An Introduction to the History of the Bluestem-
Pasture Region of Kansas

A Study in Adaptation to Geographical Environment

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The bluestem-pasture region of Kansas has come to be recognized
as a natural region with rather clearly defined boundaries. On
the map it appears as a somewhat elongated oval-shaped area about
200 miles from tip to tip, with Pottawatomie county, Kansas, at
the northern end and Osage county, Oklahoma, at the southern end,
the intervening country being some fifty miles, or somewhat more
than two counties, in width. Roughly, this is the central third of
the eastern half of the state, between 96° and 97° west longitude and
36° 30' and 39° 30' north latitude. The average annual rainfall
varies from 30 to 35 inches except in the southern portion, but there
the higher precipitation is offset, in part at least, by the higher tem-
peratures and longer period of frost-free days—186 or more annually
in the southern tier of Kansas counties, as against about 178 days
in the central and northern sections. Topographically the region is
rolling to hilly, with rather narrow valleys, but the most charac-
teristic features of the typical pasture portions are hills, or bluffs,
formed by outcroppings of rock of the Permian and Pennsylvania
strata. For the most part this rock is limestone, but in places, es-
specially in the southern end, there is sandstone. The soil is of the
residual type derived from the limestones, shales, and sandstones.
In the typical limestone area outcroppings of stone appear near the
top of the hills, the weathering process washing the decomposed ma-
terials down their sides to the lower ground.

Bluestem is the dominant native grass, represented by two major
varieties: the Big Bluestem (Andropogon furcatus) which thrives in
the lower lands, and the Little Bluestem (Andropogon scoparius)
found on the high uplands. These are tall grasses, as contrasted
with the short grasses, the buffalo and the gramas, which are present
in greater or lesser numbers according to location and season, invad-
ing the region from the western side. Kentucky bluegrass has in-

1. This is a slightly revised version of the presidential address delivered before the annual
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(3)
vaded the region from the eastern side, extending its occupation westward during wet periods and retreating eastward under the ad-
versity of prolonged drought. Prior to the occupation of the country
by white settlement the bluestem grasses were widely distributed
over the open prairie regions of the Middle West, occupying a domi-
nant position over most, if not the whole of eastern Kansas. They
were and still are present also in limited areas of the plains, especially
in the sandhill districts where the common name is bunch grass. For
various reasons early descriptions of the grass associations of the
West are often contradictory. Historical experience has indicated
in part at least an explanation in the fluctuations of the weather.
Descriptions written by observers during periods of prolonged
drought would tend to emphasize the short grasses which thrived
at the expense of the tall grasses and moved eastward under such
influences, and similarly those descriptions written during favorably
wet periods would reflect the reverse process. Several such cycles
have occurred since white observers began writing descriptions and
consequently the first necessity in making interpretations of such
materials is to fit them into the weather chronology.

The growing season of the bluestem grass is the spring and early
summer months. During May, June and July its nutritive value is
strongest, declining until it reaches a minimum after frost. Blue-
stem makes the best hay when cut just after mid-summer and before
it has seeded, while most tame grasses are at their best for hay dur-
ing the blooming period. In hay making, early settlers followed
Eastern tame hay practices and only after years of experience did
they come to appreciate the importance of early cutting.\(^3\)

The assumption is made frequently, indirectly if not directly, but
without foundation in fact, that the bluestem region is unique and
that even in the natural state it possessed the present limits as
natural boundaries. The historical development of the area indi-
cates, however, that the present limits are the result of a prolonged
process of differentiation from the surrounding country. On the
north and northeast, for example, the commercial cornbelt, utilizing
glacial drift soils, encroached early upon the hill country; on the
east a mixed farming area developed which invaded the hills from
that direction; and on the west the wheat belt of central Kansas

\(^3\) The grama and buffalo grasses retain more feed value than bluestem when cured on the
ground (in the pasture), and therefore make better winter pasture. The Kentucky bluegrass
makes an earlier spring growth and a later fall growth, being nearly dormant during the sum-
mer, and during mild seasons remains green well into the winter.

For winter pasture the bluestem region is more valuable in proportion to the amount of
grams and buffalo grass that may be intermixed with it, and for early spring and fall pasture
in proportion to the mixture of Kentucky bluegrass with the bluestem, but for summer pasture
the bluestem with the minimum of mixture is best.
challenged the hills; while on the south the Indian reservation pastures of the old Indian territory and Oklahoma delayed the process of demarcation from the lower end. Within the region, the land most obviously suited to cultivation was occupied and the native sod broken. This included not only bottom land, but also upland. The principal barrier to general cultivation of the whole were the hills, with their outcroppings of stone, sometimes a succession or series like terraces up their slopes. In many places land was cultivated at one time that was later returned to grass.

At some points the stock country has persisted beyond the conventional limits of the bluestem region. To the eastward a spur of such country runs into Linn county along the divide separating the water sheds of the Marais des Cygnes and the Neosho rivers. In 1857 a local observer described the hill country of Linn county as follows—in terms almost identical with those so frequently applied to the bluestem-pasture region of the present:

Owing to the very singular position of the limestone—rock strata near the top of the “divide”—their constant washings and decomposition continue to enrich the land below, causing the grass to grow in great luxuriance, making the best feed for stock during the summer and winter.⁴

To the northwest across Clay county the hill country connects the bluestem-limestone area to the Dakota sandstone area of Ellsworth, Lincoln and Cloud counties, which is also a bluestem country. To the southwest across Cowley, Harper and Sedgwick counties the Arkansas valley only briefly interrupts the bluestem-pasture region in its transition into the bluestem and short-grass pastures of the Medicine river red lands, and into the bluestem-bunch grass of the sandhills along the southern banks of the Arkansas and Cimarron rivers.

The bluestem-pasture region serves three significant functions, but the one that gives it distinction, if it does not render it unique, is that it occupies an intermediate position as a maturing ground or a grass-fattening area between the cattle-growing ranges of the southwestern plains and the central markets for grass-fattened cattle, or the feedlots of the cornbelt. Cattlemen have praised this unusual arrangement on the ground that the finishing weights are put on the animal near the market, saving freight and shipping shrinkage, and permitting flexibility in quick adjustment of shipping schedules to take advantage of favorable prices. It is the largest such commercial grazing area for transient cattle in the United States. The time limits of the grazing season are about six months, April 15 to October 15, but the grass is ready earlier in the southern than in the northern end of the region. The movement of southwestern range cattle by rail into the bluestem grass begins in the latter part of April and is usually completed by mid-May. These cattle from a distance are supplemented to some extent by stock from local or nearby sources. The out-shipments to market usually begin in July, but vary with the season, the condition of cattle when delivered to the pastures, and the condition of the grass and are completed by October 15, leaving the pastures empty during the winter. The second function of the region is feed-lot finishing. This process is carried out on corn and alfalfa or other feeds, without grass, or with grass. This is not done so extensively as in the cornbelt, but on a scale large enough to account for a substantial contribution to the market for full-fed beef. The third function is the maturing of young cattle by roughing through the winter, sometimes with grain added, pasturing through the following summer, and if not marketed as grass-fattened beef, full feeding into the second winter. The fourth and an important function is that the blue-stem region serves as a breeding area for thoroughbred livestock. Although these func-

5. The Kansas Stockman, Topeka, May 1, 1933
tions have persisted together in varying proportions throughout the history of the area and often are hardly distinguishable from one another, the purpose of this address is to emphasize the evolution of the pasture function. The other aspects are included only as seems necessary to the principal objective.

The bluestem grass and the region have been the subject of many eulogies, some of which have gone beyond the limit of facts that can be or have been demonstrated scientifically. Furthermore, there is some disagreement concerning what factors give distinctive value to it as a grazing region. One school of thought, and the one most widely held, takes the ground that the limestone imparts to the bluestem grass its remarkable strength for fattening cattle. If this test were applied rigidly, it would restrict the limits of the region by excluding the sandstone country. The occupants of the sandstone pastures object, however, to the discrimination, holding that it is the grass itself that is distinctive, and that the bluestem grass has the same qualities whether grown on the limestone or the sandstone soils of eastern Kansas. Comparative scientific tests seem not to be available at present to determine conclusively the merits of the divergent views.

In the early days no particular name was applied to this pasture region, the term Flint Hills being a geographical name for the hills themselves in which flint or chert outcroppings occur. As a region it was not then thought of as conspicuously different from others. When the grazing for Southwestern cattle was being referred to by livestock men of the 1880's the terms used were usually "northern pastures" which meant primarily the northern Plains States and territories. At that time Kansas excluded "green" Texas cattle on account of the Texas fever except for shipment, either from designated western stations or through rail consignments. When Kansas came to be referred to in particular, which occurred rarely prior to the 1890's, the terms used were "Kansas pastures," or "Southern Kansas pastures," or some equivalent and they were used so as including western short-grass as well as eastern long-grass grazing grounds.

The term "Flint Hills" as applied to pastures occurred only occasionally in the early accounts and then designated only the grazing in the hills themselves rather than the region. Thus the people of Chase county differentiated the Flint Hills as grazing grounds from the farming lands of the bottoms and the upland prairies. As time passed a broader usage of the term Flint Hills developed, especially

on the part of those outside the area. During the second and third decades of the twentieth century the term was rather generally used, but was not altogether appropriate because the pasture district was more extensive than the Flint Hills.

The name "Bluestem" was used in the later years of the nineteenth century to describe the grasses from a botanical standpoint, but popularly the more frequently used names were prairie grasses, long grasses or tall grasses. In the early years of the twentieth century bluestem was sometimes used to designate the grass of certain pastures, but not until after the World War did the term bluestem pastures gain general currency as applying to the region. The J. E. Edwards eulogy of the bluestem grass, printed in 1918, contributed to grass consciousness among cattlemen, the more effective portions being frequently quoted. A suggestion was made in 1923, but not acted upon, that the new hotel at Emporia be named "Blue Stem" and advertised nationally. The term "Kansas Bluestem Region" or some variation was used with increasing frequency during the 1920's, gaining in popularity over the term "Flint Hills." Other possible names, the "Limestone Pastures" or the "Bluestem-Limestone Pastures," did not find popular favor. In a sense, therefore, when in 1929 the Kansas State Board of Agriculture adopted the name "The Bluestem Pasture Region of Kansas," it was registering what was already well on the way to becoming an accomplished fact.

The first steps in white occupation of the bluestem region occurred in the northern part prior to the organization of the territory—at Council Grove on the Santa Fe trail and at St. Mary's mission, the latter in the late 1840's where stock raising and general farming, except wheat production, were carried on vigorously in order to provide support for the mission and to teach agriculture to the Pottawatomie Indians. With the organization of the territory, settlements were made immediately in the Kansas river valley as far west as Fort Riley. Only shortly afterwards settlements were made on the Neosho and Cottonwood rivers in the central area. Following the Civil War the settled area expanded rapidly, first occupying the bottom land and then pushing into the upland prairie. Part of the area was railroad land, but a substantial part could be acquired under the pre-

10. Ibid., August 1, 1916, June 15, 1921, August 15, 1922, April 15, 1926, February 1, June 15, 1927, February 1, 1928.
emption law and after the Civil War under the homestead act, the taking of homesteads being reported in Chase county as late as 1880. As had happened on earlier frontiers, livestock was for a time the predominant interest, but it was generally viewed as a temporary or transitional stage which would give way to general farming on all but the roughest of the uplands. On these matters opinion fluctuated somewhat with the weather, however, and during dry periods especially the advocates of livestock as a permanent interest had the opportunity to urge their views.

During the decade of the 1870's the agricultural interests of eastern Kansas were relatively diversified. There were at least four types of activities represented: general farming on a small scale which was largely of the subsistence type, but which emphasized grain crops; farming which emphasized the raising of corn to be fed to livestock on a commercial basis; the breeding of fine stock; and the maturing and grazing of transient cattle.

In Chase county in the heart of the bluestem the small-farmer point of view was hostile to the transient herds driven in for grazing and demanded the herd law:

We want this law to protect us from the large herds that are driven in here by men who do not settle and help to improve the country, but merely to turn non-residents' and railroad lands into stockyards, and allow their cattle to run at large, destroying all crops that are not strongly fortified.

A spokesman for the resident stockmen declared that nine of every ten men in Chase county depended upon stockraising as the basis of prosperity:

This is truly a stock raising county, we have thousands of acres of land that cannot be cultivated, but cannot be surpassed for grazing.

Later an Elmdale correspondent reported that farmers were enlarging their cultivated fields "being convinced that farming will pay in this country." Three weeks later the Chase County Leader announced through its boom column to prospective immigrants that the valleys of the watershed of the Cottonwood river were destined to be occupied by small farmers and that "the divides between them are excellent grazing grounds for cattle and sheep, and will always be open to the stock-raiser without cost." On this assumption small farmers made no effort to secure title to the hills.

