

successful when they sold their steers to the Army at Fort Sumner. Loving took the remaining 700 to 800 cows onto to Colorado while Goodnight returned to Palo Pinto to prepare for the next year's drive.

Their partnership continued through 1866 and 1867. Then in July 1867, while Loving and another cowboy were riding ahead of the herd to Fort Sumner, they were attacked by Comanches just south of the New Mexico line. Although wounded by an arrow, Loving was able to escape along with his companion. They made it to Fort Sumner 180 miles to the north, but Loving never recovered from his wound and died there in September. Faithful to his trust, Goodnight returned the body of his old partner the long 700 miles down the Pecos River and across West Texas to the Masonic Lodge in Weatherford where it was buried with full fraternal honors.

Over the next seven years Charlie Goodnight continued driving cattle over the now famous Goodnight-Loving Trail. This Palo Pinto County cattleman, more than any other cowboy-rancher in the Old West, became a true legend in his own time. He became a familiar figure at the ranch of Lucian Maxwell in Cimarron and in the other ranches and towns along the trail that bore his name. He had succeeded in burning his personal brand into the history of the Texas cattle drive. Over the following years hundreds of thousands of longhorn cattle would follow the driest, hottest cattle trail in the west, Goodnight-Loving Trail.

**THE SLAUGHTER RANCH:** George Webb Slaughter had been the last of General Sam Houston's messengers to return from the Alamo carrying a last desperate dispatch from Colonel Travis. In 1857 Slaughter drove a herd of longhorns up the Brazos and into the newly established Palo Pinto County. He settled on 2900 acres in the eastern shadow of Kyle Mountain, just across present day Farm Road Four from Worth Ranch. An historic marker marks the location of the ranch house. By 1867 his "Lazy S" herd had grown to over 10,000 head. During the fall of that year word spread across Texas of a new cattle market at a town called Abilene, Kansas, and Slaughter was determined to take a herd north to this market.

Over the next eight years, from 1868 to 1875, the Slaughter ranch drove 12,800 "Lazy S" longhorns up the Chisholm Trail, across Indian Territory, to Abilene, and sold them for close to half a million dollars, an enormous sum for anyone in Texas at that time. In 1895, George Webb Slaughter died and was buried in the Palo Pinto Cemetery. No history of the Chisholm

Trail is complete without the story of the Slaughter Ranch. His son, C.C. Slaughter, assumed the reins of his father's ranching operation, added to the family land holdings, and became the single largest individual land owner in the world.

**THE BUFFALO HUNTERS:** The increased movement of white settlers across the continent took a great toll on the buffalo. From 1830 to 1870 the population of plains buffalo dropped from an estimated 30 million to 8 million. By 1870 the hide business had become a trade for professional hunters armed with the .50 caliber Sharps Buffalo Gun. By 1875, Fort Griffin, just 50 miles west of Worth Ranch, was the buffalo hunters' boom town. At the peak of the hide trade some 1500 hunters and skinners operated out of Fort Griffin. During the winter of 1876 and '77, more than 200,000 hides were shipped by wagon from Fort Griffin to the T. & P. Station in Fort Worth. One buffalo hunter named Joe McCombs brought in 4,900 hides in the Spring of 1878. The southern herd played out quickly and by late 1879 there was scarcely a buffalo hunter left in the area.

**GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN:** With the passing of the Old West the Indian tribes that camped up and down the Brazos are now long silent. The French and Spanish explorers have left nothing but a few names scattered across the map. The 2nd Cavalry and Texas Rangers no longer defend the frontier against Comanche and Kiowa war parties. The cowboys and the cattle drivers no longer roam the open range, and the buffalo hunters have disappeared with the buffalo. But their spirits are still here. They are gone but not forgotten.

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# THE PALO PINTO STORY

**THE RIVER:** The records of the French expedition led by the explorer LaSalle preserve the name of the river as it was called by the Caddoan speaking tribes of Texas. They called the river "Tokonohono." Whatever the meaning of the word, LaSalle gave the river the name "Maligne," which means "virulent" or "malicious." But the name we use for the river is taken from the name given by the Spaniards, "Los Brazos de Dios," which means "The Arms of God." They left their mark here years before the coming of the Anglo settlers.

The earliest legend concerning the name of the river is that members of the Coronado expedition of 1540-42, while wandering on the Llano Estacado were saved from dying of thirst when they discovered the upper reaches of the Brazos. But the more popular legend, told around countless Palo Pinto campfires, contends that the river was named by early Spanish missionaries far to the south who were attacked by an Indian war party. Those that escaped fled across the river to safety. Then, just as their pursuers were crossing the always dangerous and unpredictable river, a flash flood swept the marauders away. The missionaries, believing it to be an act of God, gave thanks for their mighty deliverance by giving the river its name. This name, "Los Brazos de Dios," descriptive of the arbitrary and treacherous nature of the river, has proven a curse to all those associated with it.

**THE SPANIARDS:** Evidence of Spanish military expeditions in the Palo Pinto country is a little scarce. Expeditions through north Texas may have purposely avoided the more treacherous terrain of the Palo Pinto mountains. In 1759 Spanish explorers crossed the upper-middle Brazos in western Young County. In the late summer and fall of that year Colonel Diego Ortiz Parilla, commander of the Presidio at the Mission Santa Cruz on the San Saba River, led a punitive expedition of 576 soldiers, volunteers and mission Indians against the hostile tribes of north Texas. On October 1 they attacked a band of Tonkawa near the junction of the Clear and Salt Forks of the Brazos. Fifty-five Indians were killed, 176 captives taken, and 100 Spanish horses were recovered.

**THE PATHFINDERS:** History records that the first white man to set foot in what is now Palo Pinto County was the French explorer Pierre Vial. A native of Lyons, Vial was familiar with the lands along the Mississippi down to New Orleans before the American Revolution and was on good terms with some of the tribes along the Red River.

In 1784, after arriving in San Antonio, Vial was employed by the Spanish Governor of Texas, Col. Domingo Cabellos y Robles, to find the most direct route to Santa Fe. He was charged to keep a diary, record the distances travelled and make notes on the Indian tribes encountered. In 1789, on his second trip to Santa Fe, Vial journeyed up the Brazos River through the Palo Pinto country. The earliest maps to include details of this area bear the name "Palo Pinto." Local historians have speculated that the name, which means "Painted Pole," was applied to the mottled bark of the oaks that line the banks of Palo Pinto creek.

Nearly fifty years later the famous frontiersman and folk hero William A. "Bigfoot" Wallace became the first Anglo American to enter the Palo Pinto country. A giant of a man, he claimed descent from the Scottish heroes William Wallace and Robert the Bruce. In 1837 he accompanied a surveying expedition up the Brazos and, after being separated from the rest of the party after an Indian attack, wandered into the Palo Pinto country. Local legend holds that he camped in a cave near Strawn in the southwest part of the county.

**THE WILD WEST:** By the late 1840's Texas had gained its independence, spent ten years as a republic and joined the Union as the twenty-eighth state. But in 1849 the Palo Pinto country was still a part of the wilderness west. Fifty miles to the east, the small settlement at Fort Worth, established the same year, still consisted of no more than a few dwellings, sheds, and storehouses, and a half-dozen double log cabins.

Six years before, Sam Houston, President of the Republic of Texas, had signed the Treaty of 1843 with the Indian tribes of north Texas partitioning their hunting grounds west of Fort Worth from the white man's land to the east. The line ran southwest from Fort Worth (roughly following the route of Highway 377 through present day Stephenville) to the ruins of the old Spanish mission on the San Saba River in Menard County, and from there southeast to San Antonio.

Texas entered the Union in 1845 and two years later, after the war with Mexico, the Texas Rangers and the U.S. Cavalry alike adopted this same demarcation as the line "Where the West Begins." At that point in

history Fort Worth was literally the "jumping off place" where travelers who contemplated venturing west of Fort Worth, would literally leave the east behind and set off into the wilderness west.

But prior to 1849 practical routes to the far west did not yet travel through Texas. The prospectors who were headed to California in the gold rush of 1849 generally followed the Oregon-California Trail far to the north of Texas. Attempts to find a southern route to California, from San Antonio through El Paso and Tucson, were finally successful that same year.

**THE NATIVE AMERICANS:** In June 1851 Colonel Sam Cooper with the U.S. Cavalry led an expedition up the Brazos River to explore the area that now comprises Palo Pinto County. He reported that among the various villages of the Ioni, Anadarko, Caddo, Keechi, Waco and Tawakoni in the area were about 1,000 men, women and children, including about 240 warriors. He found numerous villages, including the Ioni camp at Village Bend south of Mineral Wells, the Anadarko at Lone Camp, the Caddo on Bone Bend at the mouth of Caddo Creek, and Keechi village just across the river. Bone Bend is now inundated by the waters of Lake Possum Kingdom.

Three years later, in 1854, the Texas Legislature established two reservations near Fort Belknap, 30 miles northwest of Worth Ranch: one for the peaceful tribes and one for the Comanche. By the summer of 1858 more than 1,100 members of the Palo Pinto tribes were camped on the Salt Fork Reservation, while the Clear Fork Reservation reported only 372 Comanche.

**THE CAVALRY:** In 1851 the War Department authorized the U.S. Cavalry to establish a string of forts through north and west Texas to protect the settlements along the Brazos and Trinity rivers. These forts included Fort Richardson just 25 miles north of Worth Ranch, Fort Belknap 30 miles to the northwest, Fort Griffin on the Clear Fork of the Brazos, Fort Phantom Hill near present day Abilene, Fort Chadbourne on the Colorado River, Fort Concho at present day San Angelo, Fort McKavett on the San Saba, and others stretching west to El Paso. Confederate Generals Robert E. Lee and Albert Sidney Johnston were both stationed at Fort Belknap for a time during the 1850's.

In 1851 the Fort Worth-Fort Belknap Road opened as a military supply road. Today the old road passes through the northern part of Palo Pinto County, near Oran and the town of Graford. It passes just six miles north of Worth Ranch. It was along this road that many of the early settlers first came to the Palo Pinto country. Among them were names that would loom large in the

annals of Texas' cattle drivers: names like Vaughn, Crawford, Hittson, Slaughter, Carter, Dalton, Goodnight and Loving.

**THE TEXAS RANGERS:** In the late 1850's, as the Anglo settlers began to encroach upon Comancheria, conflict with plains tribes became more prevalent. From 1858 to 1875 Indian raids in Palo Pinto county and the surrounding area were more frequent and more bloody than at any other time in the history of Texas. Sul Ross, the famous Indian fighter and Texas Ranger Captain, joined local Rangers to help defend the Palo Pinto frontier against the Comanche and Kiowa during the early years of the Indian Wars.

**THE GOODNIGHT-LOVING TRAIL:** In the Spring of 1857 Charlie Goodnight drove 437 longhorns up the Brazos and into the area around Black Springs on Keechi Creek. Soon after coming to Palo Pinto, Goodnight met Oliver Loving, an experience cattleman who operated a store on the new Fort Worth-Fort Belknap Road. In 1860 Loving drove a herd north across the Red River and through the Indian Nation. He continued north to the Arkansas River and then west to Pueblo and Denver. During this trip Loving became friends with Kit Carson and Lucien Maxwell who owned a large ranch at Cimarron, New Mexico Territory.

During the war years from 1861 to 1865 the Palo Pinto cattle herds grew by the thousands. By Spring 1866 Goodnight and Loving had resolved to take a herd of cattle west to Fort Sumner, New Mexico, and then north to Colorado. Before they departed, Goodnight designed and invented the chuck wagon and commissioned a local wagonmaker to build the first one for this trip. On the 6th of June 1866, Charlie Goodnight and Oliver Loving, having trailed their cattle west out of Palo Pinto county, joined their herds near Fort Belknap and struck out to blaze a new cattle trail west.

With 19 armed riders and a mixed herd of 2,000 steers and cows they initially followed the stage coach route of the Butterfield Overland Mail which had been established in September 1858. The trail followed the Clear Fork of the Brazos, past Fort Griffin and the ruins of Fort Phantom Hill, and then southwest past Fort Chadbourne to the middle Concho River. From there the trail led across 80 burning miles of waterless desert and through the Castle Mountains to Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos River. During the three day march across the desert they lost 300 head of cattle. They lost another 100 head that were poisoned in the alkali pools at the Pecos crossing. But the drive was