

NEBRASKA

FOLKLORE

PAMPHLET SEVENTEEN



NEBRASKA

CATTLE

BRANDS

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT

NEBRASKA

NOVEMBER, 1938

NEBRASKA FOLKLORE PAMPHLETS

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FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT IN NEBRASKA

J. Harris Gable, State Director

Robert E. Carlson, Editor

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Number Seventeen

NEBRASKA CATTLE BRANDS

November, 1938

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Nebraska cattlemen have, at the present time, more than thirteen thousand brands registered with the Division of Live Stock Brands in the Secretary of State's Office.

All the brands are, definitely, a part of the folklore of the State, since their designs were originated for the most part by the stockmen themselves. About ninety-five percent of the ranchers used the initials of their names for brand markings, or combined their initials with geometric designs. Others obtained ideas for their brand symbols from some personal whim or from incidents, from the suggestions of pioneers, and from the duplication of everyday objects common to ranch life, such as boots, hammers, pipes, or the birds, plants and fish found in their respective localities.

In every case, regardless of whether the brand design was made into a romantic flourish of the setting sun, or into a simple initial, it became a trademark and thing of pride for its owner. So all these cattle brands, apart from their practical worth in the stock business, have an aura of romance and strangeness.

Only a small proportion of Nebraska brand lore is listed in this pamphlet, but enough, we believe, to give some idea of the part it has played in Nebraska's greatest industry.

#### HISTORY OF BRANDING

The first recorded description of cattle branding was made 2,500 years ago on a tomb which was recently excavated near Thebes along the Lower Nile. One side of its walls bore mural decorations of a cow tied down and a man branding her with a geometric design. It is known that branding irons were used in England in the eighth century; while a French writer, Jean J. Jusserand, stated that in the year 1400 horses, kept for rent, were branded "in a prominent manner, so that unscrupulous travelers would not be tempted to leave the highway and keep the steeds."

In 1643 a New Haven, Connecticut, code stipulated how horses should be branded to "prevent trouble between rival claimants of animals running together in woods."

Nebraska pioneers began using brands as soon as their herds had grown to a sufficient size to need protection against cattle rustlers, or when the danger of intermingling between differently owned herds arose on the open range. The problem of identifying cattle became more involved after the building of railroads, which, through the creation of more convenient shipping facilities, gave an impetus to a movement for larger herds. The result was that every cattle owner became brand-conscious, zealous for his own brand and knowing the brands of the other cattle owners around him.

By 1879 the herds of cattle became so numerous that the legislature passed a law whereby brands could not be duplicated within the same county. In 1899 the law was changed to avoid duplication of brands within the borders of the State. All brand designs had to be accepted and recorded by the Secretary of State.

The Milldale Farm and Livestock Improvement Company, whose headquarters are in Council Bluffs, Iowa, made the first application for brand marking under the new law. The request, made on July 1, 1899, was for the marking **H**. This brand is still used by the same company.

### PROCESS OF BRANDING

When American cowhands learned the art of lassoing from the Spaniards, branding procedure took the form in which it is practiced today. The roper, on a trained cow-pony, throws the loop underneath the hind legs of the animal, and, with a quick jerk, brings it bawling and pitching to the branding fire.

After the cow or steer has been thrown, a cowboy, who is called a flanker, sits on its neck and twists its foreleg while another flanker forcibly spraddles the animal's hindlegs. The brander, knife man and vaccinator, working simultaneously, finish with the animal in a few minutes.

The branding iron is made out of wrought iron or copper metal; some stockmen think the copper irons hold heat longer. When the iron has been heated to a red glow in the fire, it is pressed upon the side of the struggling animal and allowed to burn deeply, it being slowly rocked back and forth until it is set square and sharp into the hide of the animal.

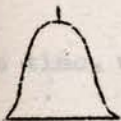
Humane societies, for many years, have been attempting to eliminate the cruelty of hot branding. Stockyards were the first to attempt avoiding the criticism by using chemical mixtures for marking diseased cattle. The chemicals, at first, made a bald patch instead of a sharp, clean brand, and have not as yet become entirely satisfactory. The United States Bureau of Animal Industry has, to date, used over a ton of patented chemical branding mixture to stamp the letter "B" on the jaws of animals affected with Bang's disease. By the summer of 1936 many stock owners were using cold irons dipped in chemicals for branding calves.



## ORIGIN OF CERTAIN BRANDS

Digests of Statements by the Owners of the Brands  
 (The drawings are not intended as exact or accurate legal representations)

Carl E. Bergman, of Kimball, inherited this brand from his father when he retired from the cattle business. Mr. Bergman's father, when a young immigrant from Sweden, was so impressed with the history of the Liberty Bell that he decided to use its design on his cattle.



C. E. Bloomfield, of Broadwater, writes that this brand was given him by the Division of Live Stock Brands. He likes it because it is symbolical of his name.



Robson Carter, of Rushville, chose the oilcan brand because he had always liked its lines.



Anna M. Chadd, of Callaway, had a small bone hairpin, which suggested a simple, and at the same time interesting design for a cattle brand. There is a saying around her ranch that when a cow switches her tail it will hook on the hairpin.



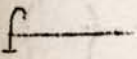
E. E. Cleveland, of Atkinson, had such a great love for the American flag that he wished to use it for a brand. He also, from an aesthetic point of view, had a great fondness for the initial "E." By combining the suggestion made by the two themes he made a brand with an initial "E" surrounded by the outlines of a flag.



J. H. Craig, of Redington, got into the cattle business through taking care of his mother-in-law's cattle, for which he was given half of the calves that were born. When he had developed a herd large enough to need a brand he found that all of the designs he could think of had already been registered. At the time, when still searching for a brand symbol, Mr. Craig hired a man who had stopped at his ranch asking for a job. The hired man, after finishing his work, went farther west. In a few days he came back to tell Mr. Craig that he had found a symbol which could be used on the branding iron and also as a name for the ranch. It was the Rising Sun. Mr. Craig's brand and ranch have been known by this name ever since.



O. C. Cram, of Sargent, originally used a quarter-circle brand that frequently made a blotch when applied on the hides of his cattle. When Mr. Cram's brother visited him, and saw the trouble he was having with his quarter brand, he suggested a hammer design, that, on account of its wider distribution of lines, makes a clear mark on his stock.



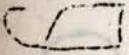
G. H. Danton, of Kilgore, after having had six cattle brand designs rejected by the Division of Live Stock Brands, became discouraged in the hope of finding an original symbol. He sat down at his table and gloomily began drawing sketches, at the same time munching on a delicious apple. After he had eaten a portion of the apple he happened to look at it, and the idea occurred to him that it would make an interesting design for his cattle brand. The apple design was found acceptable by the Nebraska Division of Brands, and has been used by him ever since.



J. L. Hibbs, of Cody, got the idea for his brand when he was riding along a lake and saw wooden duck decoys riding in the water. Mr. Hibbs writes that the blacksmith, at first, made the branding iron too large, so the design looked more like a goose or sandhill crane than a duck. After the lower bill had been cut off the symbol was made to appear as was originally intended.



Ralph J. Hoatson, of Chadron, was told of a bobsled design that had been used in 1868 by an early pioneer. The brand had never been registered, so Mr. Hoatson adopted it.



H. D. Lewis, of Bassett, in 1898, was searching for an interesting cattle brand when a friend, who had been riding the range in Wyoming, came to his home for a visit. His friend, upon being asked for a list of Wyoming brands, asked: "why don't you use the fiddle brand? You're a fiddler." Mr. Lewis liked the suggestion, so from that time on, his favorite musical instrument was imprinted upon the hides of his cattle, making a unique and distinctive brand.



P. H. Lyman, of Bayard, first needed a cattle brand during the Spanish-American War. The Cuban flag seemed appropriate. Mr. Lyman used this design for a number of years, but because the triangle within the flag made too many lines, causing a blotched symbol, he later modified his brand into a plain flag. This brand is now (1938), owned by Elmer D. Morehead.



M. A. Mart, of Hay Springs, at one time sold out "lock, stock and barrel."

Later, when he went back into the cattle business, he found it very difficult to find an original cattle brand. One day, when he was in a blacksmith shop, the blacksmith showed him a design that he called a bull-tongue cultivator shovel.

This emblem was found acceptable by the Division of Brands.



Victor Merrihew, of Ashby, has a brand that could be symbolical of either the sun or a bowler hat. Mr. Merrihew inherited it from his grandfather, who chose this design because he thought it would be difficult for cattle thieves to work over into a different design.

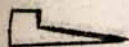


Anil Novotny, of Hay Springs, happened to be holding a hammer in his hand when he was attempting to think of an original brand. The head of the hammer suggested his design.



Lars Olsen, of Harrisburg, writes:

"I have been smoking a pipe since I was fourteen years old and I do yet; so I thought it a good plan to have a pipe brand. I got it, and have it yet."

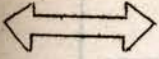


Thorwald Peterson, of Harrisburg, was born in Denmark. His mother, during the summer, used to bottle fruit juices for the winter months. Each bottle was labeled with a religious cross as a warning for the children in the family to leave the bottles alone. When Mr. Peterson registered his

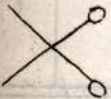


cattle brand in 1912 he used his mother's quaintly decorated bottle for his brand design.

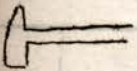
George H. Schmidt, of Chadron, submitted many brand designs to the Division of Brands, all of which were rejected because they were already in use. Desperate, in attempting to think of an original brand, he happened to glance at the back cover of a magazine which was lying on his living room table. In the advertisement he noticed a double arrow sign similar to that stamped on a brand of chewing gum. Mr. Schmidt picked up his pencil, made a slight modification of the arrow, and mailed it to the State Brand Department. It was accepted.



E. A. Siders, of Wood Lake, chose the scissors brand because it is easy to put on. His iron is only half of a pair of scissors, and he crosses the half in order to get a pair, both operations being made with one hot iron.



E. A. Smith, of Ogallala, chose a hammer brand that differed in design from Mr. Cram's. Mr. Smith said he chose this symbol because the hammer is the one tool which hangs on the cowboy's saddle the year around, and is in constant use when repairing fences or building corrals. One of the first things the ranch help asks is, "where is the hammer?"

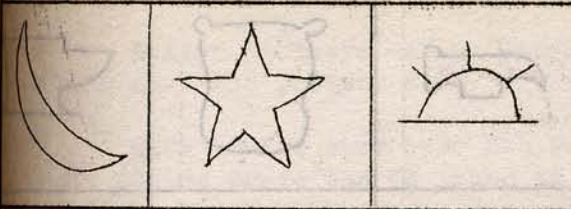


Arthur Wendler, of Simeon, bought his brand from his uncle, Gus Wendler, who came here from Germany in 1884. At that date, Gus Wendler filed on a homestead and took a tree claim near Brownlee. Arthur Wendler believes his uncle selected his acorn brand because of his great love for trees.

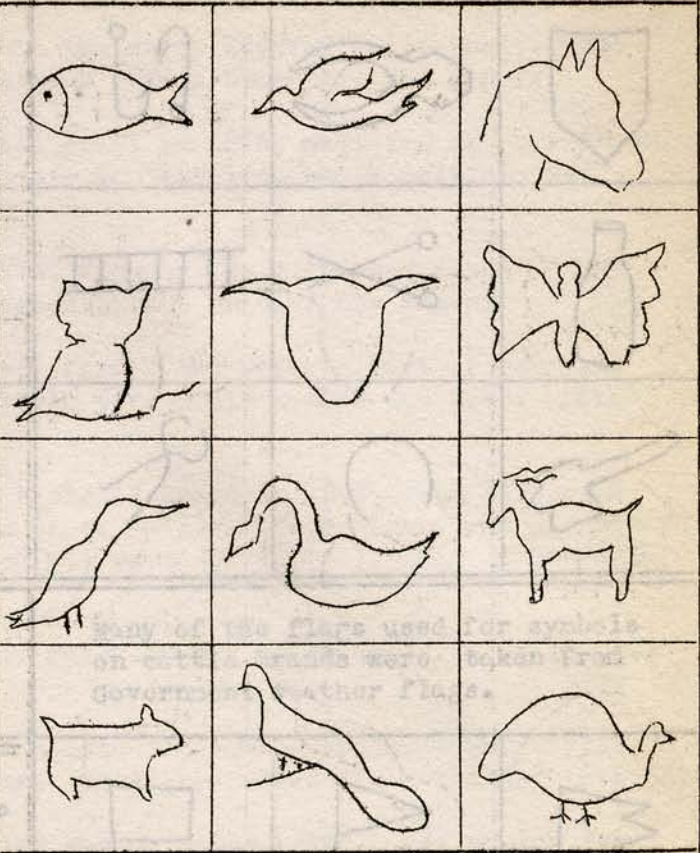




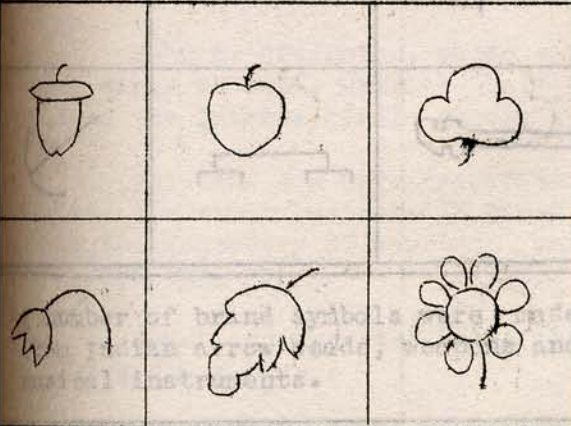
The celestial bodies suggested names for a number of brands.



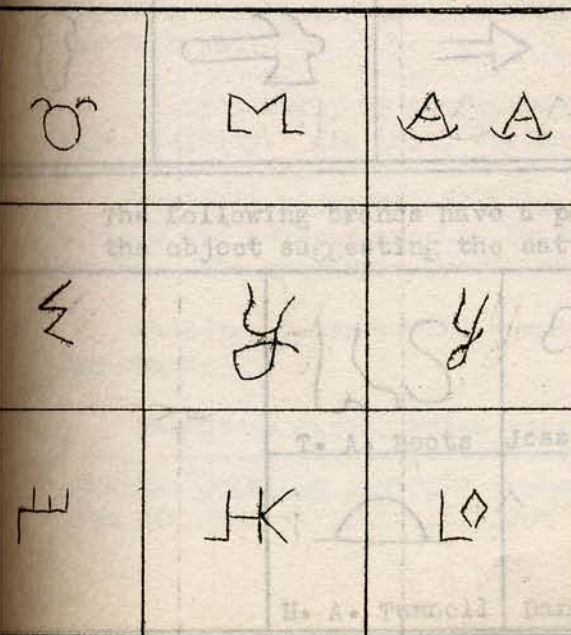
These fish, birds and animals were found in the vicinity of the ranches using these symbols.



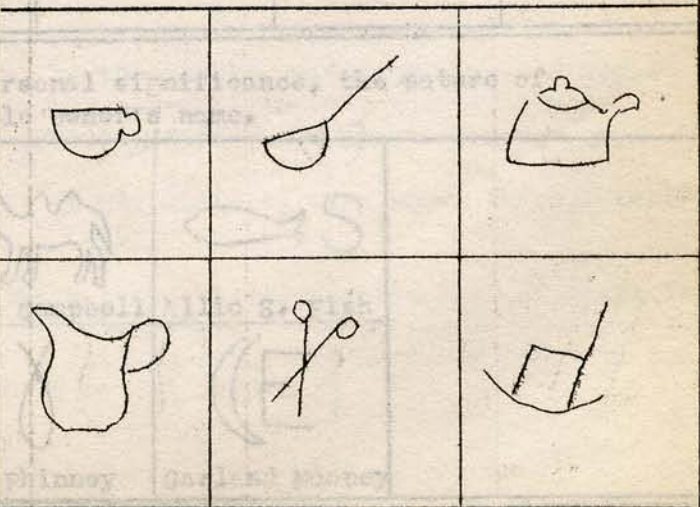
plants, leaves, flowers and fruits suggested these brands.





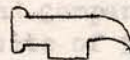




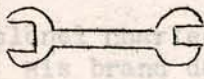

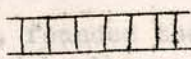
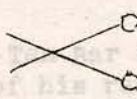


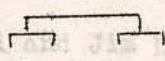
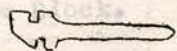


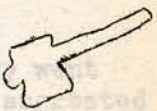
Ordinary brands, which are those brands made up of letters from the alphabet, were varied in a number of ways—such as the Flying "O" brand, walking "M" or Rocking "A"



Various household objects, used in the ranchers' homes, suggested themes for a number of cattle brand designs.





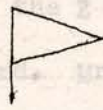


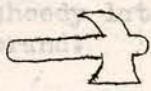
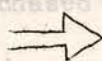
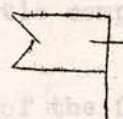
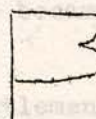
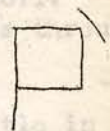


Tools and implements, of the kind used in the ranching country suggested themes for many cattle brands.

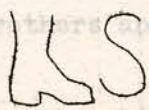





					
					
					

A number of brand symbols were made from Indian arrow heads, weapons and musical instruments.

Many of the flags used for symbols on cattle brands were taken from Government weather flags.

The following brands have a personal significance, the nature of the object suggesting the cattle owner's name.

		
T. A. Boots	Jesse Campbell	Allie S. Fish
		
H. A. Tunnell	Dan Phinney	Garland Mooney

## SOME FAMOUS BRANDS

John M. Adams and H. V. Redington, in 1874, built the first ranch in the Panhandle country, about a mile south of the present town of Redington. Their best known brand was the H Bar.

Bosler Brothers and Company, in the early 1870's, built their ranch home near the present site of Lewellen. Their brand was the B Bar.

Mark Bouton came over the Texas Trail in 1873, settling on Bear Creek. Mr. Bouton chose the VB brand in honor of his wife, whose initials the letters were.

Colonel Charles Coffee, in 1879, founded the O Ten Bar ranch on Hat Creek. His brand design was suggested by the name of his ranch.

John A. Creighton, whose cattle roamed the western part of Nebraska as early as 1867, used the Half Circle Bar. This symbol was later changed into the Quarter Circle Block.

Phil and Jim Date originated their 66 brand in 1872, when they went into the stock business in Pumpkin Creek valley. Their brand was suggested by the legendary 66 mountain, which was supposed to be located in Nebraska or Wyoming.

Emmet and Brewster built their ranch on Hat Creek in 1879. They used the S Bar E brand.

Hunter and Evans, in 1878, went into the cattle business where Pine Creek flows into the Niobrara River. Their brand was the Z Bar and Lazy 33.

W. A. Paxton, of Keystone, used the Keystone brand. Mr. Paxton later organized the Ogallala Cattle Company.

The Powers Brothers came into Scotts Bluