



Cattle drives became important after the U.S. Civil War. Longhorns in the North were worth a great deal more than they were worth in the South. And in the South ... there were millions of Longhorns!

It therefore became “imperative” to figure-out the best way to move all those cattle safely and economically to a financially viable market. Andy Adams (1859-1935) discusses this in the Preface to his 1895 book, *The Outlet*:

*At the close of the civil war the need for a market for the surplus cattle of Texas was as urgent as it was general. There had been numerous experiments in seeking an outlet, and there is authority for the statement that in 1857 Texas cattle were driven to Illinois.*

*Eleven years later forty thousand head were sent to the mouth of Red River in Louisiana, shipped by boat to Cairo, Illinois, and thence inland by rail. Fever resulted, and the experiment was never repeated.*

*To the west of Texas stretched a forbidding desert, while on the other hand, nearly every drive to Louisiana resulted in financial disaster to the drover. The republic of Mexico, on the south, afforded no relief, as it was likewise overrun with a surplus of its own breeding.*

*Immediately before and just after the war, a slight trade had sprung up in cattle between eastern points on Red River and Baxter Springs, in the southeast corner of Kansas. The route was perfectly feasible, being short and entirely within the reservations of the Choctaws and Cherokees, civilized Indians. This was the only route to the north; for farther to the westward was the home of the buffalo and the unconquered, nomadic tribes.*

*A writer on that day, Mr. Emerson Hough, an acceptable authority, says: "The civil war stopped almost all plans to market the range cattle, and the close of that war found the vast grazing lands of Texas fairly covered with millions of cattle which had no actual or determinate value. They were sorted and branded and herded after a fashion, but neither they nor their increase could be converted into anything but more cattle. The demand for a market became imperative." (Adams, pages vii and viii.)*

When it was clear that “a market” for all these cattle was in the North, cowboys drove their herds from Texas toward the railhead in Kansas. Moving along established trails, they had to make sure the herd was fed and watered.

This image depicts “Trail Herd Watering,” a photochrom released by Detroit Publishing Co., in 1905.

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### Cowboys Water the Herd in a Cattle Drive

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