

The Washington Historical Quarterly

INTRODUCTION OF CATTLE INTO THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

The domestic animals have enabled the European peoples to take and hold economic possession of new lands. Where grass grows and water runs cattle have helped man to live; their leather has clothed his feet; their milk and flesh have furnished food; their sturdy shoulders have drawn his loads. The Oregon country is well adapted to all kinds of livestock and early in its history the future possibilities of the cattle industries were noted.

The first cattle in the Pacific Northwest were brought to Nootka Sound during the time that the Spanish Government kept an armed force there to maintain Spanish claims. In 1789, work was begun, but for reasons not known, was discontinued in the late fall, and the expedition withdrew. The Spaniards under the command of Eliza, reoccupied the site in 1790, and constructed a fort and buildings that housed the garrison until the final evacuation in 1795. Cattle were brought, either from Mexico or California, that are mentioned in more than one description of Nootka during the period of Spanish occupation. They seem to have been black in color, and are so described by Vancouver who arrived at Nootka in the last days of August, 1792. He says:

"The poultry, consisting of fowls and turkies, was in excellent order as were the black cattle and the swine".

The unknown author of the "New Vancouver Journal" gives more information regarding the livestock at Nootka:

"In the evening the Governor [Quadra] sent a couple of fine sheep with a large stock of cabbages, &c. on board each of the vessels The live stock consisted of about ten head of cattle, some sheep and goats, and poultry of all kinds. Their stock, we were informed, had been much larger, but expecting that we should have been much earlier with them,

they had been very liberal with it, and as it was supposed that on receiving the Port, one of our vessels would remain here, the remainder of the stock was intended to be left with us All the ships in the Cove were regularly supplied with hot rolls, milk, and vegetables every morning—such was the hospitable and friendly attention of Seigr. Quadra.”¹

Vancouver was favorably impressed with the qualities of the Spanish cattle, and although he and Quadra represented antagonistic national interests, they were on excellent personal terms. Accordingly, when in 1793 Vancouver expressed the wish to obtain “some black cattle and sheep for the purpose of establishing a breed of these valuable animals in the Sandwich Islands”, we find Quadra displaying that generosity that endeared him to all the shipmasters that called at Nootka. “A dozen, being as many as we could possibly take on board, were immediately provided, consisting of four cows, four ewes, two bulls, and two rams”, is Vancouver’s record of the matter.

In this connection it should be of interest to note the first use of cattle within the limits of the State of Washington. In March, 1792, the Spaniards established at Neah Bay a settlement that they called “Nunez Gaona.” They abandoned this place in October of the same year bringing their personal property to Nootka. The “New Vancouver Journal” contains this information:

“He [Fidalgo] brought with him from the late settlement in Defuca no less than 8 head of cattle, besides poultry in abundance, hogs, goats, sheep, etc”.²

The Spanish settlements were made for purely political reasons; they had no commercial or economic interests. When the Spaniards withdrew, their black cattle are seen no more, and the resumption of the industry awaited the coming of another people who were to hold the shores of northwestern America with a firmer grasp.

Alexander Henry was at Fort George (Astoria) on the Columbia early in the year, 1814. In his journal he writes of the various happenings that gave piquancy to a fur trader’s life: McDougall’s and Ignace’s women engage in a brawl; the hens hatch a disappointingly small number of chickens; the oil in which the taroo pancakes are fried is bad. In March appears this item which throws light on the livestock situation:

¹ *Washington Historical Quarterly*, V, p. 223.

² *Id.*, VI, p. 57.

"We get a little milk from our goat which is a great luxury as we have neither sugar or molasses for our coffee".³

At this time there were no cattle in Oregon. Ross Cox gives an amusing account of an attempt to secure two cows in the Sandwich Islands to bring to the Columbia on the *Beaver* in 1812. The cows were purchased from the king who sent a hundred men to assist the Americans in capturing the cattle. They were as wild as deer, but not so gentle, for after they had been driven into a corral the infuriated creatures broke down the enclosure and chased the natives into the trees. The only way the cows could be secured was to shoot them. The *Beaver* sailed to the Columbia with no cattle but with a drove of hogs aboard. These were the first domestic animals to be carried to Astoria as the sheep, hogs, and goats which the *Tonquin* had taken the year before had been all killed or swept overboard in a violent storm before reaching the Columbia.⁴

In April, 1814, the *Isaac Todd* came into the Columbia bringing Donald McTavish and several other gentlemen of the North West Company, also Jane Barnes of whom both Cox and Henry record a number of interesting particulars. But there is one small entry of more than usual importance that is found in the Henry Journal under the date, Saturday, April 23:

"At 6.30 a boat with six men landed two young bulls and two heifers brought from San Francisco".

Peter Corney was in the Columbia several times between the years 1813 and 1818 and a part of his description of Fort George as it was in October, 1817, reads as follows:

"At this settlement they have cleared about 200 acres of ground and planted about 20 acres of potatoes for the use of the gentlemen, their object being to collect furs and not to cultivate or improve the land. They have about 12 head of cattle, with some pigs and goats, imported from California; their stock does not increase for want of proper care, the wolves often carrying off goats and pigs."⁵

The little herd increased slowly during the final years of the North West and the beginning of the Hudson's Bay Company periods, and there are occasional references to the presence and the use of cattle. David Douglas and Dr. John Scouler arrived in

³ Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, etc. (New York, Harper, 1832). p. 50.

⁴ Alexander Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River*, etc. (London, Smith, 1849), p. 75.

⁵ Peter Corney, *Voyages in the Northern Pacific* (Honolulu, Thrum, 1896), p. 81.

the Columbia in April, 1825, and Douglas states that a canoe came to the ship with fresh provisions, potatoes, and butter.⁶

Dr. Scouler, in writing of Fort George, says that the woods afforded plenty of pasturage to the cattle which were not very numerous and consisted only of hogs brought from Owyhee and bullocks from Monterey.⁷ The rest of the cattle had probably at this time been transferred to Vancouver, for the same writer, in another place, mentions the fact that, "a large plain between the fort [Vancouver] and the river affords abundance of pasture to 120 horses besides other cattle."