11. Chase County Leader, Cottonwood Falls, April 29, 1880.
12. The Nationalist, Manhattan, January 25, 1878, June 28, 1881; Dickinson County Chronicle, Abilene, February 16, 1882.
13. Chase County Leader, Cottonwood Falls, March 1, 1872.
15. Ibid., May 17, 1872.
16. Ibid., June 7, 1872. A later statement to the same effect was made as a reminiscence and was reported by Vandergrift in the Atchison Globe, reprinted in the Chase County Republican, Strong City, May 16, 1890.
After the lapse of two years the herd law provided again the text for the argument that without it the county could never be settled and to be a first-class county the uplands, "the best wheat land in the state . . ." must be occupied. "Give us the herd law and we can settle every quarter section of prairie land in the county." 17 Another correspondent endorsed this assertion but with some qualification, saying that "nearly every quarter section of arable land would be a fine farm." 18

Calling attention to differences in geographical environment another letter writer asserted that:

Every new county and country is always opened up by men of moderate circumstances. In a heavily timbered country it takes a life-time; in a country like this, but a few years, if all work for the public good. 19

The year 1874 with its drought and grasshoppers was one to make Kansas conscious of climatic differences and in protest against an Ohio man's clover theories, an old resident wrote:

The writer seems altogether ignorant of an important fact, which is about the first lesson taught to every practical farmer, viz.: that farming in Ohio, or any other state, is one thing, and farming in Kansas is something altogether different; and crops that pay in one section of the country are comparatively worthless in another. 20

During 1875 farmers were searching for substitute crops that would make a profit in adverse years 21 but with a more favorable year in 1876 a local correspondent reported that "the settlers are in hopes that in a few years all the land on this creek that will bear cultivation will be under fence [cultivated]." 22 At the opening of the next year grain prospects were bright and again the Leader asserted that while the bottoms were better for corn, the uplands were better for small grain. 23

However promising the early spring might be, unfavorable years for grain crops almost became a habit for Kansas during the late 1870's. By mid-summer of 1877 the Leader was proclaiming that Chase county was the best stock county in the state and was explaining why the wheat crop failed. 24 In another three years the

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17. Unsigned letter to the Chase County Leader, Cottonwood Falls, May 8, 1874.
18. Ibid., May 21, 1874.
19. Ibid., May 15, 1874.
20. Ibid., February 1, 1876.
21. Ibid., February-March, 1876.
22. Ibid., June 15, 1876.
23. Ibid., February 22, 1877.
24. Ibid., June 21, July 26, 1877.
admission was made that wheat had been practically abandoned as a crop. In Greenwood county wheat was similarly abandoned.

In the upper Kansas river valley, where the bluestem region now makes its transition into the wheat belt (Riley, Geary and Dickinson counties) one observer in 1869 gave livestock not more than ten years of dominance by which time the rising price of land would operate to eliminate livestock and favor grain as a more intensive land-use. Four years later another insisted that Geary county was peculiarly a livestock country, only to be contradicted in turn by those who held that the livestock industry was perpetuated only by an artificial influence, the failure to adopt the herd law. The winter wheat boom in Dickinson county was pointed to as proof of what would happen on Geary county hills if only the opportunity were given. Although Geary and Riley counties tried to evade the issue by laying the blame for retardation in wheat production upon the herd law, and other artificial factors, the passing years made clearer that more fundamental forces were at work. In 1878 the Manhattan Nationalist, in commentary on the wheat propaganda of T. C. Henry of Abilene, insisted that "we are satisfied, however, that a large majority of the farmers of this section have lost money on wheat, taking year in and year out." If these were merely isolated comments or expressions of discouragement over a crop failure they might be subject to misinterpretation, but they are, in fact, representative of a trend indicating a more definite drawing of the line of demarcation between the pasture and the wheat country, a process that was in progress but not yet complete by the end of the decade of the 1870's.

During the decade of the 1880's far-reaching changes came to the bluestem area. There was more intensive encroachment by the small farmer upon the outer fringes, thus tending to differentiate more sharply than formerly the strictly grazing region from the surrounding grain farming. Within the bluestem region the influence of the small farmer declined. A livestock boom dominated the early part of the decade. It included horses, sheep, and hogs, but the major emphasis was upon fine cattle and the improvement of herds. This was based upon the expansion of some of the herds

25. Ibid., April 22, 1889. In the issue of September 15, 1881, it was stated that "many have quit sowing wheat and but little ground is being plowed for it."
26. Livestock-Indicator, Kansas City, Mo., December 6, 1883.
27. Junction City Union, September 11, 1889.
28. Ibid., March 15, 22, 29, June 25, 1873, May 9, 1874.
29. Ibid., November 27, 1873—"Mize on Junction City Grain Market," a reply to John Davis in the Junction City Tribune.
30. Nationalist, Manhattan, January 25, 1878.
started during the previous decade and upon the coming of new men and money; some from the Southwest and Colorado, some from the East, and some from Canada, England and Scotland. The volume of production increased until by 1883 heavy shipments of thoroughbred bulls to the range country was a reality. The Short-horn breed had been the early favorite, then the Galloway and Angus gained a following. In a short time, however, the Hereford came to dominate the breeding for the range market. Combined with this breeding of fine cattle was an increased business in maturing pasturing cattle from outside the area, especially wintered Texas and Colorado cattle.

In order to provide the land for these extensive operations free range quickly disappeared. The process of assembling acreages can be traced in part through the newspapers which record the purchase by stockmen of one small adjoining farm after another and the purchase of railroad land. The assembling of large acreages was facilitated also by syndicates which bought up railroad land from different roads, throwing it together for resale to those forming large ranches. Board and stone fences had been built around the earlier fields and pastures, but the thing that largely made possible this great enclosure movement and which characterized it, was the introduction of barbed wire. Thus the herd problem of the 1870's was eliminated. The use of wire began slowly about 1879 and 1880 and reached boom proportions by 1883 and before the end of another two years the free range was gone. The passing of the free range marked also the end of many small farmers who had neglected their opportunities or had been financially unable to buy hill pasture land. Shut off from grass, they had to sell out.

This breeding-cattle boom was short-lived. It was dependent for its market upon the range-cattle boom which had reached its height by 1884 and run its course by 1886 and by that year a drought decade opened along with a world-wide economic depression. Few of the thoroughbred herds survived and new adjustments had to be made in utilization of the grass resources of the region. The new era was introduced by railroads and Texas cattle with the accompaniment of Texas fever.

The main lines of the Union Pacific and the Santa Fe railroad systems ran east and west. The former had no southern connections, and the Santa Fe system could serve directly only the Colorado and the northern New Mexico ranges prior to 1880. The southern Kansas branches and subsidiaries of the Santa Fe reached
the Indian territory border and the shipping points for Texas cattle at several places. The Texas cattle driven north could be loaded at these border points for through shipment to the terminal markets, but could not be unloaded within the state unless inspected and pronounced free of Texas fever. Pasture operations in transient cattle during the early 1880's were limited accordingly to those wintered north of the quarantine line and to Colorado range cattle. These were the same classes of cattle that were shipped in for winter feeding to be roughed through or half or full-fed on corn. In these days there was little distinction between the several classes of cattle and the finishing processes were not clearly standardized as to either season or method. Cattle were being received and shipped out during every month of the year, but with an accent on the spring and fall movements.

Only slowly did the campaign against Texas fever enlarge the source of supplies for grass cattle, the success depending in turn upon the shutting off of the cattle-drives to northern Texas and the Indian territory and the substituting of rail shipment as a means of clearing these intermediate ranges of Texas fever. The cattle associations of the northern Indian territory took steps in the winter of 1883-1884 to restrict to two designated trails the drives from further south. The Texas Panhandle and western Indian territory cattle associations followed closely in 1885. During the same period New Mexico, Colorado and northern range territories established quarantines, Montana following in the rear in 1886. Texas complained, but to no avail, that these quarantines were solely to monopolize free grass and not to protect cattle from disease. The western Kansas settlement boom of the middle 1880's served only to supplement the activities of the cattlemen who had effectively closed all but the most westerly cattle trails and they were usable only under close restrictions.

During the 1870's Texas had secured rail outlets for its cattle to the St. Louis and Chicago markets by way of the Missouri Pacific (St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern) railroad or by way of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas railroad across Indian territory and southeastern Kansas connecting with the Missouri Pacific road. Jay Gould had gained control of these roads and aroused the hostility of the cattle interests. The northern drive served as a more advantageous competitive marketing route for cattle intended for beef, fattening on northern grass along the trail and being shipped from western Kansas or Nebraska points to the Kansas City, Omaha or
Chicago markets. The closing of the ring of quarantines around Texas by 1885 was closing this competitive route and terminating bargaining power with the Gould interests.\textsuperscript{31} Texas explored other alternatives. As trade in refrigerated dressed beef was becoming more important, one line of action suggested was to fatten beef on grain and cottonseed products, slaughter at home and ship by water from a gulf port, thus circumventing both the dressed beef combine and the railroad extortion. Attempts in this direction were initiated, but failed.\textsuperscript{32}

Another possibility was a change of procedure in the northern outlet. In 1883, and prior to the closing of the trails, competing Texas railroads experimented in a large way with rail shipments from south Texas by way of Fort Worth to rail heads on the Red river, particularly Wichita Falls from which the drive would commence. This would put the cattle on northern grass earlier and if rates were favorable, more cheaply than to drive the whole distance.\textsuperscript{33} As the trails were closed such cattle were driven from the northern rail heads into the Indian territory as the only place left where Texas cattle might go legally.\textsuperscript{34} Fattened on grass they were shipped from Kansas border points or railroads in the eastern Indian territory where the Frisco offered competitive service to St. Louis as early as 1883.\textsuperscript{35}

As the range cattle business shifted into the High Plains of western Texas and New Mexico in the later 1880's more direct rail service from that area became insistent, and supplemented a growing demand from southern and central Texas for through competitive lines. The Kansas City livestock market interests had been aggressively challenging the St. Louis market and had been agitating during the same period to secure direct rail service from the Southwest to Kansas City in order to compete successfully with St. Louis and Chicago. As the rail situation stood prior to 1887 Kansas City had no direct connections and could only divert on unfavorable terms from the Gould-St. Louis combination a small part of the increasing rail shipments of cattle from southern Texas. The Santa Fe railroad was the best located strategically to take the lead and with the support of the combined interests of Southwestern cattlemen

\textsuperscript{31} Quarantines: Texas Live Stock Journal, Fort Worth, August 9, 1884, May 2, 9, 23, June 12, July 4, 1885, June 6, 1886, April 5, 1890, June 20, July 4, 1891. Gould railroad difficulties: Ibid., May 29, 26, November 24, 1888, March 1, July 12, 1884.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., August 9, 1884, December 26, 1891.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., January 27, February 24, April 21 (railroad map), May 5, 1883, May 10, 17, 24, 31, June 14, 28, 1884, January 16, April 25, 1885.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., April 2, 1892.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., June 2, 9, 1888.
and Kansas City market men undertook a through line south from Arkansas City to Galveston, and one southwest across the Panhandle of Texas into New Mexico. The first connections were completed during 1887 and the year 1888 was the first full-length cattle season to be served by the new accommodations. Much of the immediate significance of the new situation was lost, however, because of the economic depression of the period which was particularly severe on the range industry. The Rock Island railroad lines were extended into the Southwest as far as the Red River in 1892 making a second competing system and opening the Omaha market to Texas cattle by introducing competitive rates. It is important, however, to distinguish between beef cattle and the stocker and feeder classes. Only beef cattle could be shipped to Northern markets for slaughter. The stocker and feeder trade was subject to the restrictions of the quarantine systems, only a relatively small number moving into the northern ranges.

The first descriptions of Texas fever occur in the late eighteenth century when cattle from the Carolinas were taken north. Steps were taken to prevent further movement of such cattle, but the volume of the trade was not insistent enough to force a serious interstate issue. The southern borders of Virginia, Tennessee and Missouri had the problem with them more or less constantly, but almost a century passed after the disease was first described on the Atlantic seaboard before the issue was joined at the southern Kansas-Missouri border on a scope which made of it a national problem in Northern-Southern intersectional relations.

Effective control of the disease was all but impossible prior to 1893 because little was known for certain of its nature or of the agency by which it was transmitted. The geographical distribution of the disease was determined by the federal bureau of animal industry and the boundary line of infested territory drawn upon maps, the first issued in 1884 for the section east and in 1885 for the section west of the Mississippi river. The fever was identified in 1889 as a blood disease caused by an intra-corporeal parasite of the protozoan order, which caused a break down of corpuscles on so large a scale as to clog the organs of elimination. The cattle tick was suspected of serving as the transmitting agent and experimental

36. Live-Stock Indicator, Kansas City, Mo., July 3, 1884, September 24, October 1, 8, 1886, April 4, 1884; Texas Live Stock Journal, Fort Worth, January 20, 1884, July 3, 1886, April 23, 30, September 3, 1887; map of the railroad situation is in ibid., October (special Panhandle edition), 1887; Annual Reports of the Board of Directors of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company, 1882-1887 (Boston, 1886-1888).
37. Texas Live Stock and Farm Journal, Fort Worth, June 17, 1893.
work proved the point, the announcement of the results being published in 1893. The federal quarantine line established in 1890 became the basis of cooperative federal-state action in segregating tick-free cattle and controlling the disease when it appeared in northern pastures. Texans finally admitted the existence of such a disease and cooperated in controlling it by a quarantine line from north of which Texas cattle could move into the normal channels of the national cattle trade. One phase of control work begun in 1892 was to inoculate susceptible cattle, later Southern cattle were dipped to free them of ticks, and lastly efforts were centered after the turn of the century in freeing the Southern land of tick infestation.

This background knowledge of the disease is important to the understanding of the history of attempts in Kansas to deal with the fever menace. As the settlers in territorial Kansas accumulated livestock, the Proslavery and Free-State men were able to agree on protective measures and set up vigilance committees to turn back herds of Southern cattle. Severe outbreaks of fever in 1858, 1859, and 1860 brought drastic legislation by the territorial legislature of 1859 and by the first state legislature of 1861, the latter prohibiting Southern cattle from entering the state at all. After the Civil War there were successive outbreaks of the disease and the Kansas legislature amended the law repeatedly; 1867, 1872, 1873, 1876, 1877, 1879, 1881, 1883, 1884, 1885, setting a dead line, first at the sixth principal meridian, just west of Wichita, and in later enactments further west and prohibiting the movement of Texas cattle into Kansas at any point east of the line. The bluestem region was east of the line, but the driving of infected cattle into or across these counties occurred again and again, and the infiltration of cattle from the Indian territory across the border proved more or less continuous.

The fact that in the early 1880's so many Kansas stockmen were engaged in improving their native herds and in building up herds of thoroughbreds made imperative the exclusion of Texas fever. The pasturing of transient cattle was limited under such circumstances to animals from safe territory. The first steps on the part of the state to provide special machinery to safeguard the livestock interests against disease came in 1884 as the result of a foot-and-mouth disease scare. The Livestock Sanitary Commission thus created

39. *Texas Live Stock Journal*, Fort Worth, December 5, 12, 1891, April 19, 1892.
became an active agent in dealing with all livestock diseases and in combating Texas fever exercised the power of inspecting herds entering the state and of quarantining herds in which disease appeared. The federal law was enacted the same year creating the bureau of animal industry and vesting in it the power to exercise control over interstate transmission of disease. These two agencies, together with the discovery of the rôle of the cattle tick gradually placed the cattlemen in a position to handle Texans without excessive risk and the bluestem pastures were among the beneficiaries during the depression years of the late 1880’s and the 1890’s. Deprived of sharing in the heavy movement of Texans into the eastern Indian territory during the decade of the 1880’s, the supply had come from the east and more largely from Colorado and the farther Southwest. Now the stock formerly diverted around Kansas could enter eastern Kansas directly. This did not occur all at once, but gradually through continuous readjustment in quarantine administration, and the bluestem grass lands resumed more completely the rôle geographical location and peculiar natural resources fitted them to serve in the national livestock economy.

From the standpoint of the bluestem region the railroad systems which served the grass sections were much the same ones that had become most important as outlets to the market for Southwestern cattle, the pasture country lying on the way to the packing house. Because of this geographical relationship it was possible to ship stock from the ranges to the market destinations with privileges of pasturing in transit. The Missouri Pacific and the Frisco railroads had east and west lines in the southern part of the bluestem region of Kansas and the former across the central area. The Missouri, Kansas and Texas lines had a diagonal road from Parsons running northwest by way of Emporia to Junction City. The Rock Island railroad served the west and northwestern section. The Santa Fe railroad system enjoyed the most complete coverage as far north as the Kansas river and the most strategic location of through lines connecting with the stock regions of the greater Southwest. The Santa Fe lines carried the largest volume of in-coming cattle of any one system, but shared the trade widely with the others. Of the out-movement to market, however, the Santa Fe lines carried more than the others together.

In the twentieth century the pasturing of Southwestern cattle was continued as the major interest and the breeding of thoroughbred livestock was revived with new vigor. The pasture business was not
static, however, and vigilance was necessary to make adjustments which would insure its continuance. Among these problems were the procedures employed in filling the pastures; the terms of the pasture contract; the methods of financing the business; the cumulative market preference for younger light-weight cattle instead of mature heavy-weight animals, and the difficulties of utilizing grass in producing this type of beef; the restoration of the grasslands after years of depletion and drouth; the effects of the changes in the South and Southwest in cattle production, markets, and packing facilities; the results of shifting population centers; and the outcome of the changing transportation facilities accompanied by the Southern demand for remodeling of the rail rate-structure. Separate consideration should be given also to other livestock activities of the region, breeding of dairy cattle, hogs, sheep and horses, and the production of feed crops that must be an integral part of any major livestock production program. In such an introductory survey as this, however, only a few problems can be selected from the list for treatment.

The methods of bringing the cattle to the grass vary with respect to the ownership of both, and may be described under four general types of combinations. The owner of Southwestern cattle might lease the Kansas pastures, delivering the cattle to the pasture operator who would take responsibility for them while on grass or, less frequently, the owner might retain management. The pastureman might buy the cattle and graze them himself. A man might own both the cattle and the grass, operating a ranch in the Southwest for cattle production and grasslands in the bluestem region for finishing, all under his own management. A fourth type involves a third party, the speculator, or middleman, who would buy cattle and lease pasture, leaving management of the cattle to the pastureman upon delivery. In years when cattle markets seemed to offer opportunities for profits a larger portion of cattle was bought from the producers, but when conditions were discouraging a large portion was left in first hands to be shipped to pasture by the Southwestern owners. In the latter case if the economic outlook became too unfavorable after shipment to grass the stock was wintered in Kansas or shipped to the home ranges as in 1930 or 1934.

The purchase of cattle for the pastures might be accomplished by different methods. The pasture operator might visit the Southwestern ranges during the winter and contract his purchases for spring delivery. The same procedure might be followed by the
speculator. The cattle trades might be made at the annual spring conventions of the cattlemen's associations in the Southwest or since 1916 at the Kansas Live Stock Association's spring meeting, usually at Wichita in March. The speculator might make purchases by either of the foregoing methods, reselling the cattle in smaller lots to third parties before delivery or at delivery time. On occasion, especially during a period of cattle shortage on the ranges, cattle might be purchased on the Kansas City stocker and feeder market to fill the pastures.

The leasing of grass was accomplished through several channels. A few cattlemen and pasturemen advertised in livestock journals. More leases were arranged at the stockmen's annual meetings and others were handled through an information service of the livestock associations. Some were arranged through livestock commission houses at the markets. Once having established desirable connections a large part of the contracts were renewed from year to year with adjustment to changing conditions. The historical development of the terms of the pasture contract is difficult to trace because few examples are available for study and the terms did not become fully standardized. Early herd and pasture advertisements sometimes announced terms. In 1872 herding was offered for 500 to 1,000 head of cattle, price not indicated, but the herder assumed responsibility for all losses except by disease. In 1879 another announced an intention to make up a herd of part-fed steers for the June and July market, assuring a supply of salt, the herding rate being one-half cent per head per day. Another offered to handle cattle for the season at seventy-five cents per head. Still another offered the service of a Shorthorn bull with the herd at one dollar per head per season. A similar offer was made in 1886 but did not announce the price.40 The nature of the advertisements indicate the variety of the types of cattle being handled, part fed steers, breeding cows, and miscellaneous stock. A number of advertisements of pastures for rent implied that the lessee would assume the management of the pasture and cattle while on grass. In other words he was renting land only, without services.41 These transactions were limited to spring and summer grass, but if the number of newspaper items for the same period is any criterion a larger number of farmers took cattle to winter on pasture and feed.

40. Abilene Chronicle, May 16, 1873, February 2, 1879; Junction City Union, March 1, 1879; Chase County Leader, Cottonwood Falls, February 11, 1886.
41. Dickinson County Chronicle, Abilene, March 24, 1888; Ailoth ranch; Chase County Leader, Cottonwood Falls, May 27, 1886, S. A. Stephenson.
Another phase in the development of contract requirements appeared in 1890, when one advertisement specified three acres per head.\textsuperscript{42} This was a period when Colorado and other Western men, not Texans, were in the majority. Based upon payments through Strong City, Emporia and Cottonwood Falls banks it was estimated that Chase county had 20,000 head from Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona on grass with the result that a number of Western cattle men were spending much of their time there.\textsuperscript{43} This indicated that many owners were supervising their own cattle on grass rather than transferring the full responsibility to the pasture owner. Another example of owner supervision resulted in taking the herd from the pasture because of dissatisfaction with the care they received.\textsuperscript{44} An instance where the pastureman was taking full responsibility is illustrated by the theft of the hide from a dead steer. The importance of the episode did not lie so much in the value of the hide as in the fact that the pastureman must have the brand from it to present at settlement time when he must account to the owner for delivery of all steers received.\textsuperscript{45}

In 1930 the pasture owners of the Northern bluestem region launched the “Kansas Bluestem Pasturemen’s Association,” one point in their four-point program being the formulation of a uniform contract. The decade of the 1930’s introduced important variations in contracts, however, rather than uniformity, but in general the terms required the pastureman to receive the stock at the railroad station, transfer them to pasture, take care of them during the summer and deliver a full count at the railroad at the end of the season. He was required to assume losses, except from disease. Minimum acreage allowances were required depending upon the age of the cattle, and rental prices were paid by head per season for each age class or by the acre. A newer procedure was some form of rental payment on the basis of pounds gained for the season, either at an agreed price per pound gained or for a part of the gain at the market price when sold. Contracts were usually made at a flat rate per season for the identical animal without respect to the actual number of days the cattle were on grass and without right of replacement of animals shipped early.\textsuperscript{46} The rentals were

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., April 34, 1890.  
\textsuperscript{43} Chase County Republicans, Strong City, June 26, 1890.  
\textsuperscript{44} Chase County Leader, Cottonwood Falls, August 8, 1901.  
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., August 30, 1900.  
\textsuperscript{46} Cf. A. D. Wafer, “Problems in Leasing Blue Stem Grass,” Kansas Stockman, Topeka, March 1, 1936; T. H. Lampo, \textit{ibid.}, January 15, 1938, from The Livestock Leader.
usually deferred until marketing, and on occasion the pastureman advanced the freight.\(^{47}\)

The price of pasture rentals fluctuated and was controlled primarily by the market price of beef rather than by the price of land.\(^{48}\) About 1900 a rental of one dollar per head per season was a good price on land worth $3.50 to $5.50 per acre. By 1911 the rates had advanced to $5.00 to $6.00 on land worth $18.00 to $30.00 and with cattle selling at $3.00 to $5.50 per hundred weight.\(^{49}\) The World War lifted rentals to $14.00 to $20.00 per head with prevailing prices from $16.00 to $18.00,\(^{50}\) and in some pastures the cattle were allowed five acres each, in consequence of the experience of the 1918 season which was dry.\(^{51}\) By 1920 cattle prices were too high and leading pasture owners declined to buy, leaving cattle owners to rent the pastures. In Wabaunsee county rates ruled $12.00 and up.\(^{52}\) The extension of the depression drove rentals down in 1921 to $6.00 to $12.00.\(^{53}\) Further declines continued through 1922 when the ruling price was about $8.75.\(^{54}\) By the middle 1920's more emphasis was being placed on young cattle and a wider range in prices was emphasized accordingly. In 1925 there was some recovery from depression lows, young cattle being pastured at $5.00 to $8.00 with an average of about $6.25 and aged steers and cows from $7.00 to $10.00 with an average of about $8.50. Acreage allowances for young stuff averaged 3.25 acres and for steers 4.3 acres per head.\(^{55}\) In 1927 the rate for aged steers was quoted at $6.00 to $10.00 with an average of $8.10 and an allowance of three to five acres, and young cattle at $4.00 to $8.50 with an average of $6.00 and an allowance of two to four acres. In the Osage limestone pastures the rates for aged steers were $4.00 to $8.00 with an average of $6.25 and an allowance of 5.1 acres and $3.00 to $6.00 with an average of $4.50 and an allowance of 4.5 acres. The sandstone pastures were quoted at lower rates.\(^{56}\) By 1929 the rates reached $8.00 to $11.00 for aged steers. There had been only three prosperous years

47. T. H. Lampe, "Blue Stem Grass," Kansas Stockman, Topeka, April 15, 1931, from The Livestock Leader.


49. Daily Drovers' Telegram, Kansas City, Mo., January 10, 13, April 18, 1911. Rental prices represent reports from Wabaunsee and Greenwood counties.

50. Kansas Stockman, Topeka, February 15, May 1, 1919.

51. Ibid., January 15, August 1, 1919.

52. Ibid., April 15, July 16, August 16, September 1, 15, 1920.

53. Ibid., April 15, 1921.

54. Ibid., April 1, 1922.

55. Ibid., April 15, 1926.

56. Ibid., April 15, 1927; Kansas City (Mo.) Star, February 18, 1929; Kansas Stockman, Topeka, March 15, 1929.
for cattlemen in the decade, 1925, 1927, and 1928; 1929 was favorable for those who marketed early.

As the depression of the 1930's deepened pasture rates declined and by 1933 reached $2.50 to $5.00 for aged steers with an average of $3.50 to $4.00, and young cattle at $2.50 to $3.00. On account of dry weather the allowances were increased to six acres. Prices recovered somewhat in 1935 and 1936, but allowances were further increased because of the prolonged and severe drought and some pastures were idle. The rates for 1937 were $7.00 to $9.00. In 1941 prices began about $8.50 declining near the end of the leasing season to $7.00.

A long-time trend toward smaller, younger beef animals culminated after the World War and presented the bluestem region with a new crop of problems. On grass a mature steer took on fat, but a young animal added growth first and fat only if the feed provided nutrition definitely in excess of that necessary for growth. Grass needed a supplement for satisfactory finish. Systematic experimentation conducted by the state experiment station worked out new feeding procedures and rations. One important trend derived from these experiments was to prepare young cattle on dry feed before the grass season and later to finish them in the feed lot after grass. These adjustments assured the continuance of utilization of the bluestem grass in the maturing and fattening of the increasing proportion of young animals handled as well as grazing the continued run of mature cattle.

Financing the cattle business in any of its several phases requires facilities not necessary to other fields of agriculture. The turnover of capital is necessarily slow, as much as three years in breeding and maturing cattle and from six months to a year in handling grass and fed cattle. Large amounts of capital are employed and heavy risks involved because of the fluctuation of markets and price levels between the time of incurring first production costs and realizing final market returns.

These problems of financing have important social implications. While there was always a fair complement of small farms, the features that gave the character to the bluestem region were large stock farms and large pastures, both of which involved capital investment much beyond the means of the traditional family-size, family-owned-and-operated farm. Both land and cattle were

57. Ibid., April 1, May 1, 1933.
58. Kansas City (Mo.) Star, April 15, 1937.
59. Kansas City (Mo.) Times, May 6, 1941.
figured not only in hundreds but often in thousands of units. A substantial number of old families survived through two or three generations. A much larger number had come and gone, many through the ordinary course of American farm population turnover, and many as the result of voluntary or forced liquidation—victims of depressions. Capital requirements and the nature of operations on large stock farms induced many fathers to associate their sons with them in the enterprise, or brothers to pool their interests. Urban capital was largely represented: grain and livestock commission men, doctors, lawyers and bankers—especially bankers—either as sole owners or as majority partners. Many of the commercial pastures, as distinguished from stock farms, were in similar hands. The words “banker and stockman” were used together so frequently as almost to constitute one word descriptive of the leading men of the region. From the standpoint of rurality, the families residing in country homes were in conspicuous degrees minority partners or agents managing the enterprises and employees, sometimes specialists in herd management and administration, but more numerous were relatively unskilled farm laborers. Conspicuous in the boom days of the 1880’s were establishments of manorial proportions occupied by the owners, and in some degree these families survived.

The devastating effects of the prolonged drought of the 1930’s brought alarm to the bluestem region, an alarm not justified in the perspective of history. The grass problem had been ever present and ever a source of anxiety to stockmen. Much of the attitude of the early settlers toward grass was conditioned by the humid climate-timbered land point of view. There the grasses were not strictly native, but grass covering came only after the forests were cleared. Dependence upon tame grasses for pasture and meadow was the rule. Upon coming into the sub-humid prairies— plains this type of mental furniture was carried West along with other farm properties. Allowing for a reasonable number of exceptions, there was a rather general assumption that the native grasses could not survive occupation of the country for purposes of agriculture. Writing from Osage county in June, 1880, prior to his long tenure as secretary of the State Board of Agriculture, F. D. Coburn expressed the view that the days were numbered when reliance could be placed upon wild prairie grass for pasture and hay.60 A writer in Dickinson county in 1881 looked upon the wheat

60. *Stock, Farm and Home Weekly*, Kansas City, Mo., June 19, 1880.
boom as temporary insisting that “the time is not far distant when every farmer will have to depend on his own land for hay . . . and we predict that in ten years from now, there will be thousands of acres of clover and timothy growing, and cattle and sheep grazing thereon, where now are luxuriant and magnificent fields of wheat.”\textsuperscript{61} Three years later another writer repeated the Coburn view but went further in exposition: “The prairie grass must go. It is but a matter of a few years time when eastern Kansas will have to depend on tame grasses for hay. . . . Prairie grass does not make permanent pasturage. As soon as a tract of land is fenced and pastured, the wild grass soon dies and gives place to weeds and the pasture becomes almost worthless.”\textsuperscript{62}

The tame grasses of which so much was expected were bluegrass, clover, timothy and orchard grass, but it took extended and severe ministrations of time and nature to prove to these Easterners the extent of their mistaken preconceptions. First introduced experimentally into the area in 1875, alfalfa, a rank outsider among the tame grasses, had still to prove its worth and become second only to the native bluestem as a foundation grass for the cattle industry. A clear recognition of the permanence and significance of the blue-stem grass was slow in materializing, a fact that is vividly illustrated by a report on Western grasses made by an investigator for the federal Department of Agriculture in 1886 which deprecatingly declared that “although somewhat coarse it is considered valuable and everywhere cut for hay.”\textsuperscript{63} In view of such misconceptions concerning the behavior of nature there is little wonder at the confusion manifested concerning the future of grass. Nearer right than most, but still not sufficiently appreciative of nature’s own careful selection based upon ages of experimentation in her own laboratories, was a writer who dismissed all the grasses from east of the Mississippi insisting that “in view of the peculiarities of our climate, if not of our soil also, would we not suppose, \textit{a priori}, that some of the many native grasses could be found that would be superior both for pasture and for hay?”\textsuperscript{64}

At the opposite pole from these erroneous, early ideas concerning the native grasses, are the equally mistaken views of the soil and grass conservation experts of the 1930’s and 1940’s who pointed back to the supposed golden age when the grass was plentiful and no

\textsuperscript{61} Dickinson County Chronicle, Abilene, February 25, 1881.
\textsuperscript{62} Kansas City (Mo.) Live-Stock Indicator, July 24, 1884.
\textsuperscript{63} Texas Live Stock Journal, Fort Worth, November, 1886. An article based upon the report of Prof. George Veesey.
\textsuperscript{64} Kansas City (Mo.) Live-Stock Indicator, October 4, 1888.
question was raised respecting its permanence—only inexcusable abuse, they said, caused its depletion. In neither period was there sufficient appreciation of the alternation of favorable and unfavorable climatic conditions and their effect upon grass, nor of the remarkable recuperative powers of native grass. A grass covering is as natural to the prairie and plains as a forest covering to the humid East or jungle to the tropics. But in times of drought hysteria over depletion of grass there was only an occasional clear-memoried old-timer who insisted that these conditions were a recurring phenomena and that ninety percent of the problem depended upon nature and the return of favorable rains. In other words, man’s control measures could account for only ten percent. The exact figures might be challenged, but not the principle.

Various weeds thrived at the expense of grass during the drought of the 1930’s, broom weed arousing particular comment from Council Grove to the south line of Greenwood county. The one favorable season of 1938 brought the following comment:

Broom weed, which last year caused alarm and no little damage is very scarce this season. Some report it entirely disappeared and other weeds which threatened many acres of good grass land, are not so prevalent this season. It all shows that when there is plenty of moisture in the ground the rugged native grass will take care of itself...

The renewed vigor of the bluestem grass was so conspicuous that a number of people reported to the press on the extreme height to which it had grown: from Chase county, prior to the drought decade, eight feet, five inches; after the drought, six to eight feet; from Marshall county, nine feet tall; and in several pastures in Wabaunsee county, five to six feet tall even though it had been pastured all summer. These measurements recall the statements of old-timers that the bluestem along the Cottonwood river would hide a man riding horseback.

The original carrying capacity of the grasslands varied widely because of the differences in soil quality and depth and in topography, the extremes being found in the rocky hilltops and in the

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66. Ibid., July 1, 1938; Cf., also, September 15, 1938.

river bottoms. Another type of extreme was to be found in periods of favorable rainfall in contrast with periods of severe drought. In the course of years much of the best grass-producing land was brought into cultivation, leaving the less fertile to carry the grazing load. Waste land developed in pastures around watering places and feeding grounds.\textsuperscript{68} These factors are an important reminder that comparisons of carrying capacity for different periods seldom apply to identical acres. During boom periods carrying capacity was greatly over-rated and under adverse conditions the depletion was represented in correspondingly pessimistic terms. Experimental work in pasture restoration lacked the essential elements of perspective afforded only by the lapse of a long period of time. The oldest controlled pasture experiment in the bluestem area was begun so recently as 1915.\textsuperscript{69} To be fully convincing it would be necessary to have records of a reasonable number of samples representing different sections of the region, records that would in each case apply to identical acres, and records which would embrace at least a century of climatic experience. Making a moderate allowance for error, the tentative conclusion from this historical study of the bluestem region is that no substantial long-time change has taken place in the carrying capacity of pastures which have had reasonable treatment. Furthermore, experience indicates that not only may depleted pastures be restored, but that bare places and even plowed fields may be reseeded and restored successfully in a comparatively short time when the essential weather conditions are favorable.

By way of conclusion to this introductory survey of the history of the bluestem-pasture region attention is directed to the volume of the pasture movement of Southwestern cattle at different periods and some evaluation of it in comparative terms. Probably there is no phase of Western history with which the public has a more general interest and at least a superficial familiarity than the Texas cattle drives from the time of the opening of the Abilene market in 1867 to the closing of the cattle trails to Dodge City in the 1880's. Around this phase of American history there has grown up an amazing accumulation of history, legend and folklore. The exact volume of those drives can never be known, but estimates are available which indicate some approximation of numbers.\textsuperscript{70} Except for three

\textsuperscript{68} Cf. Henry Rogler, "Pasture Situation in Kansas," in \textit{ibid.}, April 1, 1928, covers some of these points.

\textsuperscript{69} Kling L. Anderson, "Deferred Grazing of Bluestem Pastures," \textit{Bulletin 291, Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station} (Topeka, State Printing Plant, 1940). The introductory statements in this study are lacking in historical background and make assertions regarding carrying capacity which would be difficult to prove and which ignore weather cycles.

\textsuperscript{70} E. E. Dale, \textit{The Range Cattle Industry} (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), pp. 59, 60, and footnotes. Dale used Nimmo's figures as the most accurate.
isolated big years, the estimates of the annual drives of Texas cattle northward range from 150,000 to 350,000 for the years 1869 to 1884. From other estimates the conclusion is derived that not over 25 percent of such cattle were shipped to market for beef, or 50,000 to 75,000 head each year.\textsuperscript{71}

Systematic estimates are lacking of the volume of Southwestern cattle shipped by rail to the Kansas pastures for grass fattening as they proceeded on their way to market, but significant fragments can be pieced together for the earlier periods and for the recent period the federal agricultural marketing service has provided rather full data. In the 1890's the Kansas inspection service reported on the number of permits granted for entrance into the state, but the figures were on a calendar year basis and did not segregate cattle for pasture from those for feeding and the pasture regions within the state were not designated separately. The admissions into the state for 1891 and 1892 averaged 325,000 for each year. The movement for the year 1895 was evidently one of the smallest as only 58,481 were admitted for pasture and feeding. Big volume was attained again in 1897 with 424,249 admitted, the sources of this movement being distributed as follows: Texas, 233,444; Arizona, 82,048; Oklahoma, 30,497; New Mexico, 29,819; Missouri, 7,351; and Old Mexico, 31,090. The numbers for 1898 were larger, but the annual volume for the four years 1900-1903 ranged from 213,000 to 319,000.

Skipping over two decades to the five-year period 1925-1929 the federal marketing service figures are more explicit and are available for the bluestem region and for the Oklahoma Osage pastures separately. The combined figures for these pastures ranged from 423,000 to 486,000 annually. The bluestem's share of these ranged from 263,000 to 278,000 annually. During the depression years of the 1930's the numbers of cattle sent to the Kansas-Oklahoma pastures fluctuated widely and the general trend was downward until 1939. The ten-year average, 1930 to 1939 inclusive, was 287,000 head for the combined pastures and 209,000 for the bluestem, but the low year was 1938 with 196,000 and 131,000 head respectively. The cattle movement for the current year 1941 credits the two pasture regions with 240,000 transient cattle, the bluestem with 177,000 head and the Osage with 63,000. This reflects a partial recovery in volume but there is still a question, because of the economic changes that

\textsuperscript{71} Wichita Eagle, June 14, 1872. Not over twenty-five percent were beef cattle according to Dale, The Range Cattle Industry, p. 83. The analysis of herds and the disposition of driven cattle in part based upon the tenth U. S. Census, v. III, p. 31, cited by Dale.
have occurred in the South during the depression decade, whether the volume will again reach the levels of the earlier years.

In comparing periods it is evident that the numbers of Southwestern beef cattle handled annually by rail through Kansas in 1897 was six to eight times as great as during the Texas-drive period, when as pointed out above not over 50,000 to 75,000 of those driven annually were suitable for beef. The numbers for the bluestem region alone in the late 1920’s was four to five times those for the wild years at Abilene, Ellsworth, and Dodge City. A comparison of the size of the animals and the percentage of commercial beef dressed out of each gives an even greater advantage to the more recent periods. In quality of beef the Texas steer could not be compared with the modern steer. On all points the more recent procedures for fattening cattle account for more and better beef, and the Kansas bluestem grasslands serve as the maturing and fattening ground in a more efficient style than was ever possible under the drive regime.

Unfortunately for good history, the general public has overvalued the ephemeral, the sensational and the pathological features of the short-lived cowboy boom days. At most the Texas drives of song and story lasted not more than twenty years, while the practice of rail shipments through the bluestem pastures has already functioned more than half a century. The bluestem-pasture business is more efficient, it is relatively standardized and avoids the sensational and the spectacular as the herds are moved by train to pasture to insure the least possible shrinkage. The shipments are delivered at numerous small railway stations which serve the pastures. When the cattle leave the pastures for market the shipment is usually accomplished by an overnight haul. None of these operations come to the attention of the public, and like most of the stabilized institutions of a complex social system they are taken for granted so long as they continue to deliver beef to the consumer’s table. Outside the ranks of the cattlemen themselves, few understand the significance of this beef-producing process. It is not a local industry only, but a vital intersectional link in the national economic system. The history of the bluestem-pasture region is important in its own right as Kansas history, but it is more than that. To the extent that the Kansas bluestem contributes to the essential meat supplies of the nation, it is also national history. Nevertheless, there are few regions in the United States that are more important and less known than this bluestem-pasture region of Kansas.