeding. The farm also wintered horses from the Texas ranches⁷² and produced fruit and vegetables to supply ranch line camps. As a paying venture, however, the farm fell far short of expectations, and in 1906 the Colonel gave serious consideration to selling it. Annual operating expenses often were as great as those on both the large West Texas ranches.⁷³

The deaths of Ancient Briton and Sir Bredwell in 1902 and 1904, respectively did not go unnoticed. Colonel Slaughter, while mourning the death of Ancient Briton, found some consolation because "he has served us well."⁷⁴ When Sir Bredwell died two years later, George proposed to have the bull's head dressed and stuffed for hanging in his father's Dallas office and to have erected a marble monument

⁷¹ Ibid., December 13, 1900.

⁷² Clyde Fitzgerald to Jerry L. Rogers, letter, April 11, 1971, Office Files, Ranching Heritage Center, Texas Tech University.

⁷³ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, January 16, 1906, GMS.

⁷⁴ Ibid., August 1, 1902.

in Roswell in its commemoration,⁷⁵ but there is no evidence that either project was carried out.

For several years, Slaughter reaped a great deal of publicity and premium prices from his subsequent sales of improved cattle. Although he had little interest in developing stock for the livestock show circuit, he was elated with the publicity received each time his cattle went to market, especially when they topped those from other Texas ranches. "Our steers sold for ten cents per 100 more than JA's, weight 100# more than the JA, killed 1% better than JA," he gleefully reported to George in late 1900.⁷⁶ Perhaps the experiment peaked in 1902 when the first increase from his purebred cattle was sold. In June, when he shipped from Texas to Montana 5,200 two-year-old steers, including shorthorns, shorthorn-Hereford crosses, and purebred Herefords, the Chicago Livestock World quoted Texas cattleman A. B. "Sugg" Robertson's comment on their superior quality: "It was the greatest herd of steers of one age ever brought together," Robertson said.⁷⁷ In September 1902, Slaughter reported from Kansas City to George that his sales of

⁷⁵ Roswell Record (Roswell, New Mexico), July 15, 1904, p. 4.

⁷⁶ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, December 28, 1900, GMS.

⁷⁷ Newspaper clipping, Livestock World (Chicago, Illinois), June 19, 1902, GMS.

two-year-olds of this herd "topped the market for the year," bringing \$8.75 per hundred. "The 2-year-old cattle," he continued, "were pronounced by all who saw them as the best finished load of cattle that has been here this year. . . . I have been selling cattle here for more than 21 years and they were the best cattle I have ever sold, and brought the highest price. . . ."⁷⁸

Slaughter's purchases of Hereford cows and famous bulls indeed served him well. In five years, he rose to the forefront in the purebred Hereford business, an accomplishment that brought him strong satisfaction. At the outset of the venture, in April of 1897, he confided to George that his actions were based on simple rationale: "I have said to you for the last two years there is a place for the cowman where there is no speculation and that is simply the breeding herd."⁷⁹ A month later he penned, "Now is the time to understand what we are working for is the future."⁸⁰ He never admitted that he may have been swayed by the glamour associated with fashionable livestock sales. He did indicate, however, that he expected that his

⁷⁸ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, September 16, 1902, C. C. Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University (hereafter cited as CCS).

⁷⁹ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, April 13, 1897, GMS.

⁸⁰ Ibid., May 29, 1897.

purchases would insure a notable place for him and his family in the cattle industry: "I am making a determined effort in my old days to put up the largest and best breeding Hereford herd in the world," he explained in confidence, ". . . if [we] don't aim high, we cannot expect to get high."⁸¹

The Colonel also saw his investment as a means to establish his "boys" as quality cattle raisers. "Now at much cost of both labor and thought as well as expense," he indicated to George, "I have tried very hard to put you boys to the front in the cattle business. Hope you will succeed in holding the fort. At the same time you will have many jealous men to try to knock you down and so you must be carefull [sic] of both what you say and how you act."⁸²

During the following decade, "holding the fort" was to be a major challenge for Slaughter and his sons, for the focal point would be centered, not on cattle, but on land.

⁸¹ Ibid., April 15, 1897.

⁸² Ibid., May 24, 1897.

CHAPTER VII

THE "INDIVISIBLE" EMPIRE: THE LAZY S RANCH

An important commodity for Western American entrepreneurs has been the availability of free or cheap land. From the beginning of the cattlemen's occupation of West Texas, there had always been ample prairie for use by any stockman willing to risk investment. During the first twenty years of C. C. Slaughter's ranching operations in West Texas, regardless of whether the state, railroads, or individuals owned the land, grass generally was available to all stock raisers during favorable seasons. In the 1890s, however, the situation changed dramatically. As cattle prices slowly recovered from the market collapse of 1886-1887, open range cattlemen found their control of land suddenly challenged. Prospective farmers and late-arriving ranchers joined in the competition for the remaining stretches of unplowed grassland. As a result, C. C. Slaughter, after having weathered severe drouths, blizzards, and depressions, encountered an even greater challenge--control of the land he had been using for twenty years.

From his first occupation of the West Texas

prairies, Slaughter had had little difficulty in maintaining cheap land leases. (See Chapter V). For as little as four cents per acre, he had been able to renew his leases every five or six years. And, according to the liberal laws established by the Texas legislature, leased land, if improvements had been made in amounts of one hundred dollars or more, could not be sold by the state until the expiration of the lease. Since a cattleman could renew his lease prior to its expiration, the system promised perpetuation.¹

With the increased demand for land during the 1890s, however, Slaughter's control over vast portions of West Texas was attacked. The first challenge came in 1893 from the Texas and Pacific Railway. Claiming title to a portion of Slaughter's 1886 purchase, the railroad sued Slaughter for title to 84,000 acres of the Long S and in December won the case. The shrewd Slaughter, however, salvaged the loss by leasing from the railroad the disputed land for two and a half cents per acre.²

Slaughter's second challenge came from the state legislature. Once sympathetic toward cattlemen, the lawmakers had shifted gradually to a farmer-oriented position and by the mid-1890s began revising certain laws favorable

¹Rickard, "Ranching Industry on the South Plains," p. 109; Gammel, Laws of Texas, IX, 883-884.

²C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, December 16, 1893, GMS.

to stock raisers. The legislature on April 4, 1895, created the "four-section act," which struck a devastating blow at Slaughter and other big Texas ranchers. This law provided that a prospective settler could acquire one section of agricultural land and three of grazing land for as little as \$80.00 down with four years to pay. Lands were to be sold only to actual settlers, who were required to reside on the land for three years and to make certain minimum improvements before title could be secured. A subsequent amendment lowered the price of agricultural land to \$1.50 per acre, thereby reducing the required down payment.³ With the passage of the law, demand for land increased precipitously. Because farmers could utilize windmills to obtain water in previously unwatered places and construct fences to protect crops, cattlemen could no longer maintain control over large blocks of prairie.

At the same time, West Texas ranchers were faced with a pressing need to enclose the land they used. The importation of purebred cattle required controlled breeding, for no rancher, who had invested heavily in fine Hereford cattle, wanted a rangy longhorn bull impregnating his herd. Consequently, C. C. Slaughter suddenly found that West Texas no longer had any readily available land. "There is a

³Jean Alexander Paul, "The Farmers' Frontier on the South Plains" (M.A. thesis, Texas Technological College, 1959), pp. 84-85; Gammel, Laws of Texas, X, 63-75.

general raid down at the Ranch on leasing land," he sadly reported to son George in September 1897, "and I expect our free grass is gone and it is going to cost us 7 to 10,000.00 more per year than it has for several years."⁴ Yet, he knew that, if he continued to upgrade his herds, he would need additional land: "in this great excitement over the Cattle Business," he wrote, "we will have to meet the plungers in both land and cattle and I wish to secure grass and own it if possible."⁵

To increase his holdings, Slaughter in 1897 purchased, as previously noted, the Tahoka Lake Ranch in Lynn County which contained 1,600 acres of patented land and 140,000 acres of leased land. This acquisition not only offset his loss of Long S lands, but gave him a layover point for herd movement between the Long S and the Running Water ranches.⁶ During the same year he also acquired the T J F Ranch in northeastern Dawson County for development into a new home for his purebred Hereford herd. However, because he could not secure title to alternate sections, he continued to look elsewhere for land in solid blocks, unencroachable by persistent "nesters." Furthermore, he wanted to locate an additional ranch which he could leave

⁴C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, September 24, 1897, GMS.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Alley, "Fifty-Four Years of Pioneering."

to his children. The Long S, he thought, would become Bob Slaughter's legacy, the Running Water, George's, but there were seven other children. To provide for them, he determined to create a permanent inheritance, "undivided and indivisible."⁷

Slaughter found it difficult to locate any large blocks of land. Most Texas land was surveyed in sections; alternate sections were deeded to surveyors or railroads and the remainder reserved for actual settlers. However, there was still one area on the South Plains in 1897 which offered possibilities. Lying in the heart of the Llano Estacado and passed over by the railroads and land speculators, the waterless and arid grasslands in Cochran and Hockley counties had quietly passed from the public domain. In 1883, the state legislature had deeded these lands in blocks of four square leagues (17,712 acres) or less to approximately thirty counties for county local school revenue.⁸ These tracts were still available to prospective ranchers who could persuade the counties to lease or sell.

⁷C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, January 21, 1898, GMS.

⁸Gammel, Laws of Texas, IX, 351-352. Most of the counties which received land were forced to locate their surveys in the unwanted remnant of the public domain. On the South Plains, these surveys were located primarily in Cochran, Hockley, and Bailey counties. Surveyed in Spanish measurements, these tracts were divided into square leagues and subsequently subdivided into labors.

With no surface water available, except for a few shallow lakes and buffalo wallows, the arid, often sandy country supported few cattle. Nevertheless, a few ranchers had been operating in the area since the early 1880s. The first ranch, the Surratt, was established during the 1880s in southern Cochran County,⁹ but most of the region was used by small operators who leased pasturage or simply used the grass free of charge. Unable or unwilling to invest in windmills, none of these cattlemen established a foothold in the area.

After the passage of the four-section act in 1895, which opened the public school land for settlement, the 17,712-acre tracts of non-public land in Cochran and Hockley counties became more attractive to displaced cattle-men. During the spring of 1897, R. S. Ferrell obtained leases to 43,000 acres in northeastern Cochran County, near present-day Morton, apparently intending to stock it, but in May he sold his lease to M. B. Huling of Reeves County. Huling, who had ranned in the Guadalupe Mountain area of West Texas, was familiar with the arid climate of the western South Plains.¹⁰ After obtaining additional land through purchase, Huling leased his entire tract--93,000 acres--to Fount G. Oxsheer.

⁹ Deed Records, Vol. I, p. 4, Cochran County, Texas.

¹⁰ Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 409.

Perhaps no man better understood the problems of ranching on the South Plains than did Fount Oxsheer. As early as 1888, he had been grazing cattle in the area, and, by May 1897, when Slaughter acquired his Hereford herd, he had several thousand head on his Diamond Ranch in western Hockley County. At that time, Oxsheer apparently advised Slaughter of the possibility of acquiring title to a large tract of the western South Plains. He pointed out that very little of the land was individually owned, that much of it could be bought from the counties that owned the four-league blocks, and that the purchase would have to be made through agents since the farmer-dominated commissioners' courts would never knowingly sell an acre to a landed cattleman.¹¹

Realizing that it was probably the last opportunity to acquire a contiguous large acreage tract and not wanting to rent pasture for his expensive Hereford bulls, Slaughter decided to acquire a large block of some of the Cochran-Hockley land and contracted with Oxsheer to buy fifty to sixty square leagues or about 250,000 acres.¹²

Naturally, Slaughter wrote George about his plans

¹¹C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, January 21, 1898, GMS.

¹²C. C. Slaughter, undated court interrogatory, Hiley T. Boyd Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

for the new venture. "I am of the opinion that it is one of the best ranches in the state that can be obtained in a solid body. . . . If I succeed in getting this ranch, and live long enough to improve it right, I desire to make it an insurance policy for my children, undivided and indivisible [author's underlines], until the death of the last one of my family. I think it is the best policy I could leave my children as it will be yielding a profit all the time."¹³ Sixty-one years old, Slaughter knew that he would have to move swiftly if he expected to convert the region into a profitable ranch. Yet, he hoped to make of it a model ranch that would be the crowning achievement of his life: "It will be one of, if not the greatest legacy, ever left to a family in the nation," he promised his son; "It will be the greatest blood preserve on earth. I am trying to leave a sterling character to go with it, as I think a good name is the most priceless heritage a man can leave."¹⁴

The purchase of the new ranch involved for Slaughter at least two problems. First, in 1898, the farmers were steadily advancing by the hundreds onto the eastern South Plains. Their intrusion forced land prices upward in areas that had been penetrated by railroads. Second, since the Slaughter name was already associated with large land

¹³C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, January 21, 1898, GMS.

¹⁴Ibid.

holdings, farmers (and some cattlemen) opposed his efforts to acquire additional acreage. Anticipating such opposition, Slaughter warned George to keep quiet about the Oxsheer deal: "A word to others would ruin us," he wrote.¹⁵ He instructed Oxsheer to proceed cautiously.

Oxsheer enlisted the aid of A. J. Harris, R. S. Ferrel, John Scharbauer, and W. E. Kaye, all of whom, like himself, were indebted to Slaughter's Dallas bank. Harris, who had sold Slaughter the Tahoka Lake Ranch during the previous year and had been leasing sixteen square leagues in Hockley County, quickly proved to be the most successful negotiator. Visiting the Panhandle counties of Armstrong and Randall in March 1898, he obtained title to their four-league blocks.¹⁶ In April, he persuaded R. S. Ferrel to sell the Carson County tract previously acquired for his own use, and, soon afterward, he obtained title to the Mills and Potter County school lands. By the end of July 1898, Harris had presented to Colonel Slaughter deeds to 88,560 acres in Cochran County located in a ten-by-fourteen mile block along Sulphur Draw,¹⁷ land that was then being

¹⁵ Ibid., January 25, 1898.

¹⁶ Deed Trust Records, Vol. 1, p. 88, Hockley County, Texas.

¹⁷ Deed Records, Vol. 2, pp. 192, 272, 313, Cochran County, Texas.

used by John Beal's St. Louis Cattle Company.¹⁸

Through Oxsheer, Slaughter obtained from M. B. Huling for \$25,000 the 93,000-acre Huling Ranch. Since Huling only owned four square leagues of the land, Oxsheer dispatched R. S. Ferrel to secure from the commissioners of Brewster and Coke counties titles to their tracts.¹⁹ Ferrel easily obtained title, but, as soon as he resold the lands to Slaughter, the commissioners of both counties rejected Ferrel's contract on the basis that they had been deceived.²⁰ After two years of litigation, Slaughter lost title to the Coke County land but eventually succeeded in winning a similar fight with Brewster County.²¹

John Scharbauer, from whom Slaughter had bought the Goodnight Hereford herd, also helped Oxsheer fulfill his contract by conveying his Martin County tract to Slaughter in 1899 and in April 1900 his Midland County block, but due to a title dispute the transfer of the latter was never executed.²² Slaughter obtained a third major block directly

¹⁸ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, n.d., GMS.

¹⁹ Deed Records, Vol. 2, p. 277, Cochran County, Texas.

²⁰ Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 232.

²¹ Ibid.; C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letters, February 2 and July 6, 1901, GMS.

²² Deed Records, Vol. 2, pp. 294-295, Cochran County, Texas.

from Oxsheer. In June 1900, Oxsheer deeded to Slaughter his "west pasture" of the Diamond Ranch, 37,000 acres, the tract that had been the pasture for Slaughter's Hereford herd.²³

A fourth block for the new ranch was created from parcels of land in southwestern Hockley County acquired after several years of bitter disputes and litigation. Slaughter's agents had obtained by 1900 title to 34,000 acres, including the Maverick, Kaufman, and Edwards County school land, but both the title and method of acquisition were soon challenged by the principal users, D. M. Devitt and C. H. Flato, who operated as the Mallet Land and Cattle Company. Devitt and Flato had moved cattle into Hockley County in the mid-1890s and were using approximately 74,000 acres when Slaughter's agents began soliciting the various counties for title. To curtail Slaughter's activity, Devitt filed lawsuits against the Colonel for control of the Maverick, Kaufman, and Edwards County school lands.²⁴

While Devitt's suit was pending in court, Slaughter sent W. E. Kaye to Eagle Pass to try to obtain title to the Zavala County tract that Devitt was using. On February 15, 1901, the commissioners court there granted to Kaye the deed, and on the same day Slaughter's son-in-law, attorney

²³C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 11, 1900, GMS.

²⁴Ibid., September 22, 1900.

G. G. Wright, won the Kaufman County suit.²⁵ Optimistic over the double legal triumph, Slaughter predicted that Devitt and Flato would soon capitulate:

With this deed in our hands, we will at once sue Mr. Devitt for "Trespass to try title," and there is no court on this earth that will keep us from possession of the land. With Kaufman, Maverick, and Zavala Counties in our possession, where is Devitt and Flato? They will be around soon for a compromise. Mark what I say, Flato will be over here soon, wanting to compromise and telling us much he has always loved the Slaughters.²⁶

Most critical was the 17,712-acre Edwards County tract. Lying in the heart of Devitt's ranch, its acquisition would assure Slaughter of a contiguous block; without it, his ranch would be divided by a ten-mile strip. Devitt, with holdings on both the north and south side, faced an identical situation. Whoever lost would have the expenses of extra fencing, additional windmills, more line camps, and other things. While the case was in litigation, the Edwards County commissioners, who had previously sold the land to Slaughter's agent W. E. Kaye, then sold the land to Devitt and Flato, completely disregarding the previous contract with Kaye.²⁷ With both parties claiming title, the stage was set for a major fight.

²⁵ Ibid., February 16, 1901.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Deed Records, Vol. 3, p. 218, Hockley County, Texas.

While Slaughter and Devitt fought over land titles in court, a small scale range war threatened to erupt between the cowboys of the two ranches. In 1903, Slaughter took possession of the tract following the expiration of Devitt's original grass lease and promptly fenced it. During the next three months, the barbed wire was cut at least six times.²⁸ The Slaughter cowboys immediately blamed the Mallet hands and prepared for action, one even getting a blister on his leg as a consequence of carrying a gun for several weeks. George Slaughter reported to his father that "I think he [the cowboy] thought he might be called to fight any time."²⁹

Following Slaughter's enclosure of the land, Devitt obtained an injunction against Slaughter's occupation, but the Colonel's cowboys refused to abandon the pasture until faced with a contempt-of-court threat. "I do not know what the Judge will do, but I fear he will give them the land, if he possibly can," Slaughter wrote to George in January 1904. "We immediately saw that the judge had his eye on us . . . for breaking his injunction."³⁰ Finally, after a

²⁸George M. Slaughter to Bob Slaughter, letter, January 10, 1904, GMS.

²⁹George M. Slaughter to G. G. Wright, letter, January 28, 1904, GMS.

³⁰C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, January 28, 1904, GMS.

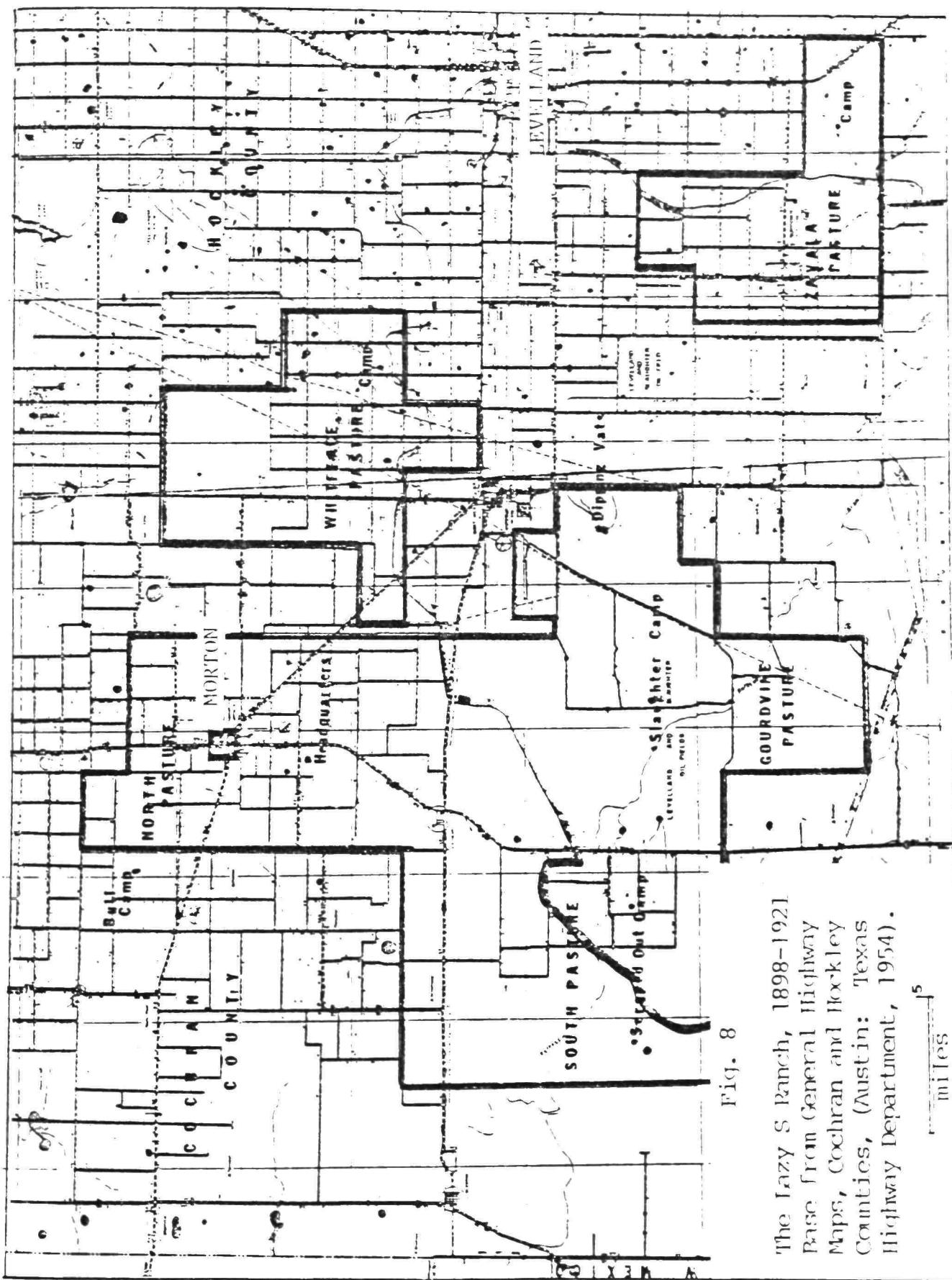


Fig. 8

The Lazy S Ranch, 1898-1921
Base from General Highway
Maps, Cochran and Hockley
Counties, Austin: Texas
Highway Department, 1954).

5 miles

preliminary hearing in Lubbock, United States Circuit Court Judge Edward R. Meeks ruled on May 31, 1904, in favor of Devitt and Flato, declared a permanent injunction against Slaughter, and ordered him to pay court costs.³¹ Slaughter appealed, but the U.S. Court of Appeals in New Orleans on October 2, 1905, upheld the lower court decision.³² "Guess we will send it to the Supreme Court," Slaughter dejectedly reported to George, but there is no evidence that he ever did.³³

Slaughter made one additional effort to break the Mallet control of southwestern Hockley County. Sending agent Ben C. Taber to Snyder and Seymour, he attempted to buy the Scurry and Baylor County lands that Devitt was leasing. The Commissioners Court in each county, however, refused to budge from its commitment, despite a \$26,000 bid.³⁴ In Knox County, Taber was more successful. He obtained title to a tract that joined on the northwest the main body of Slaughter's land in Cochran County, a tract

³¹ Copy of Judgment, Deed Records, Vol. 4, p. 236, Hockley County, Texas; C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, May 27, 1904, GMS.

³² Mandate, Deed Records, Vol. 9, p. 278, Hockley County, Texas.

³³ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, October 10, 1905, GMS.

³⁴ E. Dick Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, February 7, 1901, GMS.

that had previously been leased by Huling and Slaughter.

Taber also acquired Lipscomb County's 17,712 acres in June 1900.³⁵

In spite of the legal battles, Oxsheer, his agents, and others by the spring of 1901 had obtained for Slaughter deeds and leases to 297,000 acres, most of which lay in one contiguous block.³⁶ For this land, the Colonel paid approximately \$240,000 to the counties and \$95,000 in bonuses to Oxsheer and others for a total cost of \$1.36 per acre.³⁷ He also leased additional acreage from neighbors and from Slaughter cowboys who had established homesteads adjacent to or near the new ranch. At times Slaughter controlled in Hockley and Cochran counties over 300,000 acres.³⁸

During an era when great ranches were breaking up, Slaughter had created a vast new ranch. It had been accomplished by swift action; more leisurely efforts would have resulted in failure, for some of the commissioners' courts

³⁵Deed Records, Vol. 2, p. 289, Cochran County, Texas.

³⁶Vest Pocket Book, GMS. The 297,000-acre figure includes two blocks of land later reclaimed by Coke and Midland counties.

³⁷Several years after the ranch was established, a survey by W. D. Twichell indicated that Slaughter owned 246,699.3 acres. E. Dick Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, November 17, 1900, GMS; Deed Records, Vol. 2, p. 289, Cochran County, Texas.

³⁸C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, September 3, 1902, GMS.

would have refused to sell had they been aware of Slaughter's objective. Indeed, after learning of the intent, two counties refused to accept larger principal payments in order to prolong interest rates, and others tried to rescind their sales.³⁹

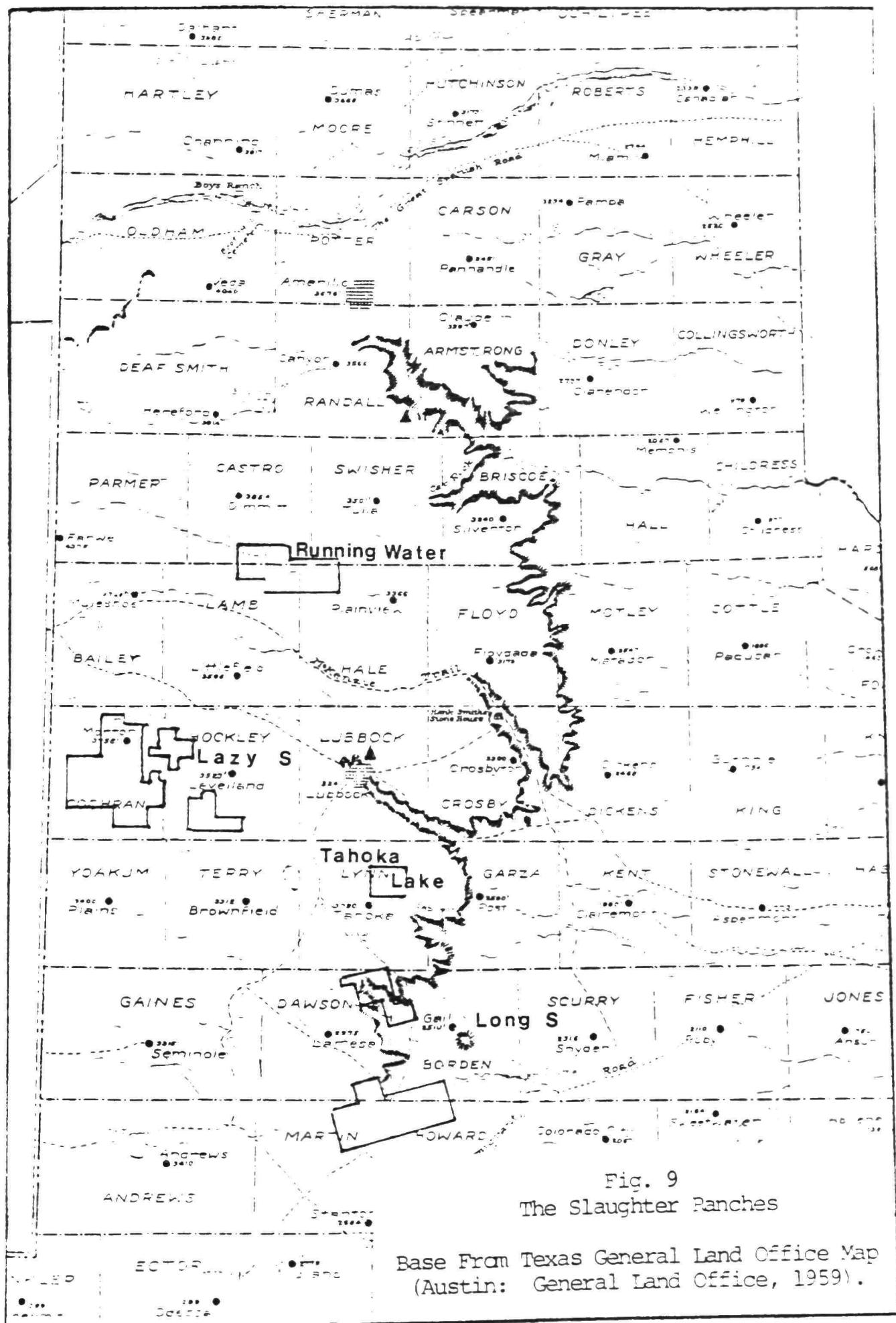
In 1898, when title to only a portion of the land had been obtained, Slaughter began operations on the new ranch. At first, he referred to it as the Sir Bredwell and Ancient Briton divisions of the Long S, but after 1901 he viewed it as a separate entity and soon called it the Lazy S. The Lazy S brand () was placed on the animal's thigh rather than on the side, as was the practice on the Long S, and it was shorter than the older Slaughter brand.⁴⁰

Once the ranch was established, Slaughter moved rapidly to make the new investment profitable. In the spring of 1898, he hired as foreman Hiley T. Boyd, a wiry young cowboy who had worked in Hockley County for five years and was well acquainted with the often-unstable conditions of South Plains ranching.⁴¹ Touring the acquired lands by

³⁹ Ibid., January 3, 1901.

⁴⁰ George M. Slaughter, II, Roswell, New Mexico, to David Murrah, interview, August 25, 1970. For a detailed description of the creation and operation of the Lazy S Ranch, see David J. Murrah, "Cattle Kingdom on Texas' Last Frontier: C. C. Slaughter's Lazy S Ranch" (M.A. thesis, Texas Tech University, 1970), pp. 1-102.

⁴¹ Hiley T. Boyd, Jr., to David Murrah, interview, June 20, 1970, Oral History File, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.



horseback with his new foreman, Slaughter outlined his plans, suggesting windmill and fence locations, herd management, and grass control methods. Then, as additional lands were obtained, the Colonel channeled his instructions to Boyd through son George, who became the manager. From his new headquarters at Roswell, George Slaughter thereafter managed the Running Water, the Slaughter Hereford Home, and the Lazy S.

Good water throughout the new ranch was as essential as grass for the projected twenty thousand head of breeding stock. Only a few wells, drilled by previous occupants and scattered over a thirty-mile area, dotted the arid landscape. Slaughter outfitted a crew and put it to drilling wells and erecting windmills.⁴² At twenty-one natural depressions and buffalo wallows, selected by Slaughter and Boyd, the crew by use of a horse-drawn fresno scraper dug a sizeable dirt tank. Eighteen tanks were supplied by two mills each and three were watered by three wells each. At the end of six years, the Lazy S had in operation fifty-four windmills, generally placed about five miles apart, at twenty-four locations.⁴³ By 1911 the investment in wells

⁴²C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, May 8, 1899, GMS.

⁴³At most watering sites on the ranch, Slaughter drilled two windmills in order to double the flow of water. Years later, Slaughter's foreman Hiley Boyd indicated that one mill per tank spaced closer together would have been a

was nearly \$60,000.⁴⁴ Such improvements were necessary, Slaughter maintained. "We are blowing in a big lot of money up there on the plains and down in the Pecos valley," he wrote his manager in 1901, but "Bearing in mind that it is simply foolishness to save the nickels and lose the Dollar, you will get through alright. On the other side look out for the dimes, and the Dollars will look out for themselves."⁴⁵

As well drilling and fencing were completed, the Lazy S was stocked with the Cross J Hereford herd and mixed breed cattle from the Long S. Once completed Slaughter's empire took on a new dimension as his ranches now spread over two hundred miles of West Texas. Anxious to promote his cattle business, he invited livestock journalists and others to tour with him the West Texas prairies. On his summer inspection in 1899, Slaughter was accompanied by H. W. Caylor, a Big Spring artist, who recounted the fourteen-day trip for the readers of the Texas Stock and Farm Journal. Joining Slaughter on July 12, at Midland,

more ideal arrangement. Hiley T. Boyd, Jr., to David Murrah, interview, June 4, 1970, Oral History File, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University; Texas Stock and Farm Journal, August 16, 1899, p. 7.

⁴⁴C. C. Slaughter Cattle Company, Inventory, 1911, Alexander A. Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

⁴⁵C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, January 23, 1901, GMS.

Caylor reported that "a few miles brought within Colonel Slaughter's range, the magnitude which can be more fully appreciated when I tell you that you can travel north from the Texas & Pacific railroad 200 miles and camp every night on Col. Slaughter's range."⁴⁶

To tour his ranches, Slaughter used a custom-built carriage. Similar to an army ambulance, the coach was equipped with a kitchen and cushioned seats that could be removed for a bed. Drawn by four matched mules, the rig bore paintings of Sir Bredwell and Ancient Briton on each side of the driver's seat.

Using the special coach, Slaughter and his guest, accompanied by Bob Slaughter, visited all four divisions of the Long S range. First, they stopped at Rattlesnake, where three thousand shorthorn cattle were being rounded up. From there, the party proceeded to the Sulphur pastures in Borden and Martin counties, then turned northwest, stopping briefly at the Buffalo division in southern Dawson County. At Indian Canyon, ten miles east of present-day Lamesa, the group rested briefly and then traveled north approximately twenty-four miles to the Tahoka Lake Ranch. On Saturday, July 22, the entourage moved into Hockley County, where it visited what Slaughter called the Ancient Briton Wellbred

⁴⁶ Texas Stock and Farm Journal (formerly Texas Livestock Journal), August 16, 1899, p. 7; April 26, 1936.

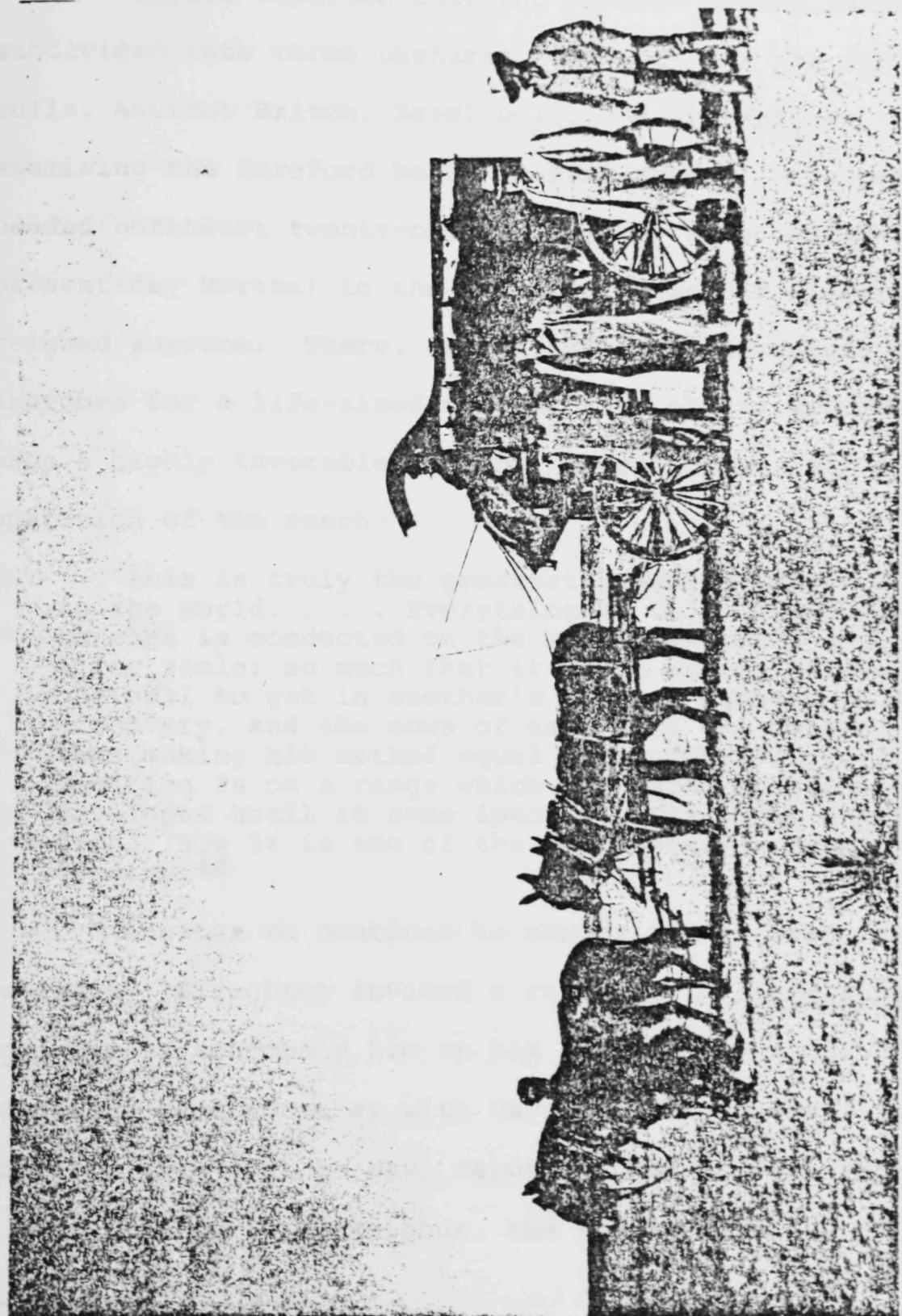


Fig. 10--Ranch Tour, 1899

C. C. Slaughter (second from left) and R. L. "Bob" Slaughter (right).

Ranch, the future Lazy S.⁴⁷

Caylor reported that the Ancient Briton Ranch was subdivided into three pastures, one each for the famous bulls, Ancient Briton, Hazel Dell, and Protection. After examining the Hereford herds in each pasture, the party proceeded northwest twenty-one miles (four miles northwest of present-day Morton) to the division where Sir Bredwell reigned supreme. There, Caylor, greatly impressed, drew sketches for a life-sized oil painting of Sir Bredwell and made a highly favorable comment regarding the bull and the operation of the ranch:

This is truly the greatest purebred Hereford herd in the world. . . . Everything on Col. Slaughter's ranches is conducted on the most systematic and scientific scale; so much that it would be impossible for one bull to get in another's pasture without immediate discovery, and the cows of each herd are counted daily, thus making his method equal to hand-breeding. The location is on a range which was never successfully developed until it came into Col. Slaughter's possession. Now it is one of the best watered-ranges in the country.⁴⁸

Anxious to continue to capitalize on such favorable publicity, Slaughter invited a reporter for Farm & Ranch Magazine to accompany him on his 1900 summer tour. He followed the same route as with Caylor. This guest, likewise ecstatic with what he saw, reported that at Soda Springs, a few miles north of Sulphur, the steers were "so uniform

⁴⁷ Texas Stock and Farm Journal, August 16, 1899,
p. 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

. . . it seemed we were viewing the same individuals over and over again. This was the largest and finest bunch of beef cattle I have ever seen. . . ."⁴⁹

At Tahoka Lake, the reporter was impressed when Slaughter stopped to give lessons to a fencing crew. At the Ancient Briton Ranch,⁵⁰ he recorded that "the Ancient Briton division is the largest ranch in the world devoted exclusively to the breeding of purebred Hereford cattle. Here Ancient Briton, the famous world's fair champion, is king."⁵¹

The tour ended at the Sir Bredwell division in Cochran County. Like Caylor, the unnamed reporter thought what he had seen was almost unbelievable: "In all the years I have been identified with the cattle industry in the North and East, I never for a moment fancied that such system and method could reach this high perfection on a ranch so large."⁵² He calculated the total acreage of the Long S and Lazy S at 1,373,000 acres, stocked with 54,500 head of

⁴⁹"Cattle Raising in Texas: The Great Slaughter Ranches," Farm & Ranch, XX (February 9, 1901), 1-3.

⁵⁰For a brief period, the Ancient Briton Ranch was headquartered at what later became the Whiteface Camp of the Lazy S Ranch. The site was served by a unique two-story dugout, now preserved at the Texas Tech Museum's Ranching Heritage Center.

⁵¹"Cattle Raising in Texas," p. 3.

⁵²Ibid.

cattle. The trip required seven days, including six nights on Slaughter land.

Adequate grass, an abundance of good water, the best purebred cattle, and favorable publicity all combined, however, were not enough to assure success. Slaughter fully realized that sound and efficient business practices suitable for such a vast empire were equally as essential. Until 1895, he had run his cattle business from a saddlebag (inventories, business ledgers, and accounting procedures were non-existent), but the Panic of 1893 and the drouth that followed forced him to keep more accurate records of expense and income.⁵³ With the 1897-1899 purchases of additional land and cattle, he updated his business practices. He put to work in his Dallas office the first of his college-educated sons, E. Dick Slaughter. Having graduated from the University of Texas in 1895 with AB and LLB degrees, Dick did further study at the University of Chicago and at Washington and Lee University. Soon after beginning his duties as a bookkeeper and stenographer in July 1897⁵⁴ and

⁵³C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, February 14, 1895, GMS.

⁵⁴As a student at the University of Texas, Dick Slaughter became known as a "Hell raiser." While a resident in B Hall, he once pretended to hang himself as a part of a practical joke played on the dormitory supervisor. Much to the delight of his college mates, Slaughter "put on an excellent performance of gasping out his last breath while his gallant rescuer frantically administered first aid." Walter E. Long, "B Hall of Texas," Southwestern

much to his chagrin of his manager-brothers, George and Bob, Dick made a fact-finding business tour of the West Texas ranches: "Take him to your ranch," the Colonel ordered George, "and give him facts in regard to all matters pertaining to the ranch and its interests. Don't be fearful of giving him too many details, but give him all facts in a systematic way for our future guidance as our business has now grown to such large proportions [sic] that it is highly necessary to have notes for reference in black and white."⁵⁵

After the creation of the Lazy S Ranch, Dick Slaughter's business influence became more pronounced. At his insistence, Colonel Slaughter agreed to create the C. C. Slaughter Cattle Company, Incorporated, a family-owned corporation which was to control the activity of the Cochran and Hockley County Lazy S Ranch. In the preamble to the charter of the corporation, Colonel Slaughter outlined his intention that the ranch serve as a permanent insurance policy for his wife and nine children. He emphatically emphasized that the ranch was to serve as "an indivisible endowment" for his family: "the title shall not pass from my wife . . . and my children . . . so long as one of my

Historical Quarterly, LXII (April, 1959), 417-418. See also "Captain E. Dick Slaughter, Encyclopedia of Texas (Dallas: Texas Development Company, 1922), p. 243.

⁵⁵C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 29, 1897, GMS.

children shall survive."⁵⁶ He divided the stock ten ways equally.

Slaughter then appointed himself and the four oldest boys to serve as the corporation's first directors. Since he always required his family to be home for the Christmas holidays, directors' meetings were scheduled in Dallas on the fourth Monday in December. At those meetings, in spite of his intent to create a family-controlled corporation, the Colonel virtually dictated policy.⁵⁷

Dick Slaughter was elated about the incorporation of the Lazy S. "Just as soon as the corporation is fully launched," he wrote to his brother George, "I want to begin keeping a full set of books, stock-holders Minute Book, Directors minute book, Ledger Journal, Day-book, etc. I am going to keep all this Company business entirely distinct and separate from the C. C. Slaughter business."⁵⁸ Insisting that his brothers supply him with a "full, itemized correct and complete INVENTORY of everything conveyed to

⁵⁶ C. C. Slaughter Cattle Company, Charter and Minutes, Cochran County Historical Museum, Morton, Texas (photocopy); see also Legal Materials File, Alexander A. Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

⁵⁷ Several of Colonel Slaughter's statements in letters to his son leaves no doubt that he single-handedly controlled ranch policy in the directors' meetings. As late as 1909, he readily vetoed decisions made by his sons.

⁵⁸ E. Dick Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, February 11, 1902, GMS.