It would seem that comparatively little attention was given to the cattle up to the time of the coming of Dr. McLoughlin. When he assumed charge a definite policy was adopted looking forward to the regional possibilities of the cattle industry. After Dr. McLoughlin's death an autobiographical sketch was found among his papers which is printed in the Transactions of the Oregon Pioneers' Association for 1880. In this paper is the outline of the plan to develop the cattle industry in Oregon.

"In 1825 from what I had seen of the country, I formed the conclusion, from the mildness and salubrity of the climate, that this was the finest portion of North America that I had seen for the residence of civilized man, and as the farmers could not cultivate the ground without cattle, and as the Hudson's Bay Company had only twenty seven head, big and small, and as I saw at the time no possibility of getting cattle by sea, and that was too expensive, I determined that no cattle should be killed at Vancouver except one bull calf every year for rennet to make cheese, till we had ample stock to meet all our demands, and to assist settlers, a resolution to which I strictly adhered, and the first animal killed for beef was in 1838; till that time we had lived on fresh and salt venison and wild fowl."

With such an increase as could confidently be expected the cattle would come to supply in time a great part of the food required for the Company and its servants while beef and dairy products would be articles of export. In the same document the Doctor tells why he refused to sell cattle to settlers but assisted them by the loan of cows:

"I lent them each two cows as we had in 1825 only twenty-seven head, big and small, old and young. If I had sold they would of course be entitled to the increase, and I would not have

⁶ *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, V, p. 241.

⁷ *Id.*, VI, p. 166.

the means to assist the new settlers, and the settlement would be retarded, as those purchasers who offered me two hundred dollars a head for a cow would put such a price on the increase as would put it out of the power of the poor settlers to buy. This would prevent industrious men settling. For these seasons I would not sell but loaned as I say, two cows to each settler and in case the increase of settlers might be greater than we could afford to supply with cattle, I reserved the right to take any cattle (above his two cows) from any settler to assist a new settler."

It should be added that when stock died while in the possession of the settler that the Company did not hold him responsible. The policy of loaning cattle then had the merit of giving the settlers the use of oxen for farm operations and of cows for milk and dairy purposes. Such a plan was characteristic of the wisdom and practical benevolence of Dr. McLoughlin and would work advantageously for the settlers as long as the number of cattle remained small; but when the herds had grown to large proportions the same plan would hamper the economic development of the colony.

F. V. Holman, in his biography of Dr. McLoughlin, writes with reference to the conservation of the cattle that the first animals were killed for food in 1838. In this he follows the Doctor's own account, quoted above, which was written toward the close of his life and apparently largely from memory. The date should have been 1836, however. William A. Slacum states in his report prepared in March, 1837, with reference to the cattle at Vancouver:

" last year they salted seventy and have over 1000 head of neat cattle from their stock."⁸ Spaulding, writing from Vancouver in October, 1836, says that a few were killed that year.⁹ In a letter written in 1837, Dr. McLoughlin makes the following statement:

"I killed forty head of cattle last summer so you see the taboo is broken."¹⁰

It is probable that no cattle were killed strictly for beef before 1836, although Francis Lemont, who was in the crew of the *Owyhee* when it entered the Columbia in 1829, says that Dr. McLoughlin sent potatoes and a quarter of beef to the ship.¹¹ George Allen, in a letter dated March 16, 1832, and written at Vancouver, states that the doctor had not yet killed any of the

8 *Ibid.*, XIII, p. 202.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 374.

10 *Washington Historical Quarterly*, V, p. 195.

11 *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, III, p. 38.

cattle,¹² and John Ball who spent the following winter there makes the same statement in his journal.¹³

There may have been some criticism on the part of subordinates who had grown tired of a wild fowl, venison and salmon diet, for Dr. Tolmie, in speaking of conditions at Vancouver in 1833, writes:

" there was good cheer altho the doctor, autocrat of the breakfast as well as of the dinner table was said, by some, Ermatinger for one, to have abstained too long from the general use of beef and mutton".¹⁴

Facts regarding the growth of the herd are found in the accounts of those who visited Vancouver, and while the estimates differ, there is a general agreement as to its rapid increase. Jedediah Smith, who was at Vancouver in the winter of 1828-29, says that there were about 200 cattle at the fort.¹⁵ Dr. McLoughlin, in a letter dated March 1, 1833, writes:

"Our stock of cattle is between 400 and 450, exclusive of what we supplied other places, and you know in 1824 we had only 17 cows."¹⁶ John K. Townsend, the naturalist, was at Vancouver in 1834-35, and his *Narrative* contains the following account:

"In the propagation of domestic cattle the doctor has been particularly successful. Ten years ago a few head of neat cattle were brought to the fort by some fur traders from California. These have now increased to near seven hundred. They are a large framed, long horned breed, inferior in their milch qualities to those of the United States but the beef is excellent, and in consequence of the mildness of the climate it is never necessary to provide them with fodder during the winter, an abundant supply of excellent pasture being always found."¹⁷

John Ball had seemingly heard the same story, for he writes that the Company had brought a bull and six cows from California seven years before, and that according to their account they had raised from this source four hundred head of cattle. Later, in writing to his parents, he repeats the story, but adds cautiously,—"if I have been correctly informed."¹⁸ Apparently there were various stories floating around Vancouver and the Townsend-Ball account is an example of the way a local legend tends to form.

¹² *Washington Historical Quarterly*, II, p. 41.

¹³ *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, III, p. 100.

¹⁴ *Transactions of the Twelfth Annual Re-union of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1884*.

¹⁵ *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, IV, p. 397.

¹⁶ *Washington Historical Quarterly*, II, p. 168.

¹⁷ John Kirk Townsend, *Narrative of a Journey Across the Rocky Mountains to the Columbia River*, (Phila., Perkins, 1839), p. 171.