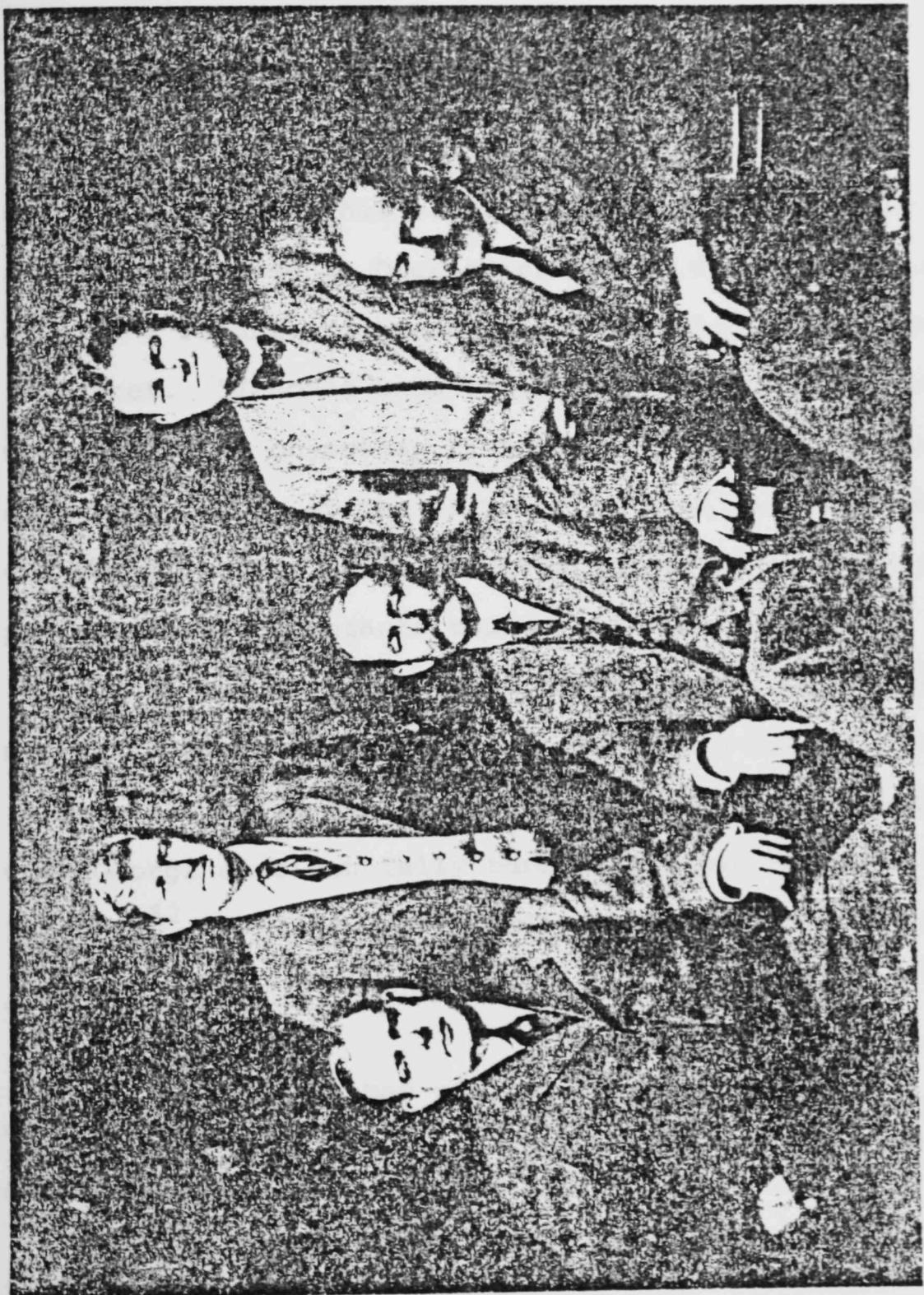


Fig. 11--C. Slaughter's Sons
(Left to right) Alex, C. C. Jr. (standing), Dick, George, Bob

the C. C. SLAUGHTER CATTLE CO.," Dick Slaughter soon aggravated his easy-going ranch manager-brothers: "Nobody on earth but you can get it up," Dick pleaded with George about the inventory, "and you know that it is absolutely necessary to have it, and to have it as soon as you can make it up. . . ." ⁵⁹ Like his older sons, Colonel Slaughter could see little sense in Dick's insistence for an inventory, and, as a result, Dick was forced to solicit the inventory in secret. "I don't know whether or not [Colonel Slaughter] would raise an objection or not. . . . I know this inventory ought to be here at the office." ⁶⁰ Dick failed, however, to get the inventory until nine years later and then only after professional accountants toured the ranch. ⁶¹

It was not long until the senior Slaughter began to mistrust his bookkeeper son. Less than a year after he joined the office staff, the Colonel began communicating with George confidentially through his own hand-written letters. ⁶² By 1902, perhaps discouraged by his father's

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid. In May of 1902, G. G. Wright also requested of George the inventory, which he wanted without Slaughter's knowledge. G. G. Wright to George M. Slaughter, letter, May 21, 1902, GMS.

⁶¹ C. C. Slaughter Cattle Company, Inventory, 1911, Alexander A. Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

⁶² See C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, April 30, 1898, GMS.

unwillingness to reorganize office matters, Dick had lost interest in the family business. "I am forcing Dick down to his books," Colonel Slaughter reported to George in October 1902, "I give him until the 1st of November to get matters straightened up, and if he does not do it, I am going to let him go and get someone else."⁶³ In an effort to give his son greater responsibility, Slaughter placed Dick in charge of office rentals in the Slaughter Building, a handsome six-story structure the Colonel had acquired for his offices.

The new duties did not end the problems with Dick. In June 1904, while his son was on an extended vacation, Slaughter discovered financial shortages which he attributed to Dick's mismanagement. "Wish he was at home," he noted to George. "He will have some explanations, I think."⁶⁴ Four days later, he instructed his managers to report directly to him and placed management of the Dallas office in the hands of his son-in-law G. G. Wright.⁶⁵ On June 24, he explained to George the office adjustments. "Dick's administration for the last year is found short \$5096.00 for which he has given his note and he made a full and frank acknowledgement. . . . It seems he cannot touch it [money] without

⁶³ Ibid., October 9, 1902.

⁶⁴ Ibid., June 18, 1904.

⁶⁵ Ibid., June 22, 1904.

using it."⁶⁶

The incident provoked the Colonel to reevaluate all his ranching and business procedures. In a strongly-worded letter to George, he demanded that stricter accounting records be kept of expense and income. "I am going to have this office run and run right or not at all," he indicated, and explained his new and complicated procedures. Dick was to work under the supervision of G. G. Wright at a salary of \$100 per month: "He cannot live with anything less," his father noted. "He has to change his way of living."⁶⁷ Money collected in the Dallas office from building rents was turned over to the office janitor, J. P. Wiley, perhaps the only one Colonel Slaughter could trust. Wiley then was to hand the money to Slaughter's stenographer who was to deposit it. C. C. Slaughter, Jr., Colonel Slaughter's second-to-youngest son, was to audit the stenographer's accounts. Slaughter placed the blame for the trouble on family jealousy and dissension. "There has been in our business too great a fear of one of our people telling on the other for fear they would get mad, and the consequence is that I am working for you all, and it appears that all

⁶⁶ Ibid., June 24, 1904.

⁶⁷ Ibid. C. C., Jr., began working in his father's office soon after he graduated from Baylor University in 1902. He also entered the tailoring business located in the Slaughter Building. C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, September 3, 1902, GMS.

of you, or some of you are pulling trying to keep us from doing anything for you."⁶⁸

George, and probably the other sons, promised his father that he would be a better businessman. "Rest assured I will do the best I can with everything . . .," and then added: "Now don't get it [in] your head that your boys are trying to rob you. I know we all spend a lot--it costs to run a big outfit. . . ."⁶⁹ Dick, however, refused to abide by his father's mandate and subsequently departed the family business. "Dick has no work yet, that I know of," the Colonel reported to George, "but he thinks he will get into an insurance office pretty soon. . . . I am sorry it comes to you like it does, and I know from experience how deep it reaches."⁷⁰

Following Dick's dismissal, C. C. Slaughter, Jr., and G. G. Wright, who was married to Slaughter's second daughter Dela, assumed more important roles in the family

⁶⁸ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 24, 1904, GMS. See also ibid., July 1, 1904.

⁶⁹ George M. Slaughter to C. C. Slaughter, letter, July 1, 1904, GMS.

⁷⁰ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, September 27, 1904, GMS. From 1904 to 1908, Dick Slaughter worked as general agent for Aetna Life Insurance Company and then organized a wholesale tire company. In 1911, he became vice president of the Mat Hahn Packing Company and in 1914 formed his own oil exploration company. He did not return to active participation in direct management of Slaughter affairs until after the death of his father in 1919. Encyclopedia of Texas, p. 243.

business. Young C. C., who at one time wanted to work on the ranches with his older brothers, worked for a few months as auditor before entering the tailoring business. Then, after a short-lived career in an ill-fated buggy manufacturing company, he rejoined his father's staff as bookkeeper in 1910.⁷¹ Wright, who worked for many years in the Dallas office as attorney, was verbose and stiff in his dealings with his brother-in-law managers and added little smoothness to the office management, but he retained the Colonel's confidence.⁷²

The older Slaughter boys remained in the west. George Slaughter continued to manage from his headquarters at Roswell, New Mexico, the Lazy S, the Running Water, and the Hereford Home. There, he established his own bank, the American National. Bob Slaughter managed the Long S from his home in Midland. Although Bob was more experienced as a cowman than George, his immaturity and ambitions would not allow him to settle into regular routines. Fast horses and later fast automobiles became his trademark, and his reputation as a "hell-raiser" became widespread in West

⁷¹ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, February 26, 1910, GMS.

⁷² See George M. Slaughter to C. C. Slaughter, Jr., letter, December 17, 1904, GMS. See also G. G. Wright to George M. Slaughter, letters, June 3, and August 2, 1906, GMS, and G. G. Wright Correspondence, C. C. Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

Texas.⁷³ With his expense account frequently overdrawn, Bob often stretched his father's patience, but never lost his favor. "Bob is going to be hard to get into line," the father once complained to George, "but means well and will come up all right."⁷⁴

In spite of all the family diversity and a far-flung operation, C. C. Slaughter retained tight control over his business. On the range and through his correspondence, he listened to and gave advice to his managers, even often heeding what they had to say, but he never failed to let them know that he was in control. From his Dallas office, he coordinated all ranch operations. Generally, his ranching methods worked well. Cattle born on both the Long S and Lazy S were held for two years on the Long S. Should additional finishing be required, the herds were moved to the Lazy S or Running Water for grazing, and from there to railheads at Bovina or Hereford.⁷⁵

⁷³ Lee Cooper, Decatur, Texas, to David Murrah, interview, June 2, 1970; J. Frank Dobie, "Top Name Among America's Cowmen," San Antonio Light, December 16, 1956, George Webb Slaughter File, Daughters of the Texas Republic, Library, San Antonio, Texas.

⁷⁴ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, July 1, 1904, GMS.

⁷⁵ Ibid., June 24, 1904, and George M. Slaughter to Bob Slaughter, letter, July 29, 1906, GMS.

For many years Slaughter maintained a semi-annual visitation routine. Normally in June and October of each year, he toured the ranches by train and coach, usually spending there eight days. From Dallas, he rode the Texas and Pacific to Big Spring, then toured the ranches by coach, generally following the route, as previously noted, when he escorted the livestock journalists. After concluding his tour at the Lazy S or Running Water, he proceeded by coach to Portales, New Mexico, where he returned on the train by way of Amarillo to Dallas. On the spring tour, Slaughter evaluated the condition of range and cattle and determined the placement of herds for summer grazing. He also observed spring roundups, made decisions whether to send cattle to market, and gave instructions on ranch improvements. On his fall tours, he supervised selection of cattle being sent to market, evaluated range prospects for winter pasturage, and inspected watering locations.

For many years, Slaughter also accompanied his cattle to the market terminals. From 1882 to 1898, he went by rail to Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago, and on one occasion, at least, to Buffalo, New York, seeking the best price for his products. Normally, he arrived a week ahead of his herd shipment and, while waiting for his cattle to arrive, he analyzed and observed market trends. At Chicago,

he often remained for three or four weeks.⁷⁶ His shrewdness at the market place was rewarded. He reportedly held for twenty years the record for prices paid for grass-fed beef.⁷⁷

Slaughter also became well-known for his tenacity as a trader and businessman. From his creditors he always demanded strong contracts. When dealing with a buyer of his cattle, he required the purchaser to place "faith" money in a special account, funds that, should the buyer default, would be forfeited to Slaughter. When financing a buyer's purchase, Slaughter required at least 10 percent interest.⁷⁸

By 1900, Slaughter had become one of the great cattlemen of America. Years of droving, herding, buying, and selling had given him an uncanny eye for cattle conditions and needs. Unlike many others, he profited from prolonged drouths and economic depressions through manipulation of cattle and land. He always maintained an optimistic

⁷⁶C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, August 27, 1897, GMS.

⁷⁷Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 333; unidentified and undated newspaper clipping, GMS.

⁷⁸C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, May 21, 1897, GMS; "Copy of Offer to O. H. Nelson," May 21, 1897, GMS. In 1900 Slaughter loaned Fount Oxsheer \$30,000 for three years at 10 percent. Securing the note with much of Oxsheer's patented land, cattle, and future increase of his herd, Slaughter was in a position to foreclose on all the land and cattle should Oxsheer fail to meet his first payment of \$8,500. C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, September 22, 1900, GMS.

spirit based on a simple philosophy: "Keep all your heifers and raise all the cattle you can," he advised a group of young cowboys in the mid-1880s; "there might be times when prices would be low, but they always come back."⁷⁹

Slaughter also understood buyer habits and knew how to sell in volume: "There is a good deal of difference between selling large numbers of cattle at a certain price and selling small numbers . . . , " he advised George on one occasion, "If you begin to distribute cattle in small numbers at a low price, the man learning this will offer a less price for large numbers."⁸⁰ He also worked the market another way to his advantage. "It is not my idea to put much money in cutbacks," he explained to George about a herd of poor cattle, "but let them grow out till they get aged and slip them in with others on account of heft by age, so they will take them when they are heavy."⁸¹ Such methods obviously allowed him to get higher prices for low quality beef.

By the time Colonel Slaughter celebrated his seventieth birthday in 1906, his empire had reached its greatest height. He owned or controlled a million acres of West Texas which made his business one of the largest

⁷⁹ O'Keefe, Cowboy Life, p. 208.

⁸⁰ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 23, 1902, GMS.

⁸¹ Ibid., December 10, 1902.

individual-controlled ranch operations in the nation. All ranches, with herds numbering more than forty thousand head, were in full production, returning sizeable profits to the long-time cattleman.

Slaughter's vast holdings enhanced his reputation in the cattle business among his peers. No meeting of cattlemen at the regional or national level was complete without a short comment by the legendary Slaughter. The Colonel often used such opportunities to bolster the Slaughter name, sometimes winning new friends with his pronouncements. For example, during a stormy meeting of the Texas Cattle Raisers Association⁸² in March 1896, while debating qualifications for membership, Slaughter gave strong support to small ranchers: "A new member with two head of cattle . . . had just as much right as any other member to express his sentiments," Slaughter proclaimed during the argument.⁸³

At the 1906 Texas Cattle Raisers convention, Slaughter rose to the greatest height of his career. Meeting in Dallas, the association had asked the Colonel

⁸²The Cattle Raisers Association of Northwest Texas changed its name to the Cattle Raisers Association of Texas in March 1893. Texas Livestock Journal, March 17, 1893, p. 1.

⁸³Proceedings of the Cattle Raisers Association of Texas, 1896 (Fort Worth: n.p., 1896), pp. 35-36, Averill Scrapbooks, Carrie Averill Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University (microfilm copy).

to give the keynote address on the subject, "The Passing of the Range, the Probable Extent of This Change, and Its Bearing on the Future of the Cattle Industry of Texas." Probably no man in Texas, whose lifelong experiences were intertwined with the history of range cattle industry, was better qualified to discuss the topic.

Slaughter accepted the assignment with enthusiasm. As a result, he delivered to the convention a forty-minute address, in which he attempted to answer a question he had posed to himself many times, "What am I do do with my cattle if the range is taken from me?"⁸⁴ His answer was his autobiography. He recounted his long association with the cattle ranges of the southwest, and particularly in West Texas. Revealing his love for the region, Slaughter described it for his fellow cattlemen as a "great table land country, beautiful to behold." There, he said, were two kinds of cowmen, the renters and the owners. The renters, Slaughter said, did nothing to improve their stock and had little faith in the land. However, the owners viewed the region in a different light: "[they] saw what a rich land it was, and if it only had moisture, they knew such a country could not be found on earth."⁸⁵ Cattlemen, like himself,

⁸⁴"The Passing of the Range," typed manuscript (14 pp.), C. C. Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

⁸⁵Ibid.

satisfied their hunger for land by buying it as best they could. "First from the state, then, from the railroads they obtained alternate sections. Then from the counties that had four leagues, granted to them for school purposes, and finally from the actual settler. They improved their herds to a great extent, and he is not a penniless man today."⁸⁶

Slaughter gave credit to individual cattlemen, the cattle raisers' associations, and surprisingly to farmers, for bringing civilization to North and West Texas. "The farmer will, in all probability, be a benefit to the cattle industry of the future . . . [steam tractors] are running now on your prairies, carrying from twelve to fourteen plows each . . . turning over many acres per day and doing it right. The farmer has learned how to manage his crops, and the stockman must learn how to manage his herds."⁸⁷

Slaughter concluded his discourse by correctly predicting that the Texas High Plains would eventually support both large cities and extensive cattle feeding operations. "Look out for the future coming white city of the plains of Texas," he said. "I cannot say where it will be located, but someday you will see the greatest city . . . with teaming [sic] millions of happy, industrious people,

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

railroads everywhere, all becoming cattle growers on a small scale."⁸⁸

Although Slaughter's optimistic nature prevailed in his address, he also recognized that his cattle empire faced immediate challenges from farmers. He knew well that, should he lose important lawsuits then in litigation, he would lose control of the thousands of acres of land, which would in turn force him to dispose of his long-established ranches. Thus, he shared with his audience his chief concern for the future of Texas cattlemen:

The only trouble with this class of men [the big cattlemen] is that their range is being taken up in many places, by actual settlers and their cattle are disturbed, and they scarcely know whether to sell out at present prices, or run their cattle, believing if they do sell, they will probably sit down in days to come and tell their sons they sold too cheap.⁸⁹

Within two years of his statement, Slaughter had indeed decided to sell. What he did not realize was that his old, long-time enemies--depression, drouth, and an agrarian-minded state legislature--would make his task of selling his ranches as difficult as trying to run them.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AGRARIAN CHALLENGE

While C. C. Slaughter was successfully developing the Lazy S Ranch, his control of the older Long S was being challenged by agrarian interests. The "four-section act" enabled land-hungry farmers to obtain title easily to large tracts; economic recovery on a national level, following the election of 1896, resulted in higher prices for agricultural commodities; and weather favorable for farming returned in 1895 to the plains. In Lubbock County, which lay between Slaughter's Long S and Running Water ranches, the vast IOA Ranch in 1895 began selling its potentially rich agricultural lands to farmers. This gave the agrarians a solid foothold in formerly rancher-dominated West Texas.

Furthermore, the inventions which allowed cattlemen to make extensive use of the arid region worked similarly well for the benefit of farmers. Windmills, which allowed ranchers to use pastures not watered by natural streams and lakes, made it possible for farmers to have water for domestic and stock use. Barbed wire likewise aided the farmers. If located in a big ranch pasture, farmers utilized fencing to protect their crops from a rancher's herd.

Occasionally, they acquired control of and enclosed with barbed wire fences watering sites long used by ranchers. In February 1901, Slaughter lost to farmers eight sections he had been leasing that included German Springs, the site of the ranch's original headquarters. Two Slaughter cowboys, who had secured title, secretly sold the land and disappeared. "It goes pretty hard on us, as we trusted these men," wrote Dick Slaughter to his brother George, "as they had been working for Bob a long time, and seemed to be honest. But such is life."¹

For many years, Slaughter and other West Texas cattlemen largely prevented farmer intrusion by perpetual leasing of state land. The increasingly-farmer-oriented state legislature even prolonged their control in May 1897 with a major concession in an amendment to the "four-section act" of 1895. Under that law, all lands, even those under lease, were subject to sale at any time. The new law of 1897, however, exempted leased lands from being sold south of a line extending from the northeast corner of Kent County on the east to the northwest corner of Yoakum County on the west.² At the expiration of a lease, the land was subject to sale, but if there were no purchasers, it was

¹E. Dick Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, February 15, 1901, GMS.

²Gammel, Laws of Texas, X, 1240; Paul, "The Farmer's Frontier on the South Plains," p. 86.

available for re-leasing by the original lessee. The land commissioner could cancel a lease only for non-payment. Cattlemen, however, soon found a way, with the aid of the land commissioner, to circumvent the intent of the law. They canceled their leases before the expiration date and then re-released for an extended time. As a result, prospective buyers had no means of knowing when a tract was available. The practice became known as lapse-leasing.³

The exempted district included the Long S and the Tahoka Lake Ranch in Lynn County. There, Slaughter freely used lapse-leasing as a means to perpetuate his empire. In 1900, he worked out an agreement with Land Commissioner Charles Rogan to renew all of his leases on enclosed land, then began to make additional improvements.⁴ As a further countermove, he persuaded the legislature to amend the lease laws again. The new law, which became effective April 19, 1901, provided that the lessee of school lands could not be disturbed in his possession during the term of his lease if he had placed certain improvements upon the property. Furthermore, the law specifically forbade the sale of leased

³Patricia Hill Jacobs, "The Texas Lapse Lease Case," unpublished and undated typescript (12 pp.), in possession of Frank Hill, Tahoka, Texas.

⁴Ketner v. Rogan, 68 Southwestern Reporter (Tx.), 775 (1902).

lands until such leases had expired in twenty-one West Texas counties, including Lynn, Howard, Dawson, Borden, and Martin counties, those which encompassed Slaughter's major holdings. But leased lands in these counties would become subject for sale in 1906.⁵ This law and the practice of lapse-leasing seemingly assured West Texas cattlemen perpetual control of public lands enclosed by their fences. C. C. Slaughter, whose wealth and influence may have been a major factor in the preferential treatment given to the West Texas cattlemen, seemingly was in no danger of losing his leases.

However, Slaughter's re-leasing practice was soon challenged in the courts. The decision was of major historic significance. An East Texas farmer, J. E. Ketner, who moved to the South Plains in 1900, awaited for the lease on Slaughter's Tahoka Lake Ranch to expire. When he learned that Slaughter had renewed the lease prior to its expiration, Ketner in 1901 filed suit against the Texas land commissioner and Slaughter. The battle lines quickly formed, the ranchers, of course, rallying to the support of Slaughter, and the farmers to the support of Ketner.

The case ultimately reached the state supreme court. Slaughter's son-in-law attorney G. G. Wright, and Texas

⁵Texas, General Laws of the State of Texas Passed at the Regular Session of the Twenty-Seventh Legislature (Austin: Von Boeckman, and Co., 1901), p. 195.

Attorney-General C. K. Bell represented the ranchers' interest. Wright pressed the case on the issue that, because Slaughter had made improvements on the land, he was not to be disturbed until the leases expired. The court, however, saw the case in a different light; on June 9, 1902, it decided that the land commissioner did not have the power to cancel a lease for any reason other than for non-payment. Ruling that improvements were not the issue, the court indicated that since only the rancher (Slaughter) and the land commissioner were involved in the lease renewal, the new contract was unauthorized and illegal.⁶ Citing the law of 1895 regulating the sale and lease of school land, the court held that the intent of the law was for the land to be for sale, rather than for lease, at the termination of a lease, and that the commissioner had no implied power to cancel a lease before its termination and to substitute another lease for a longer period. Thus, the second lease was invalid, and, upon the expiration of the first lease, the land was subject to sale.⁷

Although the ruling affected only 22,000 acres of

⁶ *Ketner v. Rogan*, p. 776.

⁷ Ibid., p. 774. Slaughter's son-in-law attorney G. G. Wright was bitter over the loss, attributing it to Colonel Slaughter's leniency. "Keep everybody off the land in your pasture. . . ." Wright sternly advised George Slaughter. "Had this method been adopted years ago, his troubles would not now be in existence." G. G. Wright to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 24, 1902, GMS.

Slaughter's Tahoka Lake pasture, the decision had far-reaching implications. For many West Texas ranchers, it meant the ultimate loss of approximately half, possibly more, of the land being grazed. With 200,000 acres under lease on his Long S Ranch, Slaughter knew that his big-ranch days were numbered. Since the court decision did not invalidate previous lapse-leasing, however, he was, for the time being, still in the ranching business. "The old 'S' Ranch holds good for a while yet," he reported to George; ". . . I am not hurt quite as badly as I thought. It gives me more time to work. At the same time, every indication is that I will have to give up the old Long S Ranch."⁸

Perplexed by the approaching loss of his old range, Slaughter considered several alternatives. He thought of converting his patented land into gigantic lots and feeding his cattle cottonseed meal. He considered sending son Bob to Arizona to see the Colonel's famous cousin "Texas" John Slaughter, who could perhaps arrange for them to acquire a ranch in Mexico. He pondered the possibility of acquiring title to additional land and consolidating his holdings, or selling out entirely. "I am taking the whole thing quietly, and thinking seriously over all the moves I can think of," he confided to George, "and while they are all

⁸C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 18, 1902, GMS.

risky, I think we had better pocket our cows."⁹ Afraid that his favorite ranch, the Long S, would soon be gone, Slaughter decided to spend there the summer of 1902.¹⁰

While there, he reached a decision. In collaboration with Bob Slaughter and bolstered with ideas from Wright, he determined to consolidate his holdings rather than sell his cattle. He returned to Dallas in July and revealed his plan to George: "I have almost concluded not to pay the State any more leases if I can help it, and let the land go on the market to settlers; except one lease I have that runs to 1904. . . . The big ranch is gone I think, I am going to try to make a fight for Rattlesnake, the best I think that I have, and I think my chances are good to hold 75,000 to 100,000 acres in that pasture which will be 21 miles long and 8 miles wide. I own 98 sections that are yet holding good; about 18 to 20 sections are gone, think I may buy them at a very extravagant price."¹¹ By allowing his leases to expire, Slaughter felt that he could acquire title to at least portions of the land from the purchasers.¹²

Slaughter's plan for retrenchment was threefold.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., letter, June 21, 1902, GMS.

¹¹ Ibid., July 18, 1902.

¹² G. G. Wright to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 24, 1902, GMS.

First of all, he would reduce his cow herd by half. "I had rather have a little money out of the cattle than to have them throw their heels up to the skies next spring and have nothing," he said.¹³ Second, he would incorporate his personal holdings as the C. C. Slaughter Company. In so doing, he hoped to remove his land disputes from local courts to federal jurisdiction in order to get away from "local prejudice."

Some counties, Borden, for instance are so prejudiced against me that I can get no more justice than a rabbit, and they cannot tell what they have against me either, more than I own some land and cattle in that vicinity; and they tell a man who has land and cattle to 'go away back and sit down.' So my idea is to get before the Federal Courts . . . and if they come it will cost them something, and I can tell them to 'go away back and sit down,' for I am going to get justice. Justice is all I want.¹⁴

Third, he would place as many of his own men on the land as possible, and then he would buy other land from the actual settler. "What I want will cost me 250 to 300,000 dollars and don't know that I can reach. . . . This is high but will never be lower."¹⁵ If he could acquire title to the land, Slaughter would then have two large ranches of near equal size, the Long S and Lazy S, one each for his two managers. "You and Bob both," he wrote George, "would be broken up

¹³C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, July 8, 1902, GMS.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., August 1, 1902.

without ranches to run, etc."¹⁶

Slaughter made two other important decisions for retrenchment. Knowing that he no longer could hold his leases on the Running Water Ranch, which lay north of the protected lease line, he would allow settlers to file on its public lands without harassment from him. Destined to become a rich agricultural area, Slaughter's patented Running Water holdings would increase in value rapidly. Then, in October 1904 he sold to his long-time friend and employee, Jack Alley, his patented holdings which encompassed Tahoka Lake in Lynn County.¹⁷

Slaughter's decisions precipitated a land rush to the plains. The land law of 1901 provided that prospective settlers could file on four sections of land, provided that not more than two sections were classified as agricultural. It also stipulated that application for the purchase was to be filed with the clerk of the county in which the land was located, rather than in the General Land Office, and accompanied by an affidavit that the applicant wanted the land for a home. The county clerk was required to receive the application, endorse it on the day and hour of the filing,

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., October 25, 1904.

and record it without delay.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the law created havoc at several county seats as large leases expired. Cowboys lined up against farmers in shoving contests to see which group could file claims first. In one instance, Slaughter produced his own group of "settlers." While on a trip to Big Spring, he made arrangements with attorneys there to locate prospective land seekers. To these individuals, he offered to pay filing fees, surveying expenses, and interest on loans until such time as the individual was ready to use the land and secretly let them know that he would ultimately buy the land.¹⁹

The first land rush occurred on September 2, 1902. Two Slaughter cowboys, O. D. Holloway and W. S. Willis, decided to take advantage of Slaughter's offer and located lands in Dawson County on which to file. A week before the filing date, the two camped inside the courthouse at Big Spring (at that time, unorganized Dawson County was attached to Howard County). "everything went fine for about a week," recalled Willis. "But about four o'clock in the morning before the filing our range boss, John Joiner, learned that

¹⁸ General Laws of the Twenty-seventh Legislature, p. 195; R. D. Holt, "School Land Rushes in West Texas," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, X (1934), 42-57.

¹⁹ W. S. Willis, A Story of the Big Western Ranches (Fort Worth: by the author, 1955), p. 40; see also J. A. Rickard, "South Plains Land Rushes," Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, II (1929), 98.

there were a large number of men coming from Scurry County to contest for filing on this land.²⁰ The wily Bob Slaughter, however, was prepared for such an event. Quickly, he rushed reinforcements to aid Holloway and Willis, supplying them with duck pants and leather belts. "Slaughter ordered . . . that we strip to the waist, put on the pants and belts, and stand with our hands in each other's belt around the boy who would have all the applications to put through the slot in the clerk's office door when the time for filing came."²¹

The expected contingent of trouble arrived at seven in the morning. Several tough looking men entered the courthouse. Halted by the sheriff, they were searched and disarmed of "guns, some knives, and iron bolts," and were told that the Slaughter men were not armed, but that they could be as rough as they wanted with their bare hands. "About four or five minutes before time to file," Willis recalled, "the newcomers rushed the Slaughter boys in the hall and began pulling some of the boys away, but it took two of them to hold one cowboy down. The boys made their filings."²²

A month later, a second rush was staged at Big

²⁰Willis, Big Western Ranches, p. 41.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

Spring. However, because there were too many prospective filers to encamp inside the courthouse, the sheriff moved the men outside, stipulating that filing would be made at the clerk's window. The Slaughter cowboys promptly built a high-walled chute adjacent to the window. Their creation resembled a small fort, and, during a rain storm, the enterprising cowboys simply covered the top to provide protection.

On the morning of October 2, a large group of Scurry County farmers arrived, this time armed. The cowboys, having been armed by Bob Slaughter, stood ready. The sheriff, acting to prevent bloodshed, promptly deputized twenty-five machinists from the nearby Texas and Pacific railroad shops and disarmed both groups. The farmers, deciding not to attack the solid wall of cowboys protecting the window, instead assaulted the courthouse door with sledge hammers. By the time they could gain entrance, however, the cowboys had filed their applications through the window.²³ Bob Slaughter, flushed with victory, reported to his father that, through such tactics, he would get three out of every four sections originally leased.²⁴

Other rushes followed. At Gail, in Borden County, where cowboys and settlers adopted the practice of wearing

²³Ibid., pp. 41-42; Holt, "School Land Rushes," pp. 50-51.

²⁴C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, October 9, 1902, GMS; Holt, "School Land Rushes," p. 49.

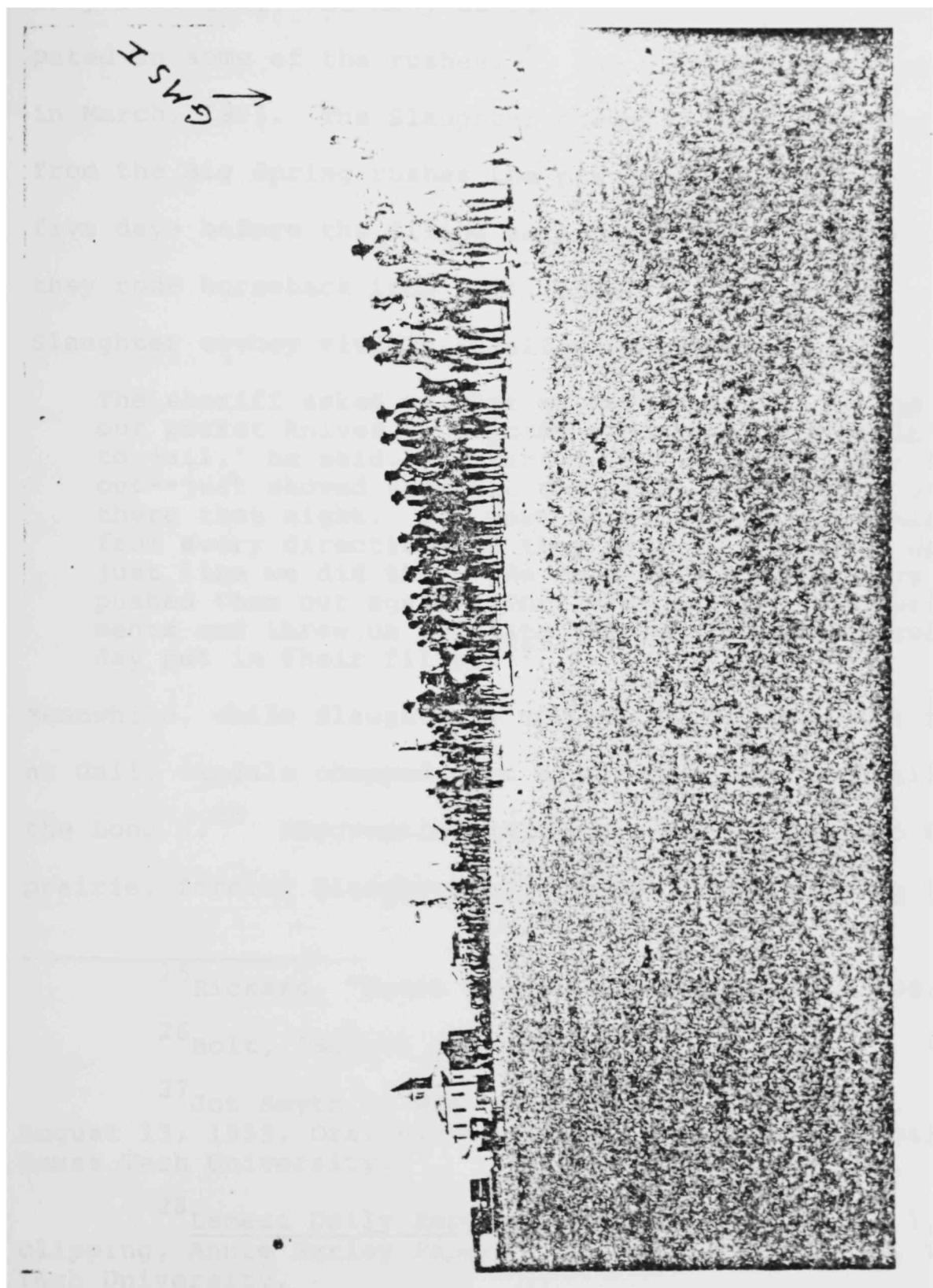


Fig. 12

Slaughter cowboys at the Gail Land Rush, 1903

red and blue ribbons on their arms as symbols of the side they belonged,²⁵ as many as five hundred persons participated in some of the rushes.²⁶ One of the biggest occurred in March, 1903. The Slaughter cowboys, well experienced from the Big Spring rushes the previous fall, waited until five days before the filing date to arrive. About noon, they rode horseback into Gail, single-file. An ex-Slaughter cowboy vividly recalled the scene:

The sheriff asked us what we were going to do and took our pocket knives. 'Anybody that goes to fightin' goes to jail,' he said. We went in and throwed these fellows out--just shoved them out the south door and we stayed there that night. The next morning they was comin' from every direction and they come in and threw us out, just like we did them. We came back the next day and pushed them out again. They kept gettin' reinforcements and threw us out late the next afternoon and next day put in their filing.²⁷

Meanwhile, while Slaughter's cowboys were losing the fight at Gail, vandals chopped down or damaged five windmills on the Long S.²⁸ Disgruntled settlers also set fire to the prairie, forcing Slaughter to grade fireguards along the

²⁵ Rickard, "South Plains Land Rushes," p. 100.

²⁶ Holt, "School Land Rushes," p. 49.

²⁷ Jot Smyth to Mrs. Frank Miller, interview, August 13, 1959, Oral History File, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

²⁸ Lamesa Daily Reporter, March 19, 1953, p. 1, clipping, Annie Barley Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.

borders of his ranches.²⁹

Such scenes were repeated throughout West Texas for the next three years. Finally, the legislature in May 1905 wisely changed the land law, placing the sale of leased lands under the responsibility of the Commissioner of the General Land Office who was required to sell to the highest bidder.³⁰ The reform not only ended the violent rushes, but also considerably enriched the state treasury. Under competitive bidding, the school fund received as much as \$25.00 per acre for land which, under the former law, cost only a dollar and a half.³¹ It is not surprising that C. C. Slaughter, who in 1902 had noted that "This land is too high at \$2.00 per acre,"³² was no longer interested in purchasing land by bids. By 1905, however, he had acquired title to an additional 100,000 acres. Although the Long S was reduced in size to approximately 250,000 acres, most of it lay in two solid blocks in Dawson County and along Rattlesnake Creek in Howard and Borden counties. Slaughter's

²⁹C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, August 25, 1903, GMS; Lamesa Daily Reporter, March 19, 1953, p. 1.

³⁰General Laws of the State of Texas Passed at the Regular Session of the Twenty-Ninth Legislature (Austin: State Printing Company, 1905), pp. 160-161.

³¹Paul, "The Farmer's Frontier on the South Plains," p. 88.

³²C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, September 3, 1902, GMS.

solidification of his holdings indicated the success of his retrenchment plan.

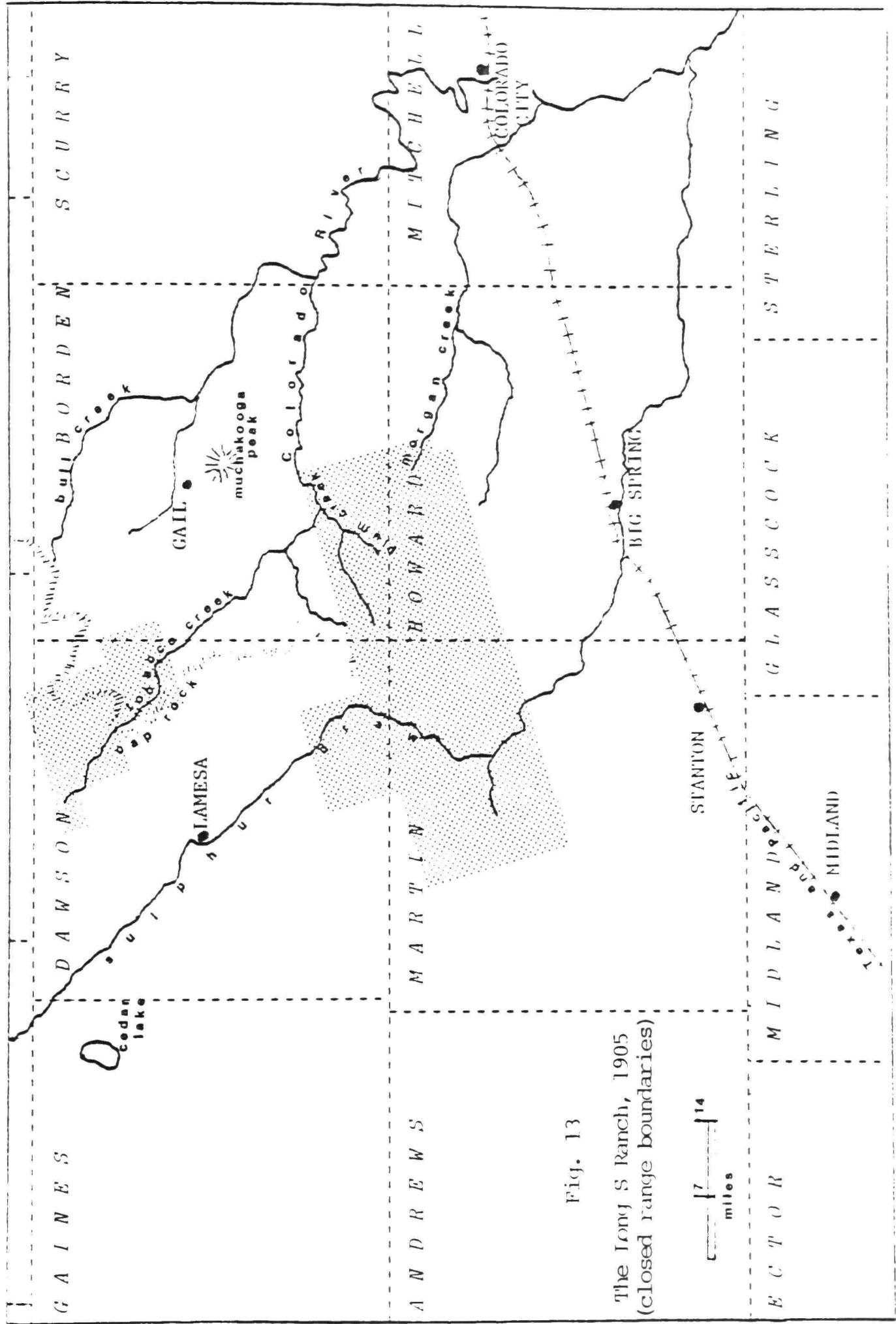
Throughout the lapse-lease fight and land rushes, dry weather consistently plagued the South Plains. A hard winter followed by a dry spring in 1898 killed two thousand Long S cattle.³³ The summer of 1903 was abnormally hot; the following summer brought little relief to Slaughter's pastures, and in February 1905 he lost an undetermined number of cattle in a sub-zero winter storm.³⁴ A month later, however, rain began to saturate West Texas. By September, 24.64 inches of rain had fallen at Big Spring.³⁵ The abundant precipitation, combined with the opening for sale of the formerly leased lands, created a "boom" period. "West Texas is this year flourishing," reported a Colorado City correspondent; ". . . grass has never been known to be so good; much better crops than ever known before. . . . Money is flowing, property is rapidly changing hands and population is coming in like the old boom days of '81 and '82."³⁶ With the influx of new settlers into West Texas, Slaughter

³³ Ibid., April 23, 1898.

³⁴ Ibid., February 28, 1905.

³⁵ The Big Springs Country of Texas, pamphlet [1909], p. 17, W. P. Soash Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University (hereafter cited as Soash Papers).

³⁶ Texas Stockman Journal, October 18, 1905, p. 1; Jones and Richardson, "Colorado City, The Cattlemen's Capital," p. 61.



foresaw the potential for the disposal of his lands. "Range is finer than I have seen it since 1882," he wrote to George in September. "It seems to me the time is not far distant when we will have to sell the land rather than run cattle on it."³⁷ Such an idea, however, was painful to the aging cattleman; in December, he noted caustically that it "Seems Texas is pretty full of home seekers now, and it is to be hoped that if our cattle decrease in value, our land will increase and we can cut our ranches up and sell them, knock the cattle in the head, and ship the hides and their bones. However, I do not think it will come to that."³⁸

For the ranchers, the influx of large numbers of settlers increased problems. The destruction by settlers of grass and the increased competition for that remaining near railheads created difficulties for cattle shippers. The XIT, which owned its own private shippings pens at Bovina, closed the facilities to other ranchers in 1905, but Slaughter hastily and successfully negotiated for the continued use of the pens for shipment of Lazy S cattle.³⁹ When Spade Ranch cattle belonging to Isaac Ellwood strayed

³⁷ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, September 20, 1905, GMS.

³⁸ Ibid., December 11, 1905.

³⁹ George M. Slaughter to C. C. Slaughter, letter, April 5, 1905, GMS; Boyce Findlay to A. G. Boyce, letter, August 31, 1905, XIT Ranch Records, Archives, Panhandle-Plains Museum.

into the Slaughter's Lazy S pasture in Hockley County, Slaughter claimed a loss of almost \$6,000 due to tick contamination. After Slaughter threatened suit, Ellwood paid \$750 dollars in damages.⁴⁰ Settlers who moved into Slaughter's big pastures also presented a problem. Invariably, they fenced their land, forcing Slaughter to divide his pastures, often isolating portions of his lands. Prior to 1900, especially on the Running Water Ranch, Slaughter had compromised with the farmers filing on school land by trading land in order to keep his own solidified.⁴¹

Meanwhile, even as early as 1900, while developing the Lazy S Ranch, Slaughter was willing to dispose of the Running Water at \$2.00 per acre, but since adjoining state land was available at the same price, he had few inquiries.⁴² Rumors of railroad construction in 1905 on the plains, however, rapidly fueled interest in his Running Water lands. In March, the Colonel was approached by Charles K. Warren of Michigan who wanted to enlarge his Muleshoe Ranch. Sensing that prices were soon to rise sharply, Slaughter

⁴⁰G. G. Wright to Isaac Ellwood, November 20, 1902, as cited in Gene Gressley, Bankers and Cattlemen, p. 132.

⁴¹C. C. Slaughter to J. M. Lemons, letter, December 29, 1900, GMS.

⁴²C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, December 4, 1900, GMS.

declined Warren's offer of approximately \$2.00 per acre.⁴³ He acted wisely. In Plainview, promoters speculated that the Santa Fe was soon to build its lines southward from Amarillo and northward from Coleman. Land values adjacent to or near the community rose rapidly, and by September 1905 property was selling for \$5.00 to \$10.00 per acre.⁴⁴ Plainview boosters approached Slaughter for a contribution to a bonus to entice the Santa Fe, but he refused. "I am inclined to turn the thing down," he wrote to George, a former resident of Plainview, "as I believe the railroad is coming to Plainview anyway. . . . If it should switch to Emma [thirty miles east of Lubbock] it leaves our land in better fix for another railroad."⁴⁵

The abundant rains of 1905 continued into the following year, and, as a result, Slaughter asked still higher prices for his land. In August 1906, he refused an offer of \$8.00 per acre for a portion of the Running Water Ranch. "It is still raining down there," he wrote while vacationing

⁴³ Ibid., March 10, 1905. Warren in 1901 established the 40,000-acre Muleshoe Ranch in Bailey County, Texas. Subsequent purchases increased his holdings to 150,000 acres by 1907. David J. Murrah, "From Corset Stays to Cattle Ranching: Charles K. Warren and the Muleshoe Ranch," West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, LI (1975), 7.

⁴⁴ George M. Slaughter to G. G. Wright, letter, September 7, 1905, GMS.

⁴⁵ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, August 11, 1906, GMS.

in Wisconsin, "and land is going to sell."⁴⁶ A month later, he noted, "We don't want to turn our lands loose at too low a price and regret it afterwards."⁴⁷ To exact the maximum possible from the ambitious land speculators, Slaughter in September 1906 set the price of his Running Water land at \$10.00 per acre⁴⁸ but let it be known that he would negotiate with buyers who demonstrated their sincerity. While in Wisconsin a few weeks earlier, he had been approached by a group interested in colonizing the Long S. "I told them . . . if they wanted to buy the Long S and would come to Dallas by Oct[.] the first and place \$50,000.00 to my credit in any bank as Earnest money, I would price the land and describe it. . . . I don't expect to hear any more from them."⁴⁹

He was, however, far more anxious to sell the Running Water Ranch than he intimated. A major prairie fire in March had burned through it, and in the following December a severe snow storm killed one hundred head of cattle, primarily those, unable to drift with the storm, that piled up against barbed wire fences. First, though, he would promote the building of railroads into the ranch

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., September 10, 1906.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

lands to stimulate increased settler interest and higher land prices. Santa Fe survey crews were already in the field. Avery Turner, Vice President and General Manager of the Panhandle and Santa Fe, had approached Slaughter in May about right of way for a proposed "Cutoff" to connect Santa Fe lines at Coleman and at Texico on the New Mexico-Texas border.⁵⁰ Such a line would cut diagonally southeast to northwest across the South Plains, perhaps across the Running Water Ranch.

Slaughter refused to negotiate. His refusal may have doomed Plainview's opportunity to acquire the coveted "Coleman cutoff." Instead, he talked to a group of Hereford, Texas, promoters who were trying to link their city and Brownwood with a railroad to be known as the Panhandle Short Line. Since this line would pass through or near the Running Water, the Lazy S, and the Long S, he initially offered the company in March 1907 right of way, forty acres for a depot, and \$50,000, "provided the road would bind itself not to put another depot nearer than Dimmitt and have it completed by the first of May, 1908."⁵¹

The Panhandle Short Line, chartered March 30, 1907, and promoted by an "energetic, large, uncouth, and

⁵⁰ Ibid., May 11, 1906.

⁵¹ Ibid., March 26, 1907.

braggadocious"⁵² booster, J. H. Ransom, was soon the talk of the South Plains. Ransom, financed with funds secured from unsuspecting investors, pushed the grading but ran out of funds before reaching Dimmitt. Refinanced in August 1907 by a group of Hereford businessmen and Slaughter, the Panhandle Short Line continued its promotion efforts.⁵³ On August 31, George Slaughter, after meeting with sixty boosters in Lubbock, reported to his father "That they are very anxious for you to take the President of the road."⁵⁴

Slaughter was flattered. During his fall tour of his ranches, he decided to view the proposed route. Accompanied by his wife and George, who provided his auto for the tour, he conferred first with Hereford businessmen about the line.⁵⁵ While passing through Lubbock, he told the Avalanche that he felt it was "absolutely necessary" that this route be built, and that he was contemplating acting as president, provided he could get financier George Gould, Jay Gould's

⁵²Carl Harper, "Movements toward Railroad Building on the South Plains of Texas" (M.A. thesis, Texas Technological College, August, 1935), p. 84; Billy N. Pope, "The Freightier and the Railroader in the Economic Pattern of Panhandle History" (M.A. thesis, West Texas State College, 1956), p. 54.

⁵³C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, August 2, 1907, GMS.

⁵⁴George M. Slaughter to C. C. Slaughter, letter, September 3, 1907, GMS.

⁵⁵The Avalanche (Lubbock, Texas), September 20, 1907, p. 6.

son, to buy the bonds. Grading again was underway.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, committees from Lubbock, Stanton, and Big Spring promoted their communities as potential route sites. Grading continued as far south as Dimmitt (apparently financed with a portion of Slaughter's \$50,000 pledge). However, a rival road, the West Texas and Northern, proposing to build along the same route as the Panhandle Short Line, began a survey from Stanton northward. Not certain which of the two routes to support, the communities involved almost ceased to make financial pledges to either.⁵⁷

By February 1908, West Texans became skeptical of the Panhandle Short Line scheme. Its promoters, Ransom and W. A. Squires, paid a final visit to Dimmitt in April 1908 where they sold \$5,000 in stock before going East "to make arrangements with the Chartered Construction Company to take the work in hand."⁵⁸ Neither returned to the plains and Slaughter had between Hereford and Dimmitt a grade but no railroad.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ibid., October 4, 1907, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Harper, "Movements toward Railroad Building," p. 98; The Avalanche, February 14, 1908, p. 5.

⁵⁸ The Avalanche, April 10, 1908, p. 10.

⁵⁹ The city of Lubbock refused to be swindled by the Panhandle Short Line scheme; however, the promotion did leave a lasting impact upon the community. Avenue Q, the city's widest major north-south thoroughfare, was originally dedicated by the city as the right-of-way for the Panhandle Short Line. Harper, "Movements Toward Railroad Building," p. 101.

Meanwhile, Slaughter was devoting some attention to another projected line, the Roswell and Eastern Railway. Begun in September 1907 by a Houston promoter, Edward Kennedy, this line was projected to extend from Roswell, New Mexico, to Lubbock, possibly through the heart of the Lazy S Ranch. As a resident of Roswell, George Slaughter promoted this line and pointed out to his father that Phelps White, manager of George W. Littlefield's LFD Ranch, which bordered the Lazy S on the northeast, was subscribing \$10,000. "They have me down for the same amount," he reluctantly indicated.⁶⁰ Promoters of the Roswell to Lubbock line told the Lubbock Avalanche that cereal king C. W. Post, who had purchased Fount Oxsheer's Diamond Ranch in Hockley County, was willing to subscribe \$100,000, and that C. C. Slaughter had offered 100,000 acres of the Lazy S, "which would yield the railroad an estimated \$2,500,000 five years after the construction of the road and would add \$10,000,000 or \$12,000,000 to the value of the entire Slaughter Ranch."⁶¹

The Roswell and Eastern, like many other "paper" railroads, never developed beyond the talking stage. Its promoters, unable to secure strong financial banking, soon found themselves with no support at all as the established Santa Fe began its invasion of the South Plains. By February

⁶⁰ George M. Slaughter to C. C. Slaughter, letter, September 3, 1907, GMS.

⁶¹ The Avalanche, September 14, 1907, p. 8.

18, 1907, that railroad had extended its tracks from Canyon to Plainview; then, in December 1908, perhaps prompted by the potential competition of the Panhandle Short Line, the Santa Fe agreed to extend the Plainview branch an additional forty-five miles to Lubbock. There the line would eventually link via Slaton (in 1913) to the long-proposed "Coleman Cutoff."⁶²

With the extension of the railroad to Plainview, Slaughter realized that the appropriate time to sell Running Water land had arrived. Already, he had been approached many times by prospective colonizers and salesmen, but none offered him an acceptable deal. In October 1906, he had noted to George that "Lots of land dealers following me, but . . . they all want to try and sell and get a commission, and that I will not do."⁶³ A year later, Slaughter suddenly changed his mind. Fortunately, when he was ready to sell, a promoter made an offer he liked. Late in 1907, W. P. Soash, a thirty-five-year-old Iowa land dealer came to his

⁶²Keith L. Bryant, Jr., History of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1974), p. 197. The Santa Fe was besieged with requests from West Texas town promoters to place the new route through their communities. Influenced by C. W. Post, who had purchased the Curry Comb Ranch in Garza County southeast of Lubbock and paid to the railroad a \$50,000 bonus, the Santa Fe chose a route to extend from Coleman northwestward through Sweetwater, Snyder, Post City, and Slaton. See also Lowell Green and Ernest Wallace, "The Beginning of Slaton, 1911-1913," West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, XXXII (1956), 4.

⁶³C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, October 19, 1906, GMS.

Dallas bank. Slaughter listened intently to the young man's plan and was charmed by his ingenuity, enthusiasm, and especially his experience. Soash had begun in 1903 selling Iowa real estate, and, two years later, had founded the W. P. Soash Land Company. In his first venture he colonized a thirty-thousand acre tract of the XIT Ranch northwest of Dalhart, in the Texas Panhandle.⁶⁴ There, he established his first townsite, the little village of Ware, thirteen miles northwest of Dalhart on the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad. Utilizing first class excursion trains designed to accommodate families from the Midwest, Soash was immediately successful. Business soon brought him into contact with Colonel Slaughter's brother, W. B., president of the First National Bank of Dalhart.⁶⁵

W. B. Slaughter made arrangements for the young land

⁶⁴ David B. Gracy, II, "Selling the Future: A Biography of William Pulver Soash," Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, L (1977), 7-9.

⁶⁵ W. P. Soash to Laura V. Hamner, interview, November 15, 1936, Mrs. David D. Gracy Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University. W. B. "Bill" Slaughter had moved from New Mexico to the Upper Texas Panhandle in 1906 where he established a ranch along Coldwater Creek in Sherman County. In 1898, he purchased his land with a \$30,000-loan from his brother, C. C. Slaughter. Seven years later, with \$25,000 of the loan unpaid, Bill attempted unsuccessfully to get his brother to accept a \$15,000 payoff. To his son George, Slaughter wrote, "[Bill] has a lot of gall, hasn't he?" C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, December 5, 1905, GMS; and Mary Lou McDaniel, God, Grass and Grits (Hereford, Texas; Pioneer Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 7-9.

promoter to visit C. C. Slaughter in Dallas. The two liked each other immediately.⁶⁶ Slaughter decided that Soash's methods would work for the Running Water Ranch and accepted his offer of \$10.50 per acre or \$900,000 for the entire ranch: ". . . I think they [Soash and his partner, C. E. Larsen] are pushing fellows," Slaughter noted to George, "and I believe they will sell the ranch. . . . Should they make a success of it, I intend to turn them then on your ranch [the Lazy S] and let them see what they can do with that."⁶⁷

In February 1908, Soash ran his first excursion train to the Running Water. Elated with the response of his prospective buyers, he quickly bought his partner's interest, and as a result renegotiated his contract with Slaughter. On March 2, the two agreed to a new deal: Soash was to pay fifty cents more, or \$11.00 per acre for the 89,000-acre ranch; Slaughter forfeited his interest in gross profits (or losses). At the conclusion of a sale to a settler, Slaughter was to receive two to three dollars per acre and would carry the balance for seven years at 6 percent. Slaughter also took an option on fifteen

⁶⁶ Many years later, Soash told an interviewer that "Colonel Slaughter was as fine a character as I have ever met, and a man of wonderful business ability." Soash to Hamner, interview, November 15, 1936.

⁶⁷ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, February 20, 1908, GMS.

thousand acres of good land to be sold last, should Soash default, and stipulated that Slaughter have free use of the range for one year.⁶⁸ "I like this contract better than the other," Colonel Slaughter told George. "Brings us [a] square \$11 and we have no part in the profit or loss. I think he will sell at least 40,000 acres. We will get \$100,000 out of it."⁶⁹

Soash worked quickly. He laid out the village of Olton on the route of the proposed Panhandle Short Line. The promise of a railroad and Soash's excursion trains from the Midwest led to the rapid sale of the Running Water land. Within the year, Soash, with volume sales approaching \$1,000,000 monthly,⁷⁰ became the leading land dealer in the nation. By the end of 1908, more than half of the Running Water had been sold, and thereupon Slaughter banked more than \$80,000. Pleased with Soash's success, Slaughter encouraged the colonizer to make a deal with George W. Littlefield for the LFD Ranch, which lay south of the Running Water, in Lamb County, and adjacent to Slaughter's Lazy S Ranch. Littlefield, however, refused Soash's offer of

⁶⁸ Ibid., March 3, 1908.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Gracy, "Selling the Future," p. 16.

\$3,000,000 for his 300,000 acres.⁷¹ The Colonel then tried unsuccessfully to interest Soash in the Lazy S Ranch; "Says he does not think the time is now ripe," Slaughter reported to George, "think he has an impression from the people around Plainview . . . that it is too much of a sand bank."⁷²

Instead, Soash wanted the Long S. Impressed with its lush and level prairies, he made the Colonel a lucrative offer on January 27, 1909, of \$12.70 per acre for 110,000 to 175,000 acres in Howard, Borden, Martin, and Dawson counties.⁷³ Terms of the contract were similar to that for the sale of the Running Water: Slaughter was to receive \$2.70 per acre upon delivery of the deed, an additional dollar per year for the next three years, and the balance to be spread over a ten to thirty year period.⁷⁴ Pleased with the sale but aware of a pitfall, Slaughter expressed to George his confidence in Soash: "He is going to spend some money. There is one advantage in the contract for him, that is, he might sell the best land and leave the balance

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 10; Joe R. Baulch, "W. P. Soash on the Urban Frontier of West Texas," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, XLVIII (1972), 24.

⁷² C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, January 28, 1909, GMS. Soash wisely analyzed the soil on the Lazy S. Much of the ranch's 246,000 acres was sandy, enough that even now it is difficult to farm there.

⁷³ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, January 28, 1909, GMS.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

in my hands. This I do not think he will do at all unless he has a bad drouth and stops his sales."⁷⁵

The first few months of the Long S colonization were profitable. In early March 1909, the first trainload of prospective settlers, some from as far as Minneapolis, arrived at Big Spring.⁷⁶ From there, the prospective buyers were transported by auto twenty miles north to Soash's community on the Howard-Borden county line which he proudly named Soash. By July 1909, the colonizer, with forty laborers, primarily employed by the Soash Development Company and headed by Bob Slaughter, had built an impressive little village, including a two-story hotel, a garage to house thirty automobiles, and a fine brick bank building, and he had plans for a flour mill, cement block factory, a canning plant, and parks.⁷⁷ Soon, the city boasted electricity, a water works, a telegraph, a telephone exchange, and several businesses. Seemingly, it was poised to become the "red letter" town of West Texas. To show off the new town, Soash staged on July 4, 1909, a gala celebration which attracted more than two thousand persons.⁷⁸ In an attractive brochure, he boasted of the rich opportunities

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Baulch, "W. P. Soash on the Urban Frontier," p. 25.

⁷⁷ Gracy, "Selling the Future," p. 21.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 23-24.

afforded in the "Big Springs Ranch" country: "There are lakes and creeks all over the ranch. . . . Rainfall is ample . . . considered as an agricultural area, BIG SPRINGS RANCH has not one demerit mark. . . ."⁷⁹

Unfortunately, the spring of 1909 turned dry. Although June rains brought some relief,⁸⁰ by late summer prospective settler visits were on the decline. As a further incentive to attract buyers, Soash joined Big Spring promoters in an effort to build a railroad from Big Spring to Lamesa, via Soash. This line, the Gulf, Soash, and Pacific, would intersect, it was hoped, with the Santa Fe's proposed line from Slaton to Lamesa. Soash then secured an agreement with the chief engineer of the Santa Fe, W. B. Storey, whereby the Santa Fe would absorb and complete his projected road, provided the city of Lamesa would move six miles east in order to lay on a more direct route. The citizens of Lamesa, however, refused to move,⁸¹ even after Soash threatened to build there his own town. The continuing drouth soon silenced his threat.⁸²

⁷⁹ The Big Springs Country of Texas, pp. 21-22, Soash Papers.

⁸⁰ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 28, 1909, GMS.

⁸¹ W. P. Soash to R. L. Slaughter, letter, September 2, 1909, Soash Papers.

⁸² Gracy, "Selling the Future," p. 27.

In spite of a large staff and a host of land agents, Soash could not sell the Long S lands, and cancellation of existing contracts increased as the drouth worsened. The spring and summer of 1910 brought no relief. Bob Slaughter reported to his father that the drouth was "worse than in 1886."⁸³ Faced with bankruptcy, Soash turned to Slaughter for help. Fearing Soash's collapse would reflect badly on himself, Slaughter, in June 1910, reluctantly loaned him \$50,000 and an additional amount in July. "The trouble is," the Colonel analyzed, "he went into several banks. Can't tell much about his business."⁸⁴

But relief both from Slaughter and from July rains were not enough. His lines of credit closed, Soash was forced to begin liquidating assets. By the end of 1911, the West Texas drouth had ruined him, and in the summer of 1912 he closed his land company offices. Lands unsold and abandoned by disgruntled drouth-weary settlers reverted to Slaughter.⁸⁵

⁸³ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 11, 1910, GMS.

⁸⁴ Ibid., July 6, 1910. See also ibid., June 21, 1910.

⁸⁵ Gracy, "Selling the Future," p. 41. Soash's failure did not end his association with the Slaughter family. In 1924, he returned to the South Plains to form the Lone Star Land Company in partnership with several of C. C. Slaughter's children, including Bob, Dick, and Minnie Slaughter Veal. From then until 1943, he sold tracts of both the Long S and Lazy S ranches and established the

Soash's initial success and subsequent failure made a major impact upon Slaughter's operation. The sale in 1908-1909 of Running Water and Long S lands and thousands of cattle gave the Colonel nearly \$150,000 in cash. "I must get some of this money to work," he wrote to George after the sale of the 1909 steer crop--his last major sale--, "it will not do to let it stop. . . ."⁸⁶

The booming city of Dallas offered an excellent opportunity to put the "money to work." Most of the money was invested in the Slaughter Building. For a number of years Slaughter had occupied a three-story office building on Main Street. In September 1902, he purchased the adjacent National Exchange Bank Building, added two stories to his office and renamed the two remodeled structures the Slaughter Building.⁸⁷ Then in 1905, after the National Exchange Bank merged with and moved to the American National Bank, Slaughter added a west wing to his building.⁸⁸ In 1909, utilizing surplus money from the sale of land and

communities of Sundown in Hockley County and Vealmoor in Howard County, two miles east of the abandoned village of Soash. Soash died in Lubbock in 1961 at the age of eighty-three. Gracy, "Selling the Future," pp. 44-55; Soash to Hamner, interview, November 15, 1936; Baulch, "W. P. Soash on the Urban Frontier," p. 36.

⁸⁶ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, November 6, 1909, GMS.

⁸⁷ Ibid., September 3, and December 10, 1902.

⁸⁸ William L. McDonald, Dallas Rediscovered (Dallas: Dallas Historical Society, 1978), p. 75.

cattle, he completely renovated his original building and added three stories to the entire structure. The addition made the building an imposing structure on the Dallas skyline. Desgined by Chicago architect Clarence Bulger in Romanesque and Chicago-architectural style, the building was "one of the most incredible and unique hybrids in the history of American architecture. . . ." ⁸⁹

Slaughter also found another Dallas property attractive. In December 1908, he purchased a piece of downtown property for \$29,000 and in June 1909 acquired an additional seventy-five frontage feet on Elm Street for \$100,000. "I think this city is the best place to put our money," he wrote George in defense of his actions. "Dallas now has 100,000 people, and is booming right along." ⁹⁰ Slaughter continued to purchase Dallas real estate, and by the time of his death in 1919 his holdings included approximately thirty pieces of property in that city and its vicinity, including nearly one thousand frontage feet of prime downtown Dallas property. ⁹¹

⁸⁹ Ibid.; The Slaughter Building housed offices of Slaughter heirs until its demolition in 1941. In 1963, the building's site was sold for \$487,500. A magnificent office building, One Main Place, occupies the location today. Corporation Record, 1920-1963, Slaughter Building, Alexander A. Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University (hereafter cited as AAS).

⁹⁰ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 8, 1909, GMS.

⁹¹ Land Book, undated, C. C. Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University (hereafter cited as CCS).

When Slaughter decided to allow W. P. Soash to sell his ranches, he incorrectly presumed that his cattle ranching days were over.⁹² Soash's failure to dispose of all the land, however, left him with approximately 200,000 acres of the Long S in terrible disrepair.⁹³ Bob Slaughter, who had managed the ranch since 1888, had allowed cattle, fences, and watering places to deteriorate. Distracted first by the land rushes and later by Soash's colonization efforts, Bob through his mismanagement angered his father several times; however, always partial to his second son, Slaughter usually turned his back on his inability to manage the ranch. "He means well and will come up alright," he noted in defense of Bob in a 1904 letter.⁹⁴ In 1911, however, when it became obvious that he would regain the use of the Long S, he

⁹²C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 8, 1909, GMS.

⁹³C. C. Slaughter Estate Land Values, Financial Documents, CCS.

⁹⁴C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, July 1, 1904, GMS. Bob Slaughter was once described by an old ex-Slaughter cowboy, Joseph Good, as "the most individualistic man" he had ever known. Easy-going, Bob Slaughter enjoyed fast horses and fast cars. Good related that once while attending the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, Bob received a wire from the Long S wagon boss advising the manager to return to the ranch immediately. Ten days later Bob returned. "Why didn't you come right away?" the wagon boss reportedly inquired. The reply: "I thought from what you wired that the outfit had gone to hell anyway and that I had just as well stay and have a good time as long as I could." San Antonio Light, December 16, 1956, p. 10c. See also Mrs. C. C. Slaughter to Alexander A. Slaughter, letter, July 1, 1917, AAS.

asked his long-time friend and employee, Jack Alley, to take over its management. Alley, who had previously managed the Tahoka Lake Ranch resigned as postmaster of Tahoka to take the Long S job.⁹⁵

Alley immediately launched a series of improvements. First, he persuaded the Colonel to acquire additional land with good water and to drill more wells on the Long S, which had been relying primarily on live water streams and tanks. By creating additional watering places, Alley felt he could more efficiently utilize the grass. From 1912 to 1915, he located twenty-five wells with windmills to serve four thousand cattle and had restored the Long S to its former position as a profitable ranch. Thereafter, the delighted owner spent the summers at the ranch's headquarters at Soash.⁹⁶

The instability on the Long S during the Soash years was offset by George's sound and stable management of the other ranches. From his Roswell office, George efficiently managed the Lazy S, the Running Water, and the Hereford Home, a greater investment than the Long S. From 1898 to 1910, George had handled more than a million dollars worth of land, cattle, and supplies. At the same time he established in Roswell in 1906 the American National Bank and

⁹⁵ Alley, "Fifty-four Years of Pioneering."

⁹⁶ Ibid.

made it financially strong.⁹⁷

Although his confidence in George continued to grow, there is no record that Slaughter lauded his son's efficient management service until after the lapse of nearly twenty years. "I do not see where you have made any mistakes and that is saying quite a great deal," he wrote in 1909, "for when we look back and do not find any bad mistakes, we are bound to say that it is well-managed, so I told you to go ahead and do what you thought best and it could be all right with me."⁹⁸

On the other hand, Slaughter was extremely reluctant to turn control of any of his business over to his other sons. Dick, Alex, and C. C. had all worked for their father and engaged in other business enterprises, but they had failed to make any money. By 1910, the younger brothers were insisting that they be allowed to assume management of the "company" ranch, the Lazy S. In February 1910, their father finally relented. "We are trying to get things straightened out the best we can and come under a straight organic law according to corporation laws," the Colonel wrote George. "This is going to seem unnecessary to you

⁹⁷ Elvis E. Fleming, "George M. Slaughter Family," Elvis E. Fleming and Minor S. Huffman, eds., Roundup on the Pecos (Roswell, New Mexico: Chaves County Historical Society, 1978), pp. 388-389.

⁹⁸ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 8, 1909, GMS.

at first, as I have always thought it was, but you must bear with it and you must bear with the other officers and directory. They may pass some rules that will seem to you unnecessary, but you must bear with them. . . ." ⁹⁹ Even though they had elected officers to handle the C. C. Slaughter Cattle Company business, for a year and a half Slaughter ramrodded his will over that of his younger sons. "We had some little ups and downs," he wrote to George following one particularly stormy meeting. "A great many resolutions were proposed that I really vetoed. Thought it was unnecessary. Of course that looked like I was going against the directory, and told them we could not admit of any scheme being worked. . . . We had some rows, but did not amount to anything, and I hope has passed over." ¹⁰⁰

Even at the age of seventy-four, Slaughter probably would not have relinquished control of his holdings had it not been for a serious accident. In August 1910, while vacationing at the Resthaven Hotel in Waukesha, Wisconsin, he fell, breaking his hip. ¹⁰¹ The injury left him crippled for the rest of his life. About the same time, his failing

⁹⁹ Ibid., February 10, 1910.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Unidentified newspaper clipping, October 5, 1910, Scrapbook, Carrie Averill Slaughter Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock (microfilm copy; hereafter cited as CAS).

eyesight impaired his ability to conduct daily business. As a result, C. C. Slaughter turned over to George Slaughter the management of his cattle interests and allowed his sons to assume responsibility for the Lazy S on condition that George should remain the manager and also the manager of the Long S with Jack Alley as the resident supervisor. The Dallas and vicinity real estate affairs were turned over to his son-in-law, G. G. Wright, and other members of the family.

Although his retirement ended his active role in the management of the cattle business, Slaughter, through Jack Alley, kept in close contact with it. But most importantly, retirement from business allowed him to devote time and money to his favorite charitable interests. Sometimes quietly but usually boisterously, he had over the years created another kind of empire of religious and medical institutions that wore the Slaughter brand--an empire, he hoped, that would survive him and perpetuate the Slaughter name.

CHAPTER IX

BANKS, BAPTISTS, AND THE LEGACY

Throughout his entire career, Colonel Slaughter dedicated most of his time to the cattle business. Three other interests, however, attracted his attention, and to these he wholeheartedly devoted himself when presented the opportunity. They were his beloved city of Dallas, his church, and his family.

When Slaughter moved his family to Dallas in 1873, the community boasted a population of 7,054;¹ at his death in 1919, it had 150,000 residents.² Over the years, his love for the city grew as rapidly as its population. He admired its busy atmosphere, its steady growth, and its abundant opportunity. In addition to his heavy investment in city property, he helped to promote numerous businesses, major civic events, churches, and medical institutions.

Slaughter monitored Dallas' financial, social and philanthropic activities through his long association with

¹John William Rogers, The Lusty Texans of Dallas (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1951), p. 108.

²Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1978-1979 (Dallas: A. H. Belo Corporation, 1977), p. 190.

the city's banks. Following his organization of the American National Bank on March 4, 1884 (see Chapter IV), Slaughter served as its vice president but rarely participated in the bank's daily business activity. Primarily tending to his own affairs, he left banking to the bankers. It was, however, a profitable venture, paying Slaughter an average 12 percent annual return on his investment.³ Only when the American National merged in June 1905 with the National Exchange to become the American Exchange National Bank did he become dissatisfied with the bank's operation. "Since my return home," he noted to George, "there has been many transactions that have transpired, some of which I do not altogether approve. . . . I refer to the selling out, as I call it, of the American National Bank. . . ."⁴ Unhappy because he lost controlling interest in the bank and a good tenant in his building, Slaughter considered blocking the transaction:

[E. J.] Gannon and [J. B.] Wilson. . . . were by some means persuaded [how and by what I will have to learn) to sell out the stock. . . . While I could have broken the trade, I would have been in a worse condition than [sic] to let it go on, as I would have had to take charge of the bank myself.⁵

However, Slaughter consented to the merger, and for his

³C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, June 22, 1905, GMS.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

\$30,000 investment in the old bank he received \$150,000 with an option to buy into the new bank. In October 1905, he invested \$50,000 in the American Exchange National and became a director and a vice president, positions he held until his death.⁶

The merger created a powerful financial institution in Dallas, and, by 1910, the bank was the state's largest with capital and surplus totaling \$2,500,000.⁷ Subsequently, the American Exchange merged in 1929 with its major rival, the City National Bank, thereby creating the powerful First National Bank. The consolidation reunited the banking lineages of two former cattlemen-bankers, Slaughter and William E. Hughes, who had dissolved partnership in 1879.⁸

Slaughter's greatest civic contribution to Dallas was perhaps his service as president of the Confederate Veterans Reunion Association. On June 7, 1901, the United Confederate Veterans in their annual convention at Memphis, Tennessee, chose Dallas as their next reunion site. A month

⁶ Ibid.; Report on C. C. Slaughter, December 1, 1912, C. C. Slaughter Company, AAS; Robert E. Tripp, The First 100 Years: A Brief History of First National Bank in Dallas (Dallas: First National Bank, 1975), p. 11.

⁷ Henry Camp Harris, Dallas: Acorn Planters of Yesteryear, 1862-1924, p. 10; James Howard, Big D is for Dallas, p. 52.

⁸ Morrison and Fourney's General Directory of the City of Dallas for 1880-1881 (Dallas: Herald Printing House, 1880), p. 50 (Southwest Collection microfilm copy).

later, Dallas civic leaders named C. C. Slaughter as chairman of the local arrangements committee for the reunion.⁹ Slaughter enthusiastically accepted the responsibility on October 15, 1902, and obtained a charter for his committee, renamed the Texas Reunion Association. Slaughter became the first president of the Association. The new organization set goals to entertain the ex-Confederates royally, to preserve historical and biographical matter pertaining to Texans who had served in the Civil War, and to erect in Austin a statue of Robert E. Lee.¹⁰

After months of preparation, on April 22-25, 1902, Dallas hosted ten thousand veterans and "80,000 to 200,000" visitors,¹¹ the former figure probably being the more accurate. The reunion, reportedly up to that time "the greatest gathering of people ever held in Texas,"¹² consumed 41,500 pounds of meat, 20,000 pounds of potatoes, and used hundreds of tents and beds at a cost to the Association in excess of \$58,000. Following the convention, highlighted by a visit from Mustapha Ben Selim, the Kaliph of Bagdad, accolades

⁹C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, July 6, 1901, GMS.

¹⁰Newspaper clipping, undated, Confederate Veterans Reunion Scrapbook, CCS.

¹¹Dallas Morning News, April 30, 1902, p. 2.

¹²"Dallas in Gala Garb," newspaper clipping, undated, Confederate Veterans Reunion Scrapbook, CCS.

came from throughout the South. "Nowhere have the arrangements been as good," wrote an Alabama veteran. "It is wonderful how a city the size of Dallas accommodated so many visitors so comfortably. The pageant of the Kaliphs and their grand ball were spectacles such as are seldom seen anywhere."¹³ Slaughter was lauded for his "herculean" effort. According to a Dallas reporter, "his shoulder has been close to the wheel at all times and some day the people of Texas will more fully appreciate the magnitude of his labors."¹⁴ In spite of his hard work, Slaughter apparently did not pursue the interests of the Confederate Veterans Reunion following the Dallas reunion.

C. C. Slaughter made a more important contribution to religious activities.¹⁵ A long-time member of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, he served on the Building Committee that supervised the construction in 1890 of the church's present sanctuary. Of the \$90,940¹⁶ cost, he reportedly contributed \$60,000, or about two-thirds the total.¹⁷

As his wealth increased, Slaughter became a

¹³ Dallas Morning News, April 23, 1902, p. 1.

¹⁴ Beau Monde, magazine clipping, undated, Confederate Veterans Reunion Scrapbook, CCS.

¹⁵ B. F. Fuller, History of Texas Baptists (Louisville: Baptist Book Concern, 1900), p. 381.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 382.

¹⁷ McDonald, Dallas Rediscovered, p. 47.

favorite target for fund-seeking Baptist leaders. In 1896, he was persuaded to contribute \$5,000 to Baylor University which was, "up to that time, probably the largest single gift ever made at one time to a Texas Baptist school."¹⁸ Because of that gift, he was approached in August 1897 by Baylor's financial manager, J. M. Carroll, about an even larger contribution. While Slaughter was vacationing at Hot Springs, South Dakota, Carroll spent three days laying before him a plan to eliminate the combined \$200,000 debt of seven Texas Baptist Schools. He asked Slaughter for an initial donation of \$50,000. "He made no answer then," remembered Carroll. "Finally, Colonel Slaughter arose, took my hand, and said, as nearly as I can remember, these exact words: 'Jim, you go to your room and pray and I will go to my room and pray, and tomorrow morning I will give you my answer.'"¹⁹

Unknown to Carroll, Slaughter was in a financial dilemma. The previous May he had spent \$50,000 for the Goodnight Hereford herd, and, while enroute to South Dakota, another \$50,000 for fine Hereford bulls. To raise immediately still another \$50,000 would be difficult, but the next morning he offered half the sum and a suggested method

¹⁸J. M. Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists (Dallas: Baptist Standard Publishing Company, 1923), p. 821.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 822.

for meeting the goal. "Jim, the \$50,000 you mentioned as necessary to make the plan succeed is probably right, and that amount may have finally to be given, but it would be hard for me to give that sum now," he said. Then Slaughter told Carroll that the project should not appear to the public as a "one-man affair," that donations would eventually lag and would need stimulation. "I will give you \$25,000 as a starter," Slaughter promised, "and will say to you personally, that if the Convention and the schools endorse and accept the plan, I will stand by you until the whole thing is put over."²⁰

Wisely, Carroll kept Slaughter's offer secret. Returning to Texas, he met on September 15 with representatives from four of the concerned schools and created the framework for the organization of the Texas Baptist Education Commission. Then, on November 8, before 1,500 delegates to the Baptist General Convention at San Antonio,²¹ Carroll outlined his plan for the consolidation of the indebtedness and the coordination of activity of the Texas Baptist schools.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Slaughter rose and stated that he would donate \$25,000.²² The

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 822-823.

²¹ Baptist Standard (Waco, Texas), November 11, 1897.

²² Ibid., November 18, 1897, p. 1.

announcement had a dramatic impact. Not only did the Convention adopt the plan, it immediately subscribed \$7,000.00 to retire a pressing indebtedness at North Texas Baptist College at Decatur.²³ Slaughter's announcement also stimulated support. Four years later, the Baptist Education Commission reported that \$211,251.51 had been subscribed for the five participating colleges, enough to eliminate totally their indebtedness.²⁴ Slaughter had given \$37,000 of that amount.²⁵

Although he had responded liberally to Carroll's campaign, no one did more to stir Slaughter's heart--and open his pocketbook--than George Washington Truett, a dynamic twenty-three-year-old Baptist preacher, who had amazed Texas Baptist leaders when he, as a financial agent,

²³ Ibid., November 11, 1897, p. 14.

²⁴ Robert A. Baker, The Blossoming Desert (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1970), p. 174. Participating in the initial plan were Baylor University, Baylor Female College at Belton, Howard Payne College at Brownwood, Decatur Baptist College, and the East Texas Baptist Institute at Rusk. Burleson College at Greenville and Simmons College at Abilene chose not to participate. Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, p. 826. The Education Commission continues to aid the financing of eight Texas Baptist schools, including Baylor University, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, Hardin-Simmons University, San Marcos Baptist Academy, Dallas Baptist College, Howard Payne University, Houston Baptist College and East Texas Baptist University.

²⁵ Baptist Standard (Dallas, Texas), November 15, 1900, p. 8; C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, November 15, 1901, GMS.

raised \$92,000 in 1891-1893 to pay off Baylor University's debts.²⁶ Following that venture, Truett entered Baylor University in 1893 and while there pastored the East Waco Baptist Church. Following his graduation in June 1897, Truett was contacted by a committee about becoming pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas. Truett accepted the offer and preached his first sermon in Dallas on September 12, 1897.²⁷

A week later, Truett reminded Colonel Slaughter and the other trustees of the church that the state mission books for the year would close at the end of the month. The trustees in turn informed their pastor that the First Baptist Church of Dallas frowned upon special collections and that for state missions he should not expect more than \$25.00 in donations. Undaunted, Truett replied to the trustees, "Brethren, you are not speaking seriously; I expect to give that amount myself. Surely Colonel Slaughter here will give at least one hundred dollars."²⁸ The trustees, thinking Truett was joking, roared with laughter, but the Colonel knew the remark was not in jest. When the

²⁶ Powhatan W. James, Fifty Years of Baylor University Hospital (Dallas, Texas: Baylor University Hospital, 1953), p. 6.

²⁷ Powhatan W. James, George W. Truett (New York: Macmillan Company, 1939), p. 82.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 83.

collection plate for state missions was passed the following Sunday, the church received \$325.17, including \$100.00 from Slaughter.²⁹ "I shouldn't be surprised," Slaughter was overheard to say, "if someday we should get as much as a thousand dollars in one of his special collections."³⁰ He truly underestimated the power of the new pastor, for in the next twenty-two years, primarily because of Truett's influence, he personally would give to charitable causes over one-half million dollars.³¹

Considering his involvement in an unhappy conflict within the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Slaughter's munificent contributions were remarkable. As a result of a dispute between two Baptist newspaper editors, J. B. Link and R. C. Buckner, the Dallas church on January 7, 1880, had split into two factions. Chosen to be pastor of one of the factions was S. A. Hayden.³² Although the church reunited on March 30, 1884,³³ Hayden, who had purchased the Texas Baptist in 1883, continued to fuel controversy through

²⁹ Ibid.; Baptist Standard, November 11, 1897, p. 14.

³⁰ James, George W. Truett, p. 83.

³¹ Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, pp. 976-977; James, Fifty Years of Baylor University Hospital, p. 26; Dallas Morning News, November 23, 1913; Baptist Standard, May 30, 1907.

³² Joseph Martin Dawson, A Century with Texas Baptists (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1947), p. 30.

³³ Fuller, History of Texas Baptists, p. 380.

criticism of various Baptist leaders. Ironically, Hayden ardently supported the unification of 1885 of the two rival Texas Baptist groups, the Baptist State Convention and the Baptist General Association, into a single body to be called the Baptist General Convention of Texas.³⁴ He consolidated in 1886 the two rival Baptist newspapers, the Texas Baptist and the Texas Baptist Herald, into the Texas Baptist and Herald.³⁵ However, when a rival newspaper, the Western Baptist, subsequently to be named the Baptist Standard, appeared in Dallas, Hayden renewed his criticism of Baptist leaders. He attacked in 1888 the pastor of Dallas' First Baptist Church, R. T. Hanks, accusing him of scandalous conduct with a woman.³⁶ He also criticized the Mission Board of the Baptist General Convention, charging in his newspaper columns that its secretary, J. M. Carroll, was reckless in his administration, that he was concealing information from the churches, and that missionaries were starving.³⁷ Furthermore, he accused J. B. Cranfill, editor

³⁴ Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, pp. 649-650. The merger led to the creation of the present Baylor University by the union of Baylor University at Independence and Waco University.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 660.

³⁶ Leon McBeth, The First Baptist Church of Dallas (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), pp. 88-89; Cranfill, et al., v. Hayden, 55 Southwestern Reporter (Tx.), 807 (1899).

³⁷ Dawson, A Century with Texas Baptists, p. 57.

of the Baptist Standard and former secretary of the Mission Board, of deliberately withholding information from the scrutiny of the churches. ". . . The bane of Texas Baptists has been juntas, combines, confidences," Hayden editorialized in May 1896. "This unbaptistic 'confidential' organizing tendency is in the nature of all men. . . ."³⁸ In response, the Board lashed back at Hayden and attempted to disqualify him as a delegate to the October 1896 General Convention at Houston. For five days, October 9-14, 493 delegates to the Houston convention heard heated debate concerning Hayden's charges. Finally, the convention approved a compromise resolution which censured but did not unseat Hayden.³⁹

The Houston debate was continued in the editorial columns of the two rival newspapers, and, as a result, more than 1,200 "messengers" or delegates gathered at the San Antonio convention in November 1897. This time, the Mission Board of the Baptist General Convention recommended that Hayden be excluded because of his "ceaseless and hurtful war upon the plans, policies, work, and workers of this convention," and, because "he is a breeder of strife and

³⁸ Texas Baptist and Herald, May 28, 1896, as cited in Presnall H. Wood and Floyd W. Thatcher, Prophets with Pens (Dallas: Baptist Standard Publishing Company, 1969), p. 25.

³⁹ Dawson, A Century with Texas Baptists, p. 60; Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, pp. 744-746.

contention." The convention voted 582 to 102 in favor of the Board's recommendation.⁴⁰

If Slaughter thought he could keep aloof from the Hayden controversy, he was wrong. In December 1897, Cranfill, sorely in need of financing, visited the Colonel.⁴¹ After listening to Cranfill's appeal, Slaughter offered the editor \$7,500 for undivided half-interest in the Baptist Standard and agreed to lend the enterprise \$2,500 for working capital, with the stipulation that the paper relocate its headquarters from Waco to Dallas.⁴²

Slaughter's new investment created varied reaction. "I rejoice very much that the Lord has led Colonel Slaughter to buy a half interest in the Standard," wrote a McKinney reader.⁴³ An elated Cranfill, who had gained a national reputation as candidate for vice president of the United States on the 1892 Prohibition Party ticket,⁴⁴ responded

⁴⁰ Cranfill, et al., v. Hayden, 75 Southwestern Reporter (Tx.), 573 (1903); Baptist Standard, November 11, 1897, p. 14.

⁴¹ J. B. Cranfill, Dr. J. B. Cranfill's Chronicle (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1916), p. 449. The Standard was published in Dallas from March to July 1892, then was moved to Waco. Wood and Thatcher, Prophets with Pens, p. 21.

⁴² Worley's Directory of the City of Dallas, 1898 (Dallas: John F. Worley, 1898), p. 43; Cranfill, Chronicle, p. 449.

⁴³ Baptist Standard, February 10, 1898, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Cranfill, Chronicle, p. 449.

in May 1898 at Norfolk, Virginia, by getting Slaughter elected as first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention.⁴⁵ Another reader of the Standard, however, was not impressed with Slaughter's involvement. On April 28, 1898, Hayden filed a \$100,000 libel suit against the editor of the Baptist Standard and thirty other Texas Baptists, including J. M. Carroll, George W. Truett, and C. C. Slaughter.⁴⁶

Initially, the defendants regarded the suit lightly.⁴⁷ In a letter to his son George, the Colonel casually noted that he and his Baptist colleagues were being sued by Hayden simply "for interfering with his peace of mind, causing him to lose sleep, white-wash his hair, and racking his nerves."⁴⁸ Hayden, however, pursued the suit seriously, and after four long trials, three appeals, and seven years of litigation, Slaughter likewise did.

The first trial began in 1899 in Judge Richard

⁴⁵ Baptist Standard, May 12, 1898, p. 12, and May 19, 1898, p. 2. Colonel Slaughter was elated with the gesture. "When I looked at that great convention of American Baptists," he noted to George, "I tell you it made me feel mighty proud of my religion. There were assembled there thousands of men whose names are household words, congregated together for the service of Almighty God." C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, May 19, 1898, GMS.

⁴⁶ Cranfill, Chronicle, p. 453.

⁴⁷ Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, p. 800.

⁴⁸ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, May 19, 1898, GMS.

Morgan's district court in Dallas County. Alleging that he was libeled at the 1897 San Antonio convention through "serious, damaging, and false accusations," Hayden asked for \$100,000 in actual and exemplary damages. Following a four-week trial, the jury awarded Hayden \$30,000 damages.⁴⁹

Slaughter and the other defendants immediately appealed. On February 24, 1900, the Texas Court of Civil Appeals ruled that the lower court had erred on several counts and sent the case back for retrial.⁵⁰ The second trial began on February 5, 1901. "I think we have a fighting chance," Slaughter reported to George, ". . . we have 7 city men against 5 county men on the jury."⁵¹ For seven weeks, the new jury heard testimony but could not reach a decision. The case was declared a mistrial.⁵²

A third trial began on June 17, 1901.⁵³ Slaughter,

⁴⁹ The Hayden-Cranfill Conspiracy Trial (Dallas: Texas Baptist Publishing House, n.d.), p. 14; S. A. Hayden, The Complete Conspiracy Trial Book (Dallas: Texas Baptist Publishing House, 1907), pp. 27-29; Cranfill, et al., v. Hayden, 55 Southwestern Reporter (Tx.), 806 (1900).

⁵⁰ Cranfill, et al. v. Hayden, Southwestern Reporter (Tx.), 805 (1900); Baptist Standard, March 4, 1900, p. 2. A full account of the decision is printed in Fuller, History of Texas Baptists, pp. 467-489.

⁵¹ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, February 7, 1901, GMS.

⁵² Missionary Worker (Dallas, Texas), April 15, 1901, clipping, Scrapbook, CAS.

⁵³ C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, July 6, 1901, GMS.

who had testified at length during the two previous trials, was on the witness stand for seven hours. "It fully developed that I am the man they are after," he confided to George. "Hayden brought a man some 2 or 300 miles S. W. of here that claimed . . . I told him at San Antonio that I was trying to down Hayden. I swore I never made any such talk to anyone, and that I was positive his story was made up."⁵⁴ After two months of testimony, the trial ended in a second hung jury.⁵⁵

A fourth trial began in mid-October 1902. Obviously wearied of the ordeal, Slaughter had his attorney, G. G. Wright, to negotiate a settlement independently. It cost him \$7,500.⁵⁶

With four defendants, including Slaughter and Truett dismissed, the fourth trial continued. On November 26, 1902, the jury awarded Hayden \$15,000 in damages.⁵⁷ The remaining defendants again appealed. On May 23, 1903, the

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Unidentified newspaper clipping, November 27, 1902, Scrapbook, CAS.

⁵⁶ Cranfill, "The Hayden Litigation," Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, pp. 802-803. See also C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, December 12, 1902, GMS.

⁵⁷ Unidentified newspaper clipping, November 27, 1902, Scrapbook, CAS; C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, November 29, 1902, GMS.

Court of Civil Appeals upheld the decision,⁵⁸ but on May 12, 1904, the Texas Supreme Court reversed it, citing error of the lower court.⁵⁹ On the same day, an elated Cranfill and a disappointed Hayden boarded the same train at Dallas to attend the Southern Baptist Convention. When the two Baptist leaders met, both drew guns and fired. Miraculously, neither was hurt. Embarrassed by his own actions, Cranfill immediately resigned as editor of and sold his interest in the Baptist Standard.⁶⁰ As Hayden's attorneys prepared for a fifth trial, Cranfill on April 28, 1905, finally moved to settle out of court and subsequently paid Hayden \$300 in damages and \$6,000 in court costs.⁶¹ Criticized by several of the defendants for compromising with Hayden, Cranfill contended that the ongoing litigation was Hayden's life-blood, and that once the matter was settled, Hayden would fade into obscurity. "His collapse was thereafter not long delayed," Cranfill later wrote. "His paper [Texas Baptist

⁵⁸ Cranfill, et al., v. Hayden, 75 Southwestern Reporter (Tx.), 573 (1903).

⁵⁹ Cranfill, et al., v. Hayden, 80 Southwestern Reporter (Tx.), 609 (1904).

⁶⁰ Wood and Thatcher, Prophets with Pens, p. 31.

⁶¹ Cranfill, "The Hayden Litigation," p. 804. During the course of the litigation, Hayden joined in 1901 with other East Texas Baptists in creating the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas, which, to this day, rivals the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Dawson, A Century with Texas Baptists, p. 64.

and Herald] died, and he passed out of our [Baptist] history. . . . Hayden ceased to be an influential figure in any phase of our Texas Baptist life some years before his death . . . in 1918."⁶²

In the midst of the affair, Cranfill was asked if the lengthy litigation was getting Slaughter "soured" of his noble Christian work. In his November 5, 1899, weekly editorial, Cranfill replied to the contrary: "[Colonel Slaughter] is not that kind of man. The man who engages in works of Christian beneficence because he loves God will get no more soured and discouraged on account of our difficulties in Texas than was Zorobabel [Zerubbabel] when under the lead of God he was rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem."⁶³

Cranfill's assessment was accurate. Slaughter continued to support Baptist work wholeheartedly. In addition to his term as vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, he served from 1897 to 1903 as president of the state Mission Board and from 1898 to 1911 as an executive board member of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.⁶⁴ And, like the biblical prophet Zerubbabel, Slaughter also built a "temple"--a magnificent Baptist hospital.

The idea for a Baptist hospital in Dallas perhaps

⁶² Cranfill, "The Hayden Litigation," p. 804.

⁶³ Baptist Standard, October 5, 1899, clipping, CAS.

⁶⁴ Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, pp. 772-814.

originated in the mind of humanitarian R. C. Buckner. Having successfully established in 1879 an orphans' home in Dallas, Buckner envisioned in 1894 a sanitarium of similar organization.⁶⁵ In February 1903, Editor Cranfill resounded Buckner's sentiments in the Baptist Standard by issuing a call for someone of wealth to provide funds: "Here in Dallas I want to see erected . . . a Baptist hospital. . . . Our people have built gloriously, but they have failed signally at this important point. I know there is in Texas money in the hands of Baptist people."⁶⁶ Cranfill correctly surmised that, among others, C. C. Slaughter would take note of his plea.

George W. Truett became a champion of the cause. In late May 1903, while addressing a banquet staged in honor of a distinguished Austrian physician visiting Dallas, Truett gave a stirring appeal for "the erection of a great humanitarian hospital to which may come men of all creeds, and those of none, with equal confidence."⁶⁷ The next morning, Slaughter telephoned Truett to say that he would start the hospital movement with a \$25,000 donation. However, acting on the advice of J. B. Gambrell, secretary of the Baptist

⁶⁵ Sam Acheson, Dallas Yesterday (Dallas: SMU Press, 1971), p. 304.

⁶⁶ Cranfill, "Baylor Hospital and Allied Activities," Carroll, History of Texas Baptists, p. 971.

⁶⁷ James, Fifty Years of Baylor University Hospital, p. 3.

Mission Board, Truett refused Slaughter's offer. "You can't begin a million-dollar hospital with twenty-five thousand dollars from a millionaire," Gambrell told Truett. "Go sit up with him [Slaughter]! He will give you fifty thousand just as easy."⁶⁸

Gambrell was correct. From Slaughter, Truett secured a \$50,000 pledge, and by October 16, 1903, had obtained a charter for the new hospital. Reportedly, the directors considered naming the facility in honor of its most generous benefactor, "but the disadvantages of having a hospital known as the Slaughter Hospital brought the decision to find a less pointed name,"⁶⁹ the Texas Baptist Memorial Sanitarium. At their first board meeting on October 23, the directors of the new hospital named R. C. Buckner president, Truett, secretary, and Slaughter, treasurer,⁷⁰ and then purchased from Dr. C. M. Rosser his God Samaritan Hospital. The new Baptist sanitarium opened its doors on March 11, 1904.⁷¹ Eight months later, on November 5,

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 7; Charles McDaniel Rosser, Doctors and Doctors, Wise and Otherwise (Dallas: Mathis Van Nort and Company, 1941), p. 153.

⁶⁹ Rogers, The Lusty Texans of Dallas, p. 105.

⁷⁰ James, Fifty Years of Baylor University Hospital, p. 12.

⁷¹ Lana Henderson, Baylor University Medical Center: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (Waco: Baylor University Press, 1978), p. 28.

Slaughter turned the first shovel of dirt in the ground-breaking ceremonies for a new building, to be situated in the midst of a beautiful oak grove in northeast Dallas where fifty years previously he had bedded cattle headed for market.⁷²

The hospital became the Colonel's favorite charity. He worked hard in its behalf, personally soliciting money for its support.⁷³ In April 1907, he obtained for the hospital, on his own security, a \$50,000 loan, a note he would later forgive.⁷⁴ From November 21, 1908, to May 11, 1911, he served as president of the hospital's board and in this capacity, on October 14, 1909, supervised the opening of the sanitarium's handsome new five-story building.⁷⁵

Four years later, on November 23, 1913, encouraged by Truett, Slaughter once again stunned Texans by pledging to the hospital a challenge gift of \$200,000. In a letter Truett read to the Baptist General Convention, philanthropist Slaughter promised to give two dollars for every three given

⁷²James, Fifty Years of Baylor University Hospital, p. 14.

⁷³George M. Slaughter to C. C. Slaughter, letters, May 11, 1905, and C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, November 21, 1905, and October 4, 1906, GMS.

⁷⁴James, Fifty Years of Baylor University Hospital, p. 20; C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, April 3, 1907, GMS.

⁷⁵James, Fifty Years of Baylor University Hospital, p. 21.

by others in a drive to meet the "remarkable growth and urgent needs" of the sanitarium.⁷⁶ Although the hospital failed to raise the \$300,000 necessary to claim his total offer, the Colonel made a donation at the ratio he had promised.⁷⁷

In June 1918, Truett for his last time appealed to Slaughter for a financial donation for the sanitarium. Shortly before leaving to spend six months with the American Army in Europe, he persuaded Slaughter to cancel \$162,000 he held in the hospital's bonds.⁷⁸ According to J. B. Cranfill, the cancellation of the bonded indebtedness was "the crowning achievement of C. C. Slaughter's life."⁷⁹ The Colonel's total contributions to the Sanitarium, which was renamed Baylor Hospital in 1920, may have exceeded \$320,000.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Dallas Morning News, November 23, 1913, p. 2.

⁷⁷ James, Fifty Years of Baylor University Hospital, p. 26.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 25-26. Sources do not indicate whether Slaughter had purchased the bonds or whether the hospital had issued them as security for several notes Slaughter held for the hospital. The latter is probably correct. In April 1907, Slaughter wrote to his son George that he had "offered to borrow forty or fifty thousand more if the board will personally guarantee the interest." C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, April 3, 1902, GMS. See also Report on C. C. Slaughter, December 31, 1912, C. C. Slaughter Company, AAS.

⁷⁹ Cranfill, "Baylor Hospital and Allied Activities," p. 977.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Although his gifts failed to match the philanthropy of Andrew Carnegie or John D. Rockefeller, his donations represented approximately 15 percent of his total worth of \$4,000,000.

Truett also inspired Slaughter to donate support to two other Baptist causes. In November 1912, the Dallas pastor announced to the annual Baptist General Convention, meeting at Waco, that Colonel Slaughter had pledged \$50,000 to Baylor University's endowment fund. According to a Waco reporter, "the incident . . . swept the audience like wildfire. . . . A mighty cheer was given, and it was some time before order was restored, following the joyful announcement."⁸¹ Using the announcement as a catalyst, Truett promptly secured from messengers at the convention additional pledges of \$120,000.⁸²

Truett's straightforward manipulation of Slaughter for gifts probably accounted for the Dallas minister's repeated success. A letter from the pastor to the philanthropist, written on Sunday morning, January 16, 1916, reveals Truett's diplomacy and careful timing: ". . . as I go more deeply into the subject of how we may best help the

⁸¹ Unidentified newspaper clipping, November 25[?], 1912, Scrapbook, CAS. See also G. G. Wright to Baylor University, letter, March 17, 1916, CCS.

⁸² Unidentified newspaper clipping, November 25[?], 1912, Scrapbook, CAS.

great Education Cause, in which we both are so vitally interested," Truett wrote, "and especially in view of the incomparable and unrivalled place of leadership you have so long held among Texas Baptists, I am venturing to make this suggestion to you: If you can start this campaign with Ten Thousand Dollars, I will see to it that half of your gift may be paid on the last day of this brief campaign . . . and the other half later in the year. . . ." Truett explained that the timing of Slaughter's payment "would not be for the public, but for the little group that ought to know, and the public would be concerned only with the gloriously inspiring fact of the gift itself."⁸³

Promising that the announcement of Slaughter's gift during the Sunday morning service "and in all the Texas dailies tomorrow" would allow Treutt "to make inspiring use of it," the pastor suggested that Slaughter "simply send me a card to the pulpit when you come to church this morning, saying in a line that you will start the campaign with Ten Thousand. . . ." In a carefully worded postscript Truett added that one of the "bretheren" had phoned that, after having "thought and prayed much" he would give \$5,000 to the cause.⁸⁴ Not one to be outgiven, Slaughter complied

⁸³ George W. Truett to C. C. Slaughter, letter, January 17 [16], 1916, CCS.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

with Truett's request. Upon arriving at church he sent his answer in a note to the pulpit: "Believing in your cause and praying for your success, showing my faith by my works, I will open your campaign by a gift of \$10,000."⁸⁵ An announcement to the effect appeared, as promised, in Monday's newspaper.

In spite of his vanity, Slaughter was deeply devoted to his religious faith. He often chided his children for their worldly ways. In February 1893, he wrote his son George, who had recently married, that he and his wife "should both live so that you may have an interest in the Home that our Saviour has gone to prepare where parting is unknown. . . ."⁸⁶ Twelve years later, he was still preaching to his son. Truett was helping hold a meeting at Midland, and he was hoping that Bob, who was there, "will fall in line." Then to George he added a bit of personal advice and philosophy: "Right here I want to say to you while we are moving along all right, we must not forget our soul's salvation. We must try to live up to the mandates of the Bible. . . . It is one of the greatest things we can have, that pearl of great price, and it is the gift of God, but he turns no one away who asks in faith, believing in His

⁸⁵Dallas Times-Herald, January 17, 1916, clipping, scrapbook, CAS.

⁸⁶C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, February 7, 1893, GMS.

son."⁸⁷

Slaughter, like many other turn-of-the-century entrepreneur-philanthropists, applied his religion to his business. Although he demanded carefully legal-worded contracts, nowhere in his private correspondence is there any hint of dishonesty. "He was absolutely just and straight in his dealings with friend and foe alike," said Jack Alley, a long-time Slaughter employee. "He acquired his property through shrewdness and foresight. . . ."⁸⁸

Slaughter's generosity toward Baptists probably incurred chagrin among several of his children. Even level-headed George complained, at least on one occasion; "I see they had to get you to raise the money for the trinity," he chided his father in May 1905. "Whenever they want money they call on C. C. S. and it generally comes."⁸⁹ Perhaps embarrassed over his generous donations at the expense of his children, Slaughter in May 1909 sent all nine \$10,000 each. The gift, however, was not without attached strings. "I request that you let me hear from you one year from today, as to benefits received and financial condition of this gift at that time," he wrote. "I ask this in order

⁸⁷ Ibid., January 20, 1905.

⁸⁸ Jack Alley, as quoted in Rickard, "Ranch Industry of the Texas South Plains," p. 182.

⁸⁹ George M. Slaughter to C. C. Slaughter, letter, May 11, 1905, GMS.

that I may . . . [know] whether or not it is in hands competent to handle money."⁹⁰

Slaughter enjoyed having his family together. Three of his children, Dick, C. C., Jr., and Carrie, lived in houses adjacent to his mansion on Worth Street. Following his hip injury in 1910, he often sat on a second-story veranda watching with binoculars their family activity.⁹¹ On Sundays and holidays, especially Christmas, he demanded that his children and grandchildren gather at his spacious home.⁹² On such occasions, Mrs. Slaughter often hosted twenty-five or more.⁹³

In spite of his numerous business interests and a broken hip, Slaughter, late in life, traveled extensively with his family to the amazement of many of his acquaintances. On June 10, 1912, accompanied by his wife, his nurse, his chauffeur, his daughter Minnie and her husband, Dr. George Veal, C. C. Slaughter, Jr., and his wife and baby, in two Pierce-Arrow automobiles, he left Dallas for the West Coast. The Colonel's car, a Landau, modified

⁹⁰C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letter, April 30, 1909, George M. Slaughter Papers (microfilm copy).

⁹¹Rogers, Lusty Texans of Dallas, p. 105.

⁹²C. C. Slaughter to George M. Slaughter, letters, December 20, and December 25, 1894, December 11, 1895, December 10, 1897, GMS.

⁹³Colonel and Mrs. Slaughter had seventeen grandchildren. In March 1979, only four were still living.

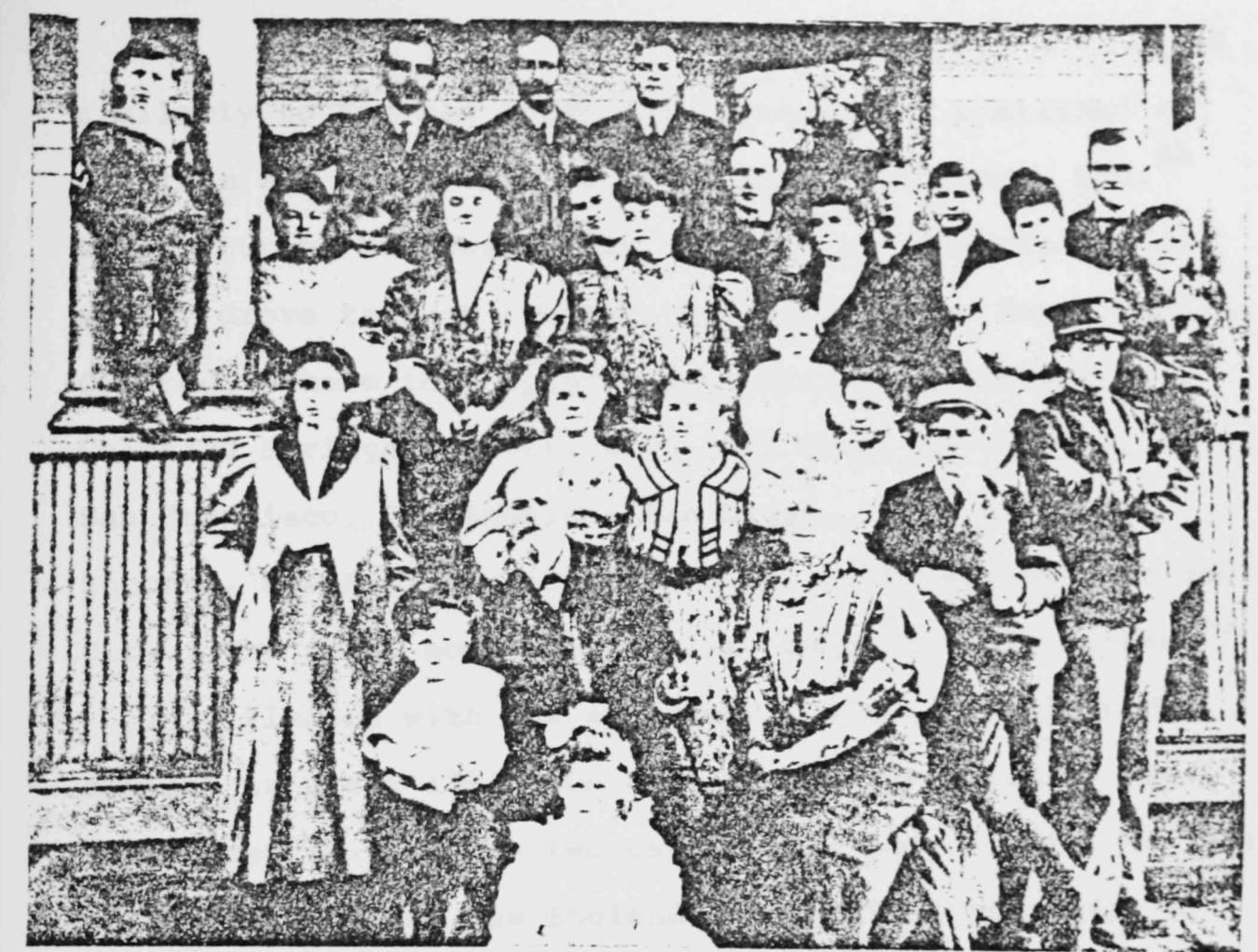


Fig. 14

The Slaughter Family In 1905

Pictured with their children and grandchildren are Colonel and Mrs. C. C. Slaughter (seated). The small boy at left is Jo Dick Slaughter. Seated on ground is Ed Dela Wright. In the first row (standing), left to right are Roberta Wright, Minnie Slaughter Veal, Nelle Slaughter, Stuart Wright, Mrs. G. G. (Dela Slaughter) Wright, R. L. Slaughter, Jr., and Gilbert Wright (in uniform). In the second row are Mrs. George (Allie) Slaughter with baby (Eloise), Mrs. E. Dick (Carrie) Slaughter, C. C. Slaughter, Jr., Mrs. C. C. (Elmira) Slaughter, Jr., G. G. Wright, Mrs. R. L. (Florence) Slaughter, Dr. George Veal, Alex Slaughter, Mrs. John (Carrie Slaughter) Dean, Dr. John Dean, and George Slaughter II (on rail). At left on rail is Jowell Wright. At back left are Bob, George, and E. Dick Slaughter.

similarly to his old horse-drawn ambulance, contained a bathroom and seats that could be converted into a bed.⁹⁴ After touring his West Texas ranches, the Slaughters leisurely drove through Lubbock, Amarillo, Raton Pass, Pueblo, Colorado (where they spent a week with W. B. Slaughter), Colorado Springs, Denver, Salt Lake City, Reno, Lake Tahoe, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Yuma, Phoenix, Socorro, New Mexico, and back to Dallas by way of Colorado City. The trip, some 8,500 miles, required five months.⁹⁵

Pleased with the experience, Slaughter planned a similar trip for 1913. On June 5, with principally the same group in the same two cars as the year before, he left Dallas enroute for New England. Driving first by way of Houston to Galveston, the Slaughters sailed to New York. From there, they toured by car Philadelphia, Atlantic City, and New England, and returned home by way of Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago, Kansas City, Des Moines, Emporia, Kansas (Mrs. Slaughter's former home), Wichita, Lawton, and Fort Worth. The trip covered seven thousand miles in five months.⁹⁶

Rejuvenated by the extensive trips, Slaughter, upon

⁹⁴ Rogers, Lusty Texans of Dallas, p. 105.

⁹⁵ Unidentified newspaper clipping, October 16, 1912, Scrapbook, CAS.

⁹⁶ Dallas Morning News, October 19, 1913, Sec. II, p. 12.

his return to Dallas, launched in 1914 an ambitious, but ill-fated project. While in Pueblo on the 1912 western tour, he apparently had visited at length with his brother W. B., who had established banks in Dalhart and Texline, Texas, and in Pueblo, about C. C.'s idea to establish in the Southwest a trust company. This business, Slaughter theorized, would function as a banker's bank and as a loan company to serve major business financial needs in the Southwest.⁹⁷ W. B. was elated with the idea; he immediately moved to Dallas in 1913, assumed control of a small Fort Worth investment company, moved it to Dallas, and laid plans for a major stock subscription. Between September 3, 1913, and January 17, 1914, he enlisted the financial support of all of C. C.'s sons (except E. Dick) and son-in-laws, each of whom signed notes for \$11,000. Colonel Slaughter subscribed \$50,000 and loaned the company an additional \$20,000.⁹⁸ Then, W. B. and C. C. contacted other prominent Southwestern cattlemen, inviting them to take stock and become directors of the new company. Among those who favorably responded were stock raisers Tom B. Burnett, R. S. Dalton, Jourdan Campbell, Sam Webb, W. L. Ellwood, John Scharbauer,

⁹⁷ Dallas Times-Herald, June 7, 1914, clipping, Scrapbook, CAS.

⁹⁸ Report on Banker's Trust Company, July 31, 1914, Folio 29, Financial Material, C. C. Slaughter Company, AAS.

and J. M. Cowden, and lumbermen F. W. Foxworth and Cicero Smith.⁹⁹

W. B. Slaughter on June 7, 1914, made public the formation of the new business, the Bankers' Trust Company. Announcing that it would have a capital stock of \$5,000,000, Slaughter said the firm would deal in all aspects of finance except commercial banking. Its officers included W. B. as president, R. T. Stuart, former owner of the company, as vice president, G. G. Wright as General Counsel, and C. C. Slaughter as Chairman of the Board.¹⁰⁰ W. B. also issued a handsome Prospectus which listed sixty-five prominent Southwesterners as directors, including his and C. C.'s famous cousin, "Texas" John Slaughter of Arizona, his brother P. E., and C. C.'s sons George, Bob, and C. C., Jr., and sons-in-law John Dean, G. G. Wright, and George T. Veal.¹⁰¹

Although Bankers' Trust by July 31, 1914, had attracted stock subscriptions totaling \$403,950.00, its business affairs were quickly criticized by Colonel Slaughter's accountants Hutchinson and Smith. Questioning the issuance of a \$20,000 stock dividend based on inflated bookkeeping procedures, the accountants pointed out to

⁹⁹ Ibid., Folio 46-49.

¹⁰⁰ Dallas Times-Herald, June 7, 1914, CAS.

¹⁰¹ Prospectus, Banker's Trust Company, undated, Printed Material, C. C. Slaughter Company, AAS.

Slaughter and the other directors of the company that such a practice may have been illegal and that "Great difficulty and serious delays were caused by confused condition of accounting and disappearance of so many vouchers."¹⁰²

Before company president W. B. Slaughter could explain the problem, events in distant Pueblo, Colorado, created even more difficulties. The Mercantile National Bank there, of which W. B. was president, suddenly closed on March 29, 1915. W. B.'s son, Coney, who was the bank's cashier, fled to Chicago, but was later arrested and convicted of embezzlement.¹⁰³ W. B., who was tried and acquitted of similar charges, was forced to borrow heavily from his brother to cover Coney's losses and ultimately forfeited to the Colonel all of his holdings, including his bank at Texline and six thousand acres of land in Dallam and Hartley counties.¹⁰⁴ He also gave up his interest in Bankers' Trust. Perhaps because of W. B.'s financial crisis, the company failed to attract major investments and apparently was liquidated.

In addition to his loans to W. B., the Colonel went

¹⁰² Report on Banker's Trust Company, July 31, 1914 [p. 1].

¹⁰³ Marylou McDaniel, God, Grass, and Grit, pp. 9-10; T. D. Gresham to G. G. Wright, letter, January 27, 1919, C. C. Slaughter Company, AAS.

¹⁰⁴ Plan of the Division of the Estate of C. C. Slaughter, Deceased, undated, Legal Documents, CCS.

to the rescue of his brother in another way. In September 1916 he employed W. B. to succeed Jack Alley (who leased from Slaughter the remnant of the Running Water Ranch) as manager of the Long S Ranch. Unfortunately, less than a week after Colonel Slaughter's death on January 25, 1919, W. B. attempted to sell Bob Slaughter's newly-acquired Western S Ranch which lay on the Rio Grande in Hudspeth County to "an unknown Mexican company." When Bob happened to learn about the fraudulent negotiations, he confronted and fired his uncle on February 8, 1919. "He [W. B.] is a thief," reported Bob to his brother Dick, "and he admits it before C. C. [Jr.] and me."¹⁰⁵ Two years later, W. B. filed a \$3,000,000 slander suit against his nephews, but there is no evidence that he ever collected anything.¹⁰⁶

The unhappy venture with W. B. Slaughter and Bankers' Trust Company ended Colonel Slaughter's business ventures. Content to live out his days peacefully, Slaughter continued to visit the refurbished Long S Ranch annually, usually spending the summer at Soash. No longer able to travel extensively, he often had his chauffeur drive to a herd of cattle, honk the auto's horn, and silently watch the cattle as they crowded around the car. "As they gazed

¹⁰⁵ R. L. Slaughter to E. Dick Slaughter, letter, February 8, 1919, C. C. Slaughter Company, AAS.

¹⁰⁶ Unidentified newspaper clipping, January 11, 1921, Scrapbook, CAS.

wonderingly at Colonel Slaughter," recorded a Dallas observer, "he would beam back delighted just to feast his eyes on them."¹⁰⁷

Even during his declining health, Slaughter continued to enjoy excellent profits from his investments, particularly from the old Long S. Restocked in 1913, the ranch had 8,327 head of cattle on April 10, 1914, including 1413 newly purchased two-year old steers. For 1915, the ranch returned a net profit of \$106,186.84, or 23 percent on the \$451,139.00 investment.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, Slaughter's children, who had assumed complete ownership of the Lazy S in 1911, initially enjoyed handsome profits from that enterprise. For each of the ten stockholders (including Mrs. C. C. Slaughter), its dividend increased from a modest \$500.00 in 1911 to \$10,000.00 in 1913.¹⁰⁹ In midsummer of 1915, however, the Slaughter family suffered a reversal from which there was no recovery. Unexpectedly, George Slaughter died on July 15 at the age of fifty-four,¹¹⁰ and no one could fill his place. His

¹⁰⁷ Rogers, Lusty Texans of Dallas, p. 105.

¹⁰⁸ Report on C. C. Slaughter Company, December 31, 1915, and December 13, 1918, Financial Documents, AAS.

¹⁰⁹ Report of Special Examination, undated, C. C. Slaughter Cattle Company, AAS.

¹¹⁰ Report to the Board of Directors of the C. C. Slaughter Cattle Company for the Fiscal Year Ending December 1, 1915, Cochran County Historical Museum, Morton, Texas (photocopy).

hard work and devotion to family business had resulted in profitable returns from the ranches during the twenty-five years he managed the Running Water and Lazy S. Although the company ranch ran smoothly for a few months under Bob Slaughter's direction, profits soon sagged and expenses mounted.¹¹¹

Furthermore, disastrous weather problems soon plunged the once-smoothly running Lazy S into turmoil. The parching drouth of 1917, followed by a tragic snowstorm and blizzard in January, reminiscent of those of the 1880s, took a heavy toll of cattle. By the end of 1920, the Lazy S's indebtedness had increased to \$270,000; simultaneously, the annual cattle sales had dropped to only \$20,000.¹¹²

Colonel Slaughter was spared the agony of witnessing the final demise of his empire. On January 25, 1919, two weeks before his eighty-second birthday, the old cattleman died. Newspapers across the state lauded his long, productive life, especially noting his great wealth, his generous philanthropy, and his "most sensational act"--the purchase of Sir Bredwell.¹¹³ J. B. Cranfill in a special Baptist

¹¹¹ Report of Special Examination, undated, C. C. Slaughter Cattle Company, AAS.

¹¹² Annual Report, June 30, 1921, C. C. Slaughter Cattle Company, AAS.

¹¹³ Houston Post, January 26, 1919, clipping, Scrapbook, CAS.

Standard editorial described him as "a man of dauntless courage" who "blazed the way for all the great [Baptist] achievements that we have known through the past quarter of a century."¹¹⁴ The Cattleman, official organ of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association which Slaughter had helped found, recorded that "as a stockman, merchant, and banker, he was most successful and by his honest methods and square dealing amassed a great fortune."¹¹⁵ The Dallas Times-Herald recalled his humble start when he bought half-interest in his father's cattle herd with money he earned "peddling goods."¹¹⁶ From that venture in 1854 until his death in 1919, C. C. Slaughter rode thousands of miles along dusty cattle trails, negotiated shrewdly in cattle markets throughout the East and Midwest, and from behind his banker's desk made advantageous deals with fellow cattlemen that, altogether, enabled him to accumulate a fortune worth approximately four million dollars.¹¹⁷

Funeral services for Christopher Columbus Slaughter

¹¹⁴ Baptist Standard, January 30, 1919, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ "Pioneer Cattleman Dies," Cattleman, V (February, 1919), 12.

¹¹⁶ Dallas Times-Herald, January 26, 1919, CAS.

¹¹⁷ On March 31, 1919, C. C. Slaughter's worth was estimated to be \$3,208,248.94. This figure did not include the Lazy S Ranch which Slaughter had given to his children in 1911. Its value was estimated in 1918 to be \$928,000. Report on C. C. Slaughter Company, March 31, 1919, AAS.

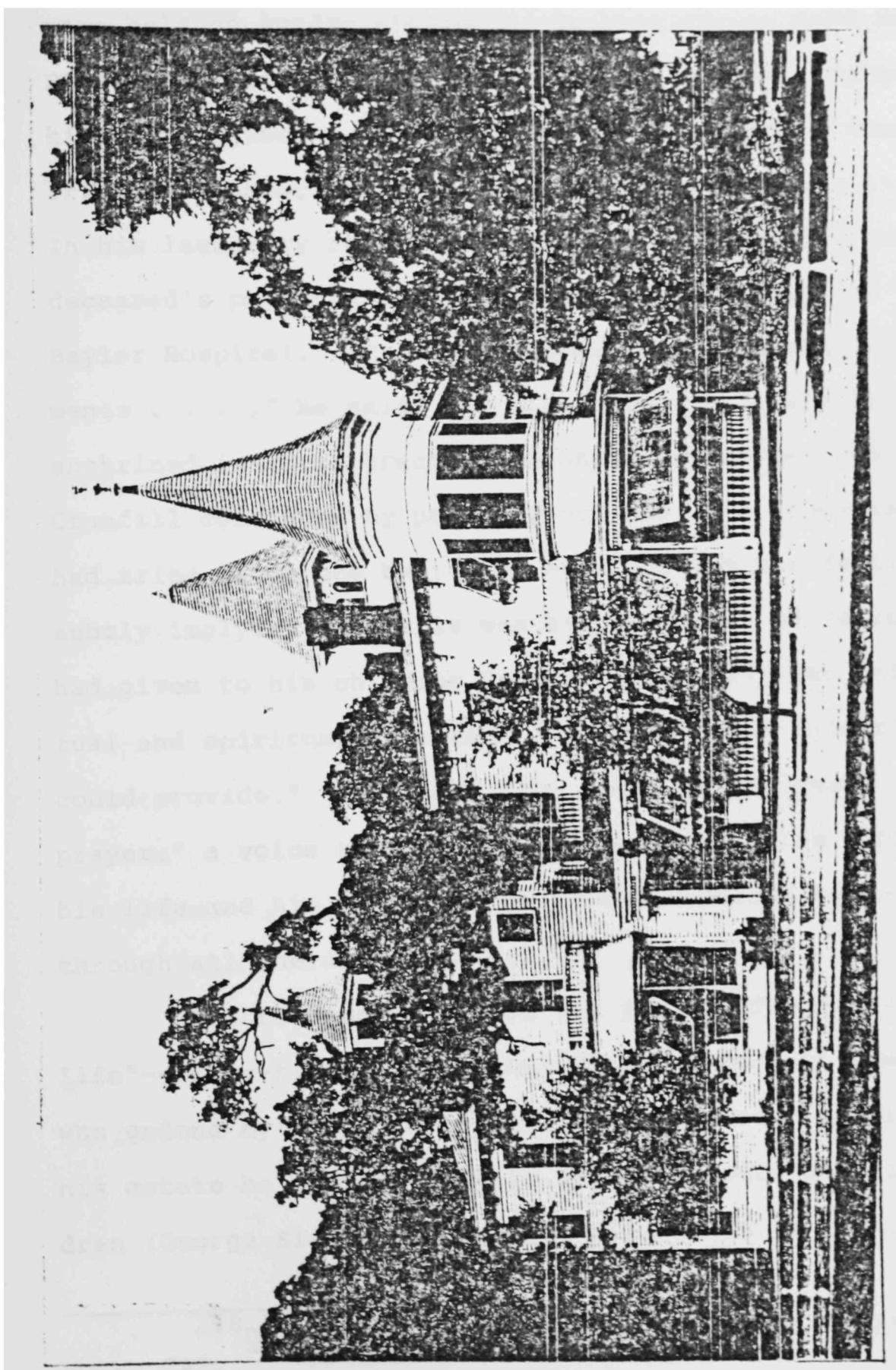


Fig. 15

The Slaughter Home in Dallas, 1925

were held on Sunday afternoon, January 26, at 3506 Worth Street, his home for forty-five years. In the absence of his pastor, George W. Truett, who was in Europe, long-time friend and associate J. B. Cranfill delivered the sermon. In his laudatory remarks, Cranfill dwelt primarily on the deceased's philanthropy to Baptist benevolences and to Baylor Hospital. "C. C. Slaughter has built his own monuments . . . , " he said, and his "name . . . will forever be enshrined in these great institutions which he loved."¹¹⁸ Cranfill concluded by pointing out that his long-time friend had tried to do the best that he could for his family, subtly implying that this was his only area of failure. He had given to his children "every opportunity for intellectual and spiritual advancement that a loving father's hand could provide." They knew "the sound of his voice in prayer," a voice they had often heard, and "the glory of his life and his home will be in their hearts as an incense through all the after years."¹¹⁹

Unfortunately, within two years, "The glory of his life"--sixty-five years of building a vast West Texas empire--was undone by Slaughter's children. Although he willed that his estate be divided equally among his wife and nine children (George Slaughter's widow, Allie, was to receive

¹¹⁸ Dallas Evening Journal, January 26, 1919, Scrapbook, CAS.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

George's share), Slaughter, fearful that there would be dissension over the will, had stipulated that should his wife, Carrie Averill Slaughter, or a group of the children by either of his marriages contest the will, the entire fortune would pass to the others.¹²⁰ His codicil was appropriate. For many years the children had divided during quarrels into two groups, the older (George, Bob, Minnie, Dick, and Dela) against the younger (C. C., Jr., Alexander, Carrie, and Nelle). Unable to agree on any joint arrangement for operation of the estate, the heirs were forced to effect complicated divisions of the property. As a result, all the land was appraised and divided into ten tracts of equal value. Then, on March 15, 1920, the family gathered at the law offices of Dallas attorney Henry C. Coke and drew from a hat capsules, each containing brief descriptions of land parcels. In such a manner, the old Long S, the remnant of the Running Water, and W. B. Slaughter's former property were methodically divided into small tracts. The Dallas property, notes receivable, stocks and bonds, furniture, personal effects, livestock, and \$174,000 in cash were divided similarly.¹²¹

Even Slaughter's "insurance policy," the 246,000-acre Lazy S Ranch, which he had proclaimed to be

¹²⁰ Dallas Times-Herald, January 13, 1920, ibid.

¹²¹ Plan of the division of the Estate of C. C. Slaughter, Deceased, undated, CCS.

"indivisible," and the Slaughter Hereford Home near Roswell were soon divided. On August 20, 1920, "in lieu of the dissension and dissatisfied stockholders," nine of the Slaughter heirs petitioned the directors of the C. C. Slaughter Cattle Company for division.¹²² As a result, on April 11, 1921, it too was equally partitioned among the ten shareholders; then, beginning on May 1 and for 59 days thereafter, the 12,000 cattle on the ranch were slowly separated into 10 equal herds and given new brands.¹²³ By August 1921, the Slaughter cattle empire had vanished, and in its stead, ten small ranches had supplanted a range that once was the "kingdom" of the famous Sir Bredwell.

The breakup of the Slaughter empire, however, did no financial harm to some of the Slaughter heirs. For those fortunate enough to inherit land in Cochran and Hockley counties, vast riches awaited. On April 8, 1937, on Bob Slaughter's tract of the old Lazy S, five miles south of Sundown, Texas, a Texaco oil well completion signaled the beginning of the great Slaughter oil field.¹²⁴ With a

¹²² "To the Officers and Stockholders of the C. C. Slaughter Cattle Company," petition, August 4, 1920, CCS.

¹²³ Ira P. Deloache to Stockholders of the C. C. Slaughter Cattle Company, letter, April 12, 1921, CCS; Lee Cooper to David Murrah, interview, June 2, 1970.

¹²⁴ Ruford Francisco Madera, "The Slaughter Field in Hockley County" (M.S. thesis, Texas Technological College, Lubbock, 1939), p. 1.

production of 511 barrels a day, the discovery well created a boom and within four years, the field had 52,000 acres of proven production with 849 wells,¹²⁵ and by the end of 1975 total production had reached 642,687,368 barrels,¹²⁶ or an approximate income to the land owners of \$20,000,000 per year.

Unfortunately, the dissolution of the vast ranching domain deprived Slaughter of the significant place in history he deserved. No longer did his far-flung cattle domain stand as a visible embodiment of his wealth and power, and the greatness of his accomplishments were forgotten as rapidly as his legacy was carved into hundreds of cotton and small grain farms. Furthermore, family disharmony, which continued beyond his own children's generation, prevented any united effort to memorialize adequately his life. Actually, no effort on their part was necessary for, as J. B. Cranfill had told the mourners gathered at his funeral, Slaughter had "built his own monuments"--Baylor University and seven other Texas Baptist colleges, as a tribute to his appreciation of Christian education; Baylor Medical Center in Dallas, in 1979 a \$100,000,000 complex, as an evidence of his

¹²⁵ Carl Coke Rister, "Yates, an 'Oil Klondike,'" West Texas Historical Association Year Book, XXV (1949), 9-10.

¹²⁶ Railroad Commission of Texas, Annual Production by Active Fields, Oil and Gas Division, 1975 (Austin: Railroad Commission of Texas, n.d.), p. 80.

humanitarianism; and a thriving cattle industry in West Texas, as testimony of his faith in the importance of land and cattle.

The product of an era that produced many "cattle kings,"¹²⁷ real and fictitious, Christopher Columbus Slaughter succeeded in earning his title. As an individual, he was one of the major cattlemen of America. His land holdings compared favorably to that of California butcher and stock raiser Henry Miller who controlled one million acres in five Western states.¹²⁸ Slaughter's wealth exceeded by \$3,500,000 that of one of Montana's biggest cattle raisers, Pierre Wibaux.¹²⁹ The size of Slaughter's herds never matched the reported 125,000 head owned by Washington (state) stockman Ben Snipes. Snipes, however, went bankrupt during

¹²⁷ According to James Cox, the term "Cattle King" came into widespread use during the early 1880s. "Newspapers on the lookout for sensational items printed accounts of phenomenal wealth and prosperity of the so-called cattle barons . . . anyone who happened to be located at a hotel in an Eastern town was generally described as 'that well-known cattle king, Mr. _____,' no matter whether the gentleman was a cowboy, a country postmaster, or a small storekeeper." Cox, Cattle Industry, p. 136.

¹²⁸ Edward F. Treadwell, The Cattle King (New York: Macmillan Company, 1931), pp. vii-viii.

¹²⁹ Donald H. Welsh, "Cosmopolitan Cattle King: Pierre Wibaux," Michael S. Kennedy, ed., Cowboys and Cattlemen (New York: Hastings House, 1964), p. 70.

the Panic of 1893.¹³⁰ Similarly, although Slaughter's land and cattle holdings were smaller than many of the investor-owned ranching companies of the Great Plains, his empire outlasted most.

Many of the nation's cattle barons were Texans. Among their number, Slaughter likewise compared favorably to those about whom biographies have been written. South Texas rancher Richard King, who established the famous King Ranch, at his death in 1885 owned 614,140 acres and 40,000 cattle, holdings of a similar size to Slaughter's.¹³¹ A. H. "Shanghai" Pierce, another well-known and legendary South Texas stockman, at his death in 1900 was worth less than half of the Slaughter fortune.¹³² The colorful Charles Goodnight, whose name is nationally famous, repeatedly lost money in poor investments, never matched Slaughter's wealth, and at his death in 1929 was broke.¹³³

Interestingly, Slaughter's career, except for politics, closely paralleled that of Texas entrepreneur George Washington Littlefield. Like "Colonel" Slaughter, "Major"

¹³⁰ Roscoe Sheller, Ben Snipes: Northwest Cattle King (Portland, Oregon: Binfords and Mort, 1957), p. 197.

¹³¹ Tom Lea, The King Ranch (2 vols.; Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1957), I, 418.

¹³² Chris Emmett, Shanghai Pierce (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), p. 7.

¹³³ Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 460.

Littlefield made a fortune following the Civil War driving cattle to Kansas. In 1877, while Slaughter was establishing the Long S Ranch in West Texas, Littlefield was founding his LIT Ranch on free range along the Canadian River in the Texas Panhandle. Littlefield in 1890 founded the American National Bank in Austin which coincidentally bore the same name as the bank Slaughter established in Dallas six years previously. In 1882 Littlefield purchased an irrigated farm in the Pecos River Valley near Roswell, New Mexico, eighteen years before Slaughter placed there his Hereford Home. In 1901 Littlefield bought the XIT's 300,000-acre Yellow House Ranch in Hockley and Lamb counties, which lay adjacent to Slaughter's Lazy S Ranch, and thereafter for the life of the two cattlemen, these ranches shared a common fence. And, at the time of Slaughter's death in 1919, Littlefield's holdings and total wealth were similar to that of his neighbor.¹³⁴

Like Littlefield, Slaughter was a true entrepreneur. Driven from an early age by a competitive spirit born and bred on the Texas frontier, Slaughter emerged as a cattle king able to survive the transition from the open range to

¹³⁴ David B. Gracy II, "George Washington Littlefield: A Biography in Business" (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1971), pp. 95, 105, 138, 219; J. Evetts Haley, George W. Littlefield, Texan (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), p. 281.

modern cattle ranching. For this kind of success, ranch historian Lewis Atherton perhaps best defined the formula: "By luck alone, one might profit greatly from a single venture of short duration, but only an entrepreneur possessed of daring flexibility, curiosity, and a willingness to change procedures, could hope to retain his place among the cattle kings for any extended period of time."¹³⁵ Christopher Columbus Slaughter, virtually unknown to Atherton, could have served as the historian's best model.

¹³⁵ Atherton, The Cattle Kings, p. 227.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

GEORGE WEBB SLAUGHTER FAMILY

George Webb Slaughter, 1811-1895, m. 1836 Sarah Ann Mason,
1818-1894.

Christopher Columbus, 1837-1919

Nancy, 1840-?

George Webb, Jr., 1843-1860

Peter Eldridge, 1844-1911

John Bunyan, 1848-1928

William Baxter, 1852-1929?

Francis (Fannie), 1854?-?

Mary, 1858-?

Jane (Jennie) [Harris], 1860-1947

Mason, ?-?

Millie [Dalton], ?-?

APPENDIX B

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS SLAUGHTER FAMILY

Christopher Columbus Slaughter, 1837-1919, m. 1861 Cynthia Ann Jowell, 1844-1876

George Morgan, 1862-1915, m. Alice Louise Donohoo

Minnie Magdalene
George Morgan, Jr.
Jo Dick
Eloise [Hill]

Minnie, 1864-1955, m. George T. Veal

Dela, 1866-1956, m. Gilbert Greer Wright

Gilbert Greer, Jr.
Florence Roberta [Reeves]
Ed Dela [Cutto]
Jowell Slaughter
Stuart Phillips

Eugene, 1868-1870

Robert Lee, 1870-1938, m. Florence Harris, m. Belle

Robert Lee, Jr.

Edgar, 1873-1935, m. Connie Ligon Graham, m. Sally Tibbs Milleken

Edgar Dick, Jr.

m. 1877 Carrie Averill, 1852-1928

Christopher Columbus, Jr., 1879-1940, m. Elma Letcher

Anella [Bauer]

Walter Webb, 1880-1881

Alexander Averill, 1881-1931, m. Blanche Fallon,
m. Dorothy Gray

Hattie Louise [Browning]

Carrie Rebecca, 1883-1958, m. John Henry Dean

John Henry, Jr.

Nellie Louise, 1892-1964, m. Ira Pleasant Deloache

Averill

Nelle Jordan [Davidson]

James Ira

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

Collections

- Bailey, Annie. Papers. 1913-1959. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock. Microfilm copy.
Contains material limited to Dawson County, Texas.
- Boyd, Hiley T. Papers. 1898-1924. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.
Correspondence, tally books, and other material concerning Boyd's work as foreman of the Lazy S Ranch.
- Burns, R. C. Papers. 1842-1958. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.
Concerns Burns' career as manager of three South Plains ranches.
- Hill, Louis Hamilton. Papers. 1859-1932. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.
Correspondence and records of Webb and Hill, Albany, Texas, cattle dealers.
- JA Ranch. Records. 1876-1907. Archives, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, West Texas State University, Canyon.
Primarily correspondence of JA Ranch.
- Matador Land and Cattle Company. Records. 1882-1957. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.
An extensive collection of records of the company, including those from the corporate headquarters in Dundee, Scotland.
- McCarty, John L. Papers. 1884-1959. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock. Microfilm copy.
Extensive collection of McCarty's notes and material on Panhandle-Plains history; originals in Mary E. Bivens Library, Amarillo, Texas.

Munson, W. B. Papers. 1846-1930. Archives, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, West Texas State University, Canyon.

Primarily concerns land colonization in the Panhandle of Texas.

Ranching Heritage Center. Office Files. Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

Pertains to the development of restored historic ranch buildings at the Ranching Heritage Center, Lubbock, Texas.

Slaughter, Alexander A. Papers. 1883-1964. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

Includes extensive material related to the interests of C. C. Slaughter's wife and children Alexander, C. C., Jr., and Carrie Slaughter Dean.

Slaughter, Bob. Reference File. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

Contains limited information about R. L. "Bob" Slaughter.

Slaughter, Carrie Averill. Papers. 1862-1960. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock. Microfilm copy.

Includes scrapbooks compiled by Mrs. C. C. Slaughter concerning Slaughter family history.

Slaughter, C. C. Papers. 1876-1968. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

Limited quantity of correspondence, legal documents, and miscellaneous material, but contains the earliest known C. C. Slaughter correspondence (1876).

Slaughter, George M. Papers. 1893-1959. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

Primarily correspondence between George Slaughter and his father C. C. Slaughter from 1893-1910.

'Slaughter, George M. Papers. 1893-1973. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock. Microfilm copy.

Primarily relates to George M. Slaughter family, but includes limited correspondence of C. C. Slaughter. Originals in possession of Mrs. George Slaughter, II, Roswell, New Mexico.

Slaughter, George Webb. File. Daughters of the Texas Republic Library, San Antonio, Texas.

Contains limited information on Slaughter family.

Soash, W. P. Papers. 1877-1967. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

Concerns Soash's land colonization activity in Texas and Iowa.

Spur Ranch. Records. 1885-1941. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

Extensive records pertaining to organization and operation of the Espuela Land and Cattle Company, Ltd.

XIT Ranch. Records. 1882-1917. Archives, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, West Texas State University, Canyon.

Extensive correspondence and records of the large Texas Panhandle ranch.

Interviews

Boyd, Hiley T., Jr., Godley, Texas, to David Murrah. Interviews, June 1-2, 1970. Oral History File, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

Cooper, Lee, Decatur, Texas, to David Murrah. Interview, June 2, 1970. Notes in possession of author.

Foor, C. W., Fort Sumner, New Mexico, to J. Evetts Haley. Interview, September 23, 1927. In possession of J. Evetts Haley, Canyon, Texas.

Holden, W. C., Lubbock, Texas, to David Murrah. Interview, March 2, 1970, Lubbock, Texas. Notes in possession of author.

McAnally, W. E., Dallas, Texas, to David Murrah. Interview, June 25, 1970. Notes in possession of author.

Slaughter, C. C., Dallas, Texas, to W. H. Harrison. Interview, March 17, 1886. H. H. Bancroft Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Microfilm copy.

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