¹⁸ *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, III, pp. 100. 102.

There is the suggestion of some similar foundation story in an account found in *Bancroft*:

"China and the Hawaiian Islands furnished hogs and the Russian settlement at Fort Ross the first cattle. These were driven up along the shore, and considering the inlets, bays, rivers, and mountains, to say nothing of the natives, it was an extremely hazardous undertaking."¹⁹

Bancroft does not give the source of his information and it is probably to be regarded as apocryphal. The principal points in the history of the herd are clear: the foundation stock was brought from California in 1814, and probably formed a part of the small herd seen by Corney in 1817. Given little attention by the North West fur traders, McLoughlin found but 27 head in 1825, but from this date the increase is rapid. Notice should also be taken of the fact that in all the contemporary accounts there is no suggestion that the cattle are other than Spanish or Mexican stock. Attention should be called to this matter because there is another story bearing on the origin of the Hudson's Bay cattle which appears to be purely traditional. It is that about 1825 three Durham cattle were brought from England to furnish milk, butter, and cheese for the gentlemen at Vancouver. As the story goes, Dr. McLoughlin took great care of the stock and soon had a fine herd of English cattle. This appears in Elwood Egan's *History of the Pacific Northwest*²⁰ but it is doubtful if Mr. Egan was responsible for the part of the work in which the account is found.

Samuel Parker was at Vancouver in the winter of 1835-36, and states that there were at the fort 450 head of neat cattle, and also that this number did not include the stock at other stations. Spalding writing in October, 1836, says that there were 700 head at Vancouver and between 20 and 100 at the other forts.²¹ William A. Slacum visited Vancouver about the first of the year, 1837, and according to his report there were 1000 head of neat cattle, 700 hogs, 200 sheep, 450 to 500 horses, and 40 yoke of working oxen. He further states that in 1818 there were but two cows and one bull, from which 1000 head had been bred in 19 years. Evidently we have here a confusion of two dates, 1818 for 1814.²²

As we have seen, the first cattle were killed in 1836; at that time the herd at Vancouver amounted to at least 700. Besides,

19 Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast*, II, p. 443.

20 *History of the Pacific Northwest: Oregon and Washington* (North Pacific History Company, 1889), II, p. 126.

21 *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, XIII, p. 374.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

some cattle had been loaned to the Willamette settlers, and a few had been sent to Colville, Nisqually, and other posts. At first all the bullocks were needed as oxen on the farms and at the mills, but by 1836 a surplus of steers was accumulating that could be used for beef. Although the cattle of the Company had increased rapidly Dr. McLoughlin was not yet ready to modify his plan so far as selling cattle to the settlers was concerned. As he saw the interests of the Company it was advisable to continue to increase the productive part of the herd. Captain Belcher complained that in 1839 he could not get fresh beef from the Hudson's Bay Company, but if the bullocks of that year had already been killed, a supply for the ships would have meant the depletion of the cows and oxen. However, the fact that Dr. McLoughlin furnished a considerable part of the money that the Ewing Young party took to California in 1837 would go to show that, whatever his attitude may have been on the sale of the Company's cattle as a business matter, it was not his intention to endeavor to hold the settlers in a benevolent vassalage.

Where it was practicable the Company would send a small number of cattle and pigs to their distant posts. In his evidence before the Commissioners in the Hudson's Bay Claims, Thomas Nelson testified that Dr. McLoughlin told him in 1853 that the cattle were sent to the posts partly for the sake of the Company's own people and partly to help in civilizing the Indians, and mentioned the sending of three or four cows to Fort Hall in 1835 or 1836 as gifts to the Indians. According to this information given Nelson, cattle were first sent to Okanogan in 1826. In 1832 we know that cattle had been established at Fort Langley near the mouth of the Fraser River, because Archibald McDonald writes from there that he has four milch cows.²³

There were important farming and livestock interests at Fort Colville, and it is possible to follow accurately the growth of its herd of cattle. John Work's *Journal* for April 11, 1826, contains this entry:

"They brought three pigs and three young cows from Fort Colville."²⁴

Mr. T. C. Elliott observes with respect to this item that it marks the beginning of the pork, beef, and dairy business in Stevens County in particular and in all the Inland Empire in general. On August 5, of the same year, John Work adds this information:

²³ *Washington Historical Quarterly*, I, p. 266.

²⁴ *Id.*, V, p. 284.

"The horses, cattle, and pigs very fat but the grass is getting dry."²⁵

The little herd did wonderfully well among the pleasant hills of the upper Columbia for we have a letter of Archibald McDonald, dated January 25, 1837, in which this paragraph appears:

"What think you this winter, upwards of 5000 bushels of grain—namely 3000 of wheat, 1000 of corn, and 1200 of other grain. Your three calves are up to 55 and your three grunTERS would have swarmed the country if we did not make it a point to keep them down to 150."²⁶

Lieutenant Johnson of the Wilkes Expedition was at Okanogan and Colville in 1841 and reported that there were 35 head of very fine cattle at the former post, furnishing an abundance of milk and butter. No cattle as yet had been killed at Okanogan. At Colville the herd numbered 196²⁷ and he was informed that small herds were maintained at both Fort Alexandria and Fort George on the upper Fraser. Less attention seems to have been given to the cattle at Colville in later years. Angus McDonald testified (Hudson's Bay Co. vs. U. S.) that from 15 to 30 were kept, and that the cattle pastures were rarely changed except in severe winters, when all cultivated fodder was consumed and they were then driven out to feed on the moss of newly cut trees.

Lieutenant Wilkes was in the Oregon country in 1841 and in his report he makes a number of references to the cattle and other live stock of the region, and generally speaks in terms of high praise of the industrial results secured by the two British companies. Twenty-five years afterwards, as a witness before the Commissioners on the Claims of the Puget Sound Agricultural and Hudson's Bay Companies, he modified his evidence considerably from the account given in the report. He stated in 1866 that he embodied in the report what was told him by the officers at the trading posts and that in certain particulars his own observations did not bear out their statements. In the report appears the description of the Nisqually dairy of seventy cows; in his later evidence Wilkes thinks from the men and equipment that he saw that the dairy was much smaller. As Vancouver he says in the report:

"I saw two or three very fine bulls that had been imported from England."²⁸

25 *Id.*, VI, p. 37.

26 *Id.*, II, p. 255.

27 Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition during the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842.* (Phila., Lea & Blanchard, 1845), IV, p. 445.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 334.

When interrogated on this point he answered that he thought he saw one or two.

There is an interesting question here regarding the importation of breeding stock from abroad. Wilkes writes:

"They [The Puget's Sound Agricultural Company] began by making large importations of stock from California and some of the best breeds of cattle from England."²⁹

It is also a notion loosely held among stockmen in the grazing districts that a part of the improvement of the original California stock in the Northwest was due to the importation of blooded bulls from England by the Hudson's Bay Company. But Mr. Charles Day, counsel for the two British companies, made no assertion of the kind in his final argument before the commissioners when he reviewed all the evidence offered by the claimants. He stresses as a part of the cost of construction of the different posts of the claimants, the fact that they had to bring their servants all the way from Canada and England; and if he could have shown that they had improved the native stock by the importation of blooded sires from Europe with all its inevitable cost, such a telling argument would not have been passed over.

There are only a few references to this matter, and the testimony is so vague that it carries little weight. Dugald McTavish, who had been with the Hudson's Bay Company since 1833, and who was its principal witness, was asked the question, "What was the character of the cattle?" His reply was, "I think they were principally of the California stock, those that were herded out of the way. There was however at the different dairies, a number of cows of improved breeds which were kept and guarded in the neighborhood of the dairies."

Neither on direct or cross examination was there any disposition shown by either Mr. Cushing or Mr. Day to develop this line of evidence. It might be thought that both men regarded the Northwest as still in the hide and tallow stage of the cattle business.

There is a remark by Sir George Simpson which throws some light on the nature of the cattle at the Columbia dairies of which McTavish spoke:

"At the dairy [Wappatoo Island] we found about a hundred milch cows that were said to yield on an average not more than sixty pounds of butter each in a year."³⁰

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

³⁰ Sir George Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842* (London, Colburn, 1847), I, p. 174.

So small a production would go to show that the cows were either unimproved California stock, or that if any improvement had been brought about, that it was slight.

There is, however, another source from which some better breeding stock may have come. In the winter of 1835 Nathaniel J. Wyeth sent the *May Dacre* to the Sandwich Islands with a cargo of lumber, and on her return trip she brought some cattle, sheep, goats, and hogs. These Wyeth placed at his establishment on Wappatoo Island.³¹ A letter in the possession of the Oregon Historical Society, dated June 12, 1876, from Dr. W. F. Tolmie to Matthew P. Deady bears on this point:

"I have seen Sir James Douglas He thinks that the early Astorians imported the cereals and domestic animals from California principally and also from the Sandwich Islands. The H. B. Co. obtained some valuable cows from Nathaniel Wyeth, who got them either from the Sandwich Islands or farther off. I remember admiring one of them at Vancouver forty years ago when the Puget Sound Agricultural Company was set on foot. Thoroughbred sheep of various breeds, Cheviot, Southdown, Leicester, and Merino, were in small quantities imported from England and kept at Vancouver, Nisqually, and Cowlitz. These importations were continued for some years. In 1840 the Company had a large number of California sheep brought into the territory which were in greatest numbers kept at Nisqually. Improved breeds of hogs were brought from London and Scotch collies and sheep dogs likewise."³²

This quotation is valuable in more ways than one. Taken in connection with Dr. Tolmie's position with the Puget Sound's Agricultural Company it ought to effectually set aside the statements of Lieutenant Wilkes regarding the importation of cattle from England. It also fails to confirm Bancroft's account of the importation of 2000 head of cattle by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1840 from California. As Bancroft has it, this great herd of cattle, together with 4000 sheep, were driven over the mountains to Oregon as Ewing Young had brought the cattle of 1837.³³ The omission of the cattle item, while confirming the importation of sheep, practically amounts to its contradiction.

At Vancouver, Wilkes states that there were 3000 cattle and 2500 sheep, while according to Simpson's account there were between 400 and 500 cattle and 1500 sheep. Simpson says that

³¹ "Correspondence and Journals of Captain Nathaniel J. Wyeth, 1831-6". . . edited by F. G. Young, in *Sources of the History of Oregon*, I, pts. 3-6 (Eugene, 1899), p. 255.

³² Quoted in Carey, *History of Oregon*, p. 277.

³³ Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, I, p. 150.

there were 1200 cattle at Nisqually, which would indicate the transfer of a large part of the herd from Vancouver. The fact that Simpson makes no mention of imported bulls, although he too was there in 1841, is also to be noted.

The Puget's Sound Agricultural Company was organized in 1838 to take over the agricultural and livestock interests of the Hudson's Bay Company, as its charter did not provide for these interests. The stockholders of the parent company furnished the capital for the new enterprise. The transfer of the property, as a matter of bookkeeping, took place in 1840. Lieutenant Wilkes describes the prospects of the company as follows:

"This company has the supplying of all the posts and stations of the Hudson's Bay Company on the west side of the American continent and also furnishes the Russian posts with grain, butter, and cheese; of the former article the Russians take about 15000 bushels. It is also their intention when they shall have succeeded in breeding a sufficient stock of cattle and sheep to export hides, horns, tallow, and wool to England in the return ships which now go home comparatively empty as the furs occupy only a small portion of the capacity of the ship."³⁴

For a number of years the Company saw its herds increase. In the memorial covering its claims against the United States it declares that in 1846 it possessed at Nisqually 3100 head of neat cattle, 350 horses, and 5300 sheep, and that there were at the Cowlitz farm 800 cattle, 1000 sheep, and 120 horses. James Douglas testified that there were at Vancouver in 1846, 1915 neat cattle, 3000 sheep, and 517 horses. Dr. Tolmie testified that in 1852 the Company had at Nisqually 6777 cattle. Of this period the evidence of Michael Simmons presents a pleasant picture:

"All over the tract were bands of horses and cattle and herds of sheep. They had five or six white herdsmen and fifteen or twenty Indians; they lived in houses scattered over these plains. . . . The cattle were in small bands lying all over the prairie and appeared tame; in the summer time a good many ranged in the woods and marshes when the grass was dry on the plains."

The next few years witnessed the practical extermination of the herd. There were, according to Dr. Tolmie, 6777 in 1852, and by 1855 there were barely 500. During the years 1852, 1853, and 1854, Edward Huggins testified that there were sold or slaughtered by the Company 2348 animals, a number less by far than the normal increase. The settlers were coming into the region, occu-

³⁴ Wilkes, *Narrative*, IV, p. 308.

pying the lands, and the rights of a foreign corporation to its semi-wild cattle received scant consideration. On this point Richard Flanders testified:

"I have seen Joseph Legard shoot seven head; I have seen Charles Wren kill, I should think, upwards of one hundred; I have seen persons from down the Sound come and take away a boat load."

A witness named Bolton declared:

"I have seen them shoot down cattle, take choice pieces, and leave the rest to the wolves."

The Puget's Sound Agricultural Company received from the United States, in compensation for its losses of all descriptions, the sum of \$200,000; and with this award, made in 1869, the story of the cattle of the fur companies comes to an end.

The first cattle brought to the Northwest from the eastern states were brought by the Jason Lee party in 1834. In Jason Lee's diary we read that he bought some cows at Liberty, Missouri, and that they were the source of much trouble on the way west; it was difficult to make them swim the deeper streams, and with the scanty grass and the long marches over the dry plains, the cattle became so footsore and weary that they could with difficulty be kept with the party travelling with riding and pack horses. In the Snake River country Jason Lee writes:

"The slow monotony of cow driving is indeed very wearisome and the quart of milk that they afford us now per day is a small compensation for our trouble."³⁵

Daniel Lee gives some information on the subject:

"Mr. J. Lee took some cows and two of them made the journey to Oregon. Their milk was quite a luxury on the way."³⁶

It is probable that the cattle did not go beyond Fort Walla Walla, for Jason Lee's diary contains this entry:

"Closed a bargain with Mr. Pambrun in relation to our animals. We are to have two cows, a bull, and five horses for the same number at Vancouver."³⁷

After they reached the Willamette, Dr. McLoughlin loaned the mission seven oxen, a bull, eight cows, and eight calves. Apparently the arrangement with Pambrun was carried out, for the Oregon Mission Book for January 11, 1837, contains an entry made with reference to the proposal of Slacum to take the cattle

35 *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, XVII, p. 254.

36 Daniel Lee nad J. H. Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon* (New York, J. Collard, 1844), p. 114.

37 *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, XVII, p. 258.

party to California, that there were "no neat cattle owned in the settlement except a very few belonging to the mission, the rest having been loaned by the H. B. Co. to the people barely for their milk."³⁸

Jason Lee was one of the important contributors to the funds of the Willamette Cattle Company, and the share of the Mission in the herd brought back by the Ewing Young party was 80 head, according to Lee and Frost. Joseph Williams, who visited the Willamette in 1841, states that the Mission then possessed about 300³⁹ head, which was a good record, as some of the cattle had been taken elsewhere, Daniel Lee driving 14 head in the fall of 1838 by way of the Indian trail around Mt. Hood to the newly established mission station at The Dalles.

The Whitman-Spalding party came to Oregon in 1836, and started with seventeen head of cattle; of these, four were cows giving milk. They brought fifteen head across the mountains, and left five at Fort Boise to be exchanged for other animals at Walla Walla. They seem to have come over the long trail without undue difficulty, as Mrs. Whitman writes on August 8, 1836:

"We think it remarkable that our cattle should endure the journey as well as they do; we have two sucking calves that appear in very good spirits; they suffer some from sore feet, otherwise they have come on well and will go through."⁴⁰

Cushing Eells and Elkanah Walker came with their families in 1838. They started, according to the diary of Mrs. Eells, with twelve head of cattle, and appear to have had no trouble, as Mrs. Eells only mentions the killing of one calf on the way. According to W. H. Gray, fourteen head were brought as far as Fort Hall, and there, to avoid the trouble of driving them farther, the majority of the missionaries agreed to exchange their stock for an equal number of Hudson's Bay Company cattle to be delivered to them at Fort Colville. Gray says that they realized their mistake when they tried to make use of the half wild California stock as milch animals.⁴¹ There was some trading back and forth between the missionaries and the Hudson's Bay Company. Spalding writes in a letter of February 18, 1842:

"After distributing to the people [Nez Perces] several heifers, some of which are now cows, our two milch cows were killed last summer, and we have every reason to believe intentionally,

³⁸ *Id.*, XXIII, p. 251.

³⁹ Joseph Williams, *Narrative of a Tour*, p. 62.

⁴⁰ *Transactions of the Nineteenth Annual Re-union of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1891.*

⁴¹ William Henry Gray, *History of Oregon, 1792-1849* (Portland, Harris, 1870), p. 177.

leaving us but a young heifer for milk which supplied scantily last winter. We have the Spanish cows, but they are of little use for milk."⁴²

Archibald McDonald, in that same letter of January 25, 1837, in speaking of the increasing frequency of travellers crossing the continent, remarks, in connection with the settlement of the missionaries in the Walla Walla country, that he has now St. Louis cows and horses at Fort Colville.

Mrs. Walker's journal contains occasional references to the cattle that they brought, as well as to those at the fur trading posts. At Boise there was a cow that gave 24 quarts of milk a day—probably one of the young cows left there by the missionaries of two years before. After they arrived at Waiilatpu Mr. Pambrun sent up from Walla Walla a quarter of beef as a neighborly treat, "having killed the old cream colored cow that was 23 years old." Even this venerable animal must have seemed an agreeable change at the mission after the steady diet of horse flesh.

Milk and butter added a great deal to the comfort of the mission stations and formed a considerable part of the mission property. Spalding reported to Elijah White, in 1843, that there were 24 head of cattle at Lapwai and 34 at Waiilatpu. At the time he abandoned Lapwai, Spalding states that there were 30 head at the station. At Tshimakain, Walker and Eells kept a few cows, and the former's diary shows that no small part of the missionaries' labors consisted in searching after persistently straying cattle.

It was the policy of the Catholic fathers at their mission on the upper Columbia to acquaint the Indians with the use of cattle. Governor Stevens states that there were at the Coeur d'Alene mission in 1853 eight yoke of oxen and twenty cows, and he notes as an interesting fact that he saw one of the Indian women milking with both hands—an unusual act for an Indian.

The Indians obtained some cattle from the Hudson's Bay Company and a few from the missionaries. When the large movement of settlers to the Willamette set in they traded horses for cattle when they found immigrants with jaded teams and foot sore cows. The Indians were eager to obtain cattle, and one of their complaints against the missionaries was that they were not disposed to share their like stock freely with the people whom they had come to convert. In 1843, there were 32 head of cattle

⁴² Eliza Spalding Warren, *Memoirs of the West: The Spaldings* (Portland, Marsh, 1916), p. 74.

among some of the richer Nez Percés, and Bancroft is authority for the assertion that the Cayuse had some 70 head at the same time. The Spokane Indians were poorer, and at this time there was but one Indian possessing any cattle. Kamiakin was the first of the Yakima Indians to own cattle, which he obtained at Vancouver.⁴³ Later other Indians living east of the Cascades exchanged horses for cattle at Nisqually, and drove them back over the Naches Pass. In the Indian war of 1855-56 many of these cattle were killed by the soldiers and Indians, but when the whites began to settle in the Yakima country in the early sixties, they found that the Indians owned a number of small herds.

In 1844, an expedition of Cayuse, Walla Walla and some Spokane Indians went to California to obtain cattle by trading furs and horses. In a dispute at Sutter's Fort, Elijah Hedding, the son of Peupeumoxmox was killed, and the angry and disappointed Indians returned from their long, dangerous, and fruitless journey. Without considering the political complications that grew out of the California adventure it may be regarded as an indication of the eagerness of the Indians of the upper Columbia to get cattle with which to stock the dry regions of the interior.

The settlers in the Willamette Valley were handicapped by the lack of cattle of their own. They had the use, it is true, of the cows and oxen of the Hudson's Bay Company, but there were hundreds of thousands of acres of the finest grazing land, a mild climate, and the definite knowledge that the possession of even a small herd of cattle would in a few years make the owner well to do according to frontier standards. The desire to take advantage of these beckoning opportunities resulted in two of the most dramatic undertakings in the history of Oregon. Six hundred miles to the southward were herds of cattle grazing around the California missions, and while there were archaic laws forbidding the exportation of breeding stock, these regulations might be circumvented or overcome. A more serious obstacle was to be found in the wide belt of excessively difficult mountain wilderness peopled with hostile and treacherous Indians that lay between.

William A. Slacum had been commissioned by the Secretary of State of the United States to go to Oregon, investigate existing conditions, and report. Fortunately Slacum was not a narrow literalist in construing his instructions; to the task he brought a generous spirit and a quick intelligence that grasped at once the essential features of the situation. In the Sandwich Islands he

⁴³ Andrew Jackson Splawn, *Ka-mi-akin; The Last Hero of the Yakimas* (Portland: Kilham, 1917), p. 281.

chartered the brig *Loriot*, for \$700 a month and entered the Columbia river late in December, 1836. Although he spent little more than a month in Oregon, his coming was one of the fortunate happenings of the time, for William A. Slacum visioned the possibilities of Oregon.

"The general aspect of the plains is prairie but well interspersed with woodlands presenting the most beautiful scenery imaginable. The pastures at this day (Jan. 12) are covered with the richest grasses 8 to 12 inches high I consider the Willamette as the finest grazing country in the world. Here are no droughts as on the pampas of Buenos Ayres or the plains of California while the lands abound in richer grasses winter and summer. . . . In the course of conversation with Mr. Lee, Young, and other settlers I found that nothing was wanting to insure comfort, wealth, and every happiness to the people of this most beautiful valley but the possession of neat cattle all of those in the country being owned by the Hudson's Bay Company who refuse to sell them under any circumstances whatever. I then proposed to give as many settlers as chose to embark in the *Loriot*. a free passage to California where they might procure cattle at \$3 a head. The advantage of being landed in California or Bodega free of expense and the risk of the road was very great. . . . Mr. Young was appointed leader of the party. All the settlers who had money due them from the Hudson's Bay Company contributed to the enterprise."

These selections from Slacum's Report supply the main outlines; more than \$2500 was raised to finance the undertaking of which Dr. McLoughlin furnished a third or more. The Methodist mission put in \$500 which Slacum loaned Jason Lee for this purpose. Eleven men sailed on the *Loriot* for California. P. L. Edwards acted as treasurer and has left a diary of the adventure which is one of the epic narratives of the early West. The cattle were wild; there were deep rivers and high mountains to cross; there were Indian ambushes in the mountain defiles; hunger and thirst and four months of incessant labor wore the tempers of the men to the breaking point. But under the leadership of the masterful Ewing Young, 630 of the 800 purchased were brought to Oregon, where they were distributed on the basis of \$7.67 a head—the wages of the men and the loss of nearly 200 on the way making the difference between the final cost and the \$3.00 a head paid in California.

Slacum, who had taken a speculative chance, received 23 head as his share, the mission about 80. The Hudson's Bay Company generously allowed the settlers to exchange their allotments of California cattle for the domesticated cows and oxen that they had borrowed from the Company. The dawn of a more prosperous day was now breaking. Lieutenant Wilkes speaks of O'Neal, one of the Young party, as the owner of 200 head in 1841; Slacum's 23 had increased to 86; the Mission to 300 or more. Sir George Simpson and De Mofras, who were both visitors in the Willamette the same year that Wilkes was there, estimated the number of cattle at 3000. At the rate of increase of the cattle belonging to Slacum and the Mission this is probably sufficiently high. Wilkes in his report, estimates the cattle in the Willamette Valley at 10000 head, worth on the average \$10;⁴⁴ but in his evidence in 1866 he stated that this number covered the stock both north and south of the Columbia River.

We have referred before to the fact that Wilkes, in his testimony before the commissioners empowered to settle the claims of the two British companies, contradicts statements that appear in the report of a quarter century before. These discrepancies are found in other matters than those items bearing on this subject. The most plausible explanation seems to be that Wilkes as an ardent expansionist wished to set before Congress and the people of the United States in the most favorable light both the industrial advantages and the results actually accomplished in the Oregon country and consequently was not disposed to be unduly critical. To this general attitude his description of the Willamette Mission is an exception.

The success of the expedition of 1837 led to the organization of another cattle company the following year. T. J. Hubbard, who had come to Oregon with Wyeth, was chosen leader, and 27 men joined the party. The plan was to go to California overland and to drive the cattle back over the route followed by Ewing Young. The attempt was a failure because, when they reached the Rogue River, they were attacked by the natives and obliged to return.⁴⁵

The second successful expedition of Willamette settlers to California for cattle centers around the romantic story of the *Star of Oregon*. A most interesting account of the adventurous undertaking was prepared by Joseph Gale for J. W. Nesmith and later published in the *Transaction of the Oregon Pioneers*. Gale,

⁴⁴ Wilkes, *Narrative*, IV, p. 265.

⁴⁵ Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, I, p. 179.

who had come to Oregon with Ewing Young, knew something of navigation, but he was the only one of the party with any experience as a sailor. The *Star* was finished in 1841, and a part of the credit belongs to Wilkes who interceded with McLoughlin, as the latter had refused to supply the amateur shipbuilders with cordage and other supplies. Apparently McLoughlin regarded the whole scheme as foolish and dangerous. On account of the lateness of the season the voyage was postponed until the following year. On September 12, 1842, the little *Star* sailed out into the Pacific, and with the proverbial good luck that favors the brave, reached San Francisco Bay five days later. Gale says that he stood one trick of 36 hours at the helm on the way. The partners now sold their schooner for 350 cows, and, by waiting until 1843, succeeded in recruiting a party of 42 men, nearly all possessing more or less live stock. They had altogether 1250 cattle, 600 horses and mules, and nearly 3000 sheep. Seventy-five days of incessant labor brought them to Oregon with only slight losses to their stock on the way.

The benefits derived from these California importations were large, but after the settlers from the Eastern States began to bring in better cattle of the American type the importance of the Spanish stock declined. M. M. McCarver writes that in 1843 when American cows were selling for \$60 to \$70 a head, California cattle could be bought for \$15 to \$20. Regarding their characteristics a paragraph from an address of Matthew P. Deady before the Oregon Pioneers in 1875 may be quoted:

"Many of you will remember their striking appearance—a half wild look and motion, a long light round body, clean bony limbs, and a handsome head crowned with a pair of long tapering curved horns. When tame or at rest they were as mild looking as gazelles, but a herd of them alarmed or enraged was as terrible as an army with banners."⁴⁶

The advent of cattle in large numbers from the Mississippi Valley states came with the settlers of the 1840-50 decade. Prior to 1842 the only cattle from east of the Rocky Mountains were the few brought by the missionaries. In that year the White-Hastings party of over one hundred people brought some cattle, but apparently the number was small. Medorem Crawford states that Dr. White brought 36 head to camp at the time the party was preparing to start.

46 *Transactions of the Third Annual Re-Union of the Oregon Pioneer Association, 1875.*

The immigration of 1843 of nearly a thousand people employed oxen and brought their wagons through to the Columbia. Burnett states that the use of oxen was an experiment, and that a conclusive trial proved that the ox possessed more pluck than either the horse or the mule. To break down the ox required great hardship; he gathered his food more rapidly than the horse, and would seek it in more difficult places. Joel Palmer, who came in 1845 when experience had acquainted the pioneers with the best methods to follow on the long road to Oregon, wrote the following advice:

"Ox teams are more extensively used than any others. Oxen stand the trip much better and are not so liable to be stolen by the Indians and are much less trouble. Cattle are generally allowed to go at large when not hitched to the wagons; while horses and mules must always be staken out at night. Oxen can procure food in many places where horses cannot and in much less time."⁴⁷

There are varying accounts of the number of cattle brought to Oregon in 1843. Dr. McLoughlin says 1300,⁴⁸ while Jesse Applegate in his descriptive article, "A Day with the Cow Column," speaks of 5000 head of stock, oxen, cows, young cattle, horses and mules. Tallmadge Woods, writing in 1843, says that there were 2000⁴⁹ head of cows, young cattle, and horses. A census of the pioneers of 1843, printed in the New Orleans *Picayune* of July 14, 1843, gives the number of males above the age of 16 as 260; of females above the same age as 130; of boys under 16 as 290; of girls under 16 as 312; this makes a total of 992. According to the same count there were 121 wagons, 698 oxen, 296 horses, and 973 loose cattle—a total of 1967 head of live stock.⁵⁰ Jesse Applegate and Daniel Waldo had the largest herds, the latter starting from Missouri with 108 head. Many of the immigrants, however, had few loose cattle, or none at all, and objected to the trouble involved in herding and driving the mass of loose stock. This dissatisfaction gave rise to the division of the immigrants into the "light column" and the "cow column."

The Cascade Mountains presented a difficult problem with two solutions, neither being very attractive. It was necessary, either to drive the cattle over the range by the Mt. Hood trail, or to cross the river below The Dalles, then follow a trail along the north bank to the vicinity of Fort Vancouver, and finally swim

⁴⁷ Joel Palmer, *Journal of Travels over the Rocky Mountains, to the Mouth of the Columbia River*, etc. (Cincinnati, James, 1847), p. 257.

⁴⁸ *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, I, p. 199.

⁴⁹ *Id.*, IV, p. 395.

⁵⁰ *Id.*, II, p. 191.

the cattle again to the south bank. Edward Lenox, whose family took the latter route, says they drove the cattle fifteen miles below The Dalles and then swam them over two at a time behind a canoe steered by an Indian.⁵¹

The men who drove their cattle over the mountain trail found it difficult at all times and dangerous late in the season. A characteristic story is that of Uncle Davy Carson, who, in the fall of 1845, was caught in a snow storm on one of the ridges running down from Mt. Hood. When almost exhausted he unfastened the bell from one of the cows, found another still giving milk, and using the bell as a pail, satisfied his hunger and eventually succeeded in bringing the entire herd of 150 head down the mountain in safety.⁵² Still, some of the early travellers over the Mt. Hood trail do not seem to have found it particularly formidable. John Howell drove his cattle over in 1845 at an average rate of fourteen miles a day, and mentions the good grass at several of the mountain camps.⁵³ When the newcomers reached the Willamette they found their stock in good demand. Peter Burnett says that American cows were worth from \$50 to \$75, while the native cows were worth from \$30 to \$40; but both Waldo and William Barlow rate the California cattle at a much lower price than Burnett.

The authorities differ to a marked degree as to the number of immigrants in 1844, and the number of cattle brought must be a matter of estimate. One contemporary account on the subject gives 3000 for 1844, and 7500 in 1845,⁵⁴ but these figures are probably too large. Matthew P. Deady gives an estimate of 2500 for 1845, which is probably nearer the truth. In a letter of Cornelius Gilliam he gives a description of a part of the 1844 immigration consisting of 48 families and 323 men, women, and children. They had 410 oxen, 160 cows, 143 young cattle, 54 horses, and 41 mules, and their belongings were carried in 72 wagons.⁵⁵ It will be noted that the ratio of number of people to the different classes of stock closely resembles the condition of the 1843 immigration. If these two groups of immigrants present fairly accurate ratios of the people to their cattle it seems likely, not taking into account the number of oxen, that not less than 10,000 cows and other breeding stock were brought to Oregon

⁵¹ Edward Henry Lenox, *Overland to Oregon*, etc., edited by Robert Whitaker (Oakland, Dowdle, 1904), p. 54.

⁵² *Transactions of the Fifth Annual Re-union of the Oregon Pioneer Association, for 1877.*

⁵³ *Washington Historical Quarterly*, I, p. 153.

⁵⁴ Charles Saxon, *The Oregonian*, etc. (Washington, Ward, 1846), p. 39.

⁵⁵ Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, I, p. 448.

before 1850. This total may easily have been larger because the prices of American cattle in Oregon would stimulate their importation.

Some of the pioneers, realizing the possibilities of improving the cattle of the Northwest, brought high grade breeding stock to Oregon. Ralph C. Greer, in writing of the immigration of 1847 mentions this fact:

"The stock interests were advanced by the introduction of fine horses, cattle, and sheep, by enterprising pioneers of that year, a few of whom I will speak. Uncle Johnny Wilson of Linn County brought a drove of Durhams from Henry Clay's herd at Blue Grass Grove which greatly improved the stock of Oregon, for he sold animals all over the state. Captain Benser brought a herd of fine cattle and improved the herds of the Columbia bottoms greatly."⁵⁶

On this matter, the testimony of a very competent witness, and one yet living, may be cited. Mr. Daniel M. Drumheller came to California in 1854, and to Washington in 1861, where he engaged in the cattle business, becoming one of the prominent stockmen of the Northwest:

"The cattle men of this region seem to be of the opinion that the range cattle in the early days of the industry were veritable scrubs. In this they are greatly mistaken. It is true that all the cattle in the early history of California were long horned Mexican breeds. A few of these were driven into Oregon prior to 1850. . . . Governor Gaines, one of the early governors of Oregon Territory, brought with him to Oregon some splendid Durham cattle. A few years later Sol King of Benton County made several importations of choice Shorthorn cattle. Besides these, there were other early settlers of Oregon who owned full blooded cattle of beef strains. . . . In my opinion the range cattle of Oregon and Washington were as good sixty years ago as they are now. The good grazing in that time may have been accountable for this to some extent."⁵⁷

The census of 1850 gave Oregon 13,294 inhabitants, and the cattle amounted to 41,729—milch cows, 9,427; oxen, 8,114; other cattle, 24,188. The census of 1860 gave the State of Oregon and the Territory of Washington a combined population of 64,059 inhabitants and the corresponding totals for the cattle were milch cows, 63,106; oxen, 10,203; other cattle, 109,073, amounting alto-

⁵⁶ *Transactions of the Seventh Annual Re-union of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1879.*

⁵⁷ Spokane, *Spokesman-Review*, May 8, 1921.

gether to 182,382. The ratio of cattle to population in both instances is high, as there were a little more than three head of cattle to each inhabitant in 1850 and nearly three to one in 1860. In these ratios the frontier conditions and their effect on the economy of the times is very apparent. A small population and great areas of grazing land led to the rapid expansion of the herds as one of the quickest methods of utilizing the natural resources of the region. A comparison of the figures of today with those of sixty and seventy years ago will show how the economy of the Northwest has changed. In 1920 the population of Washington was 1,356,621 and the number of cattle as shown by the census was 605,553. Instead of three head of cattle to each person we now have less than one-half, which is not greatly different from the ratio of cattle to inhabitants in the United States as a whole.

C. S. KINGSTON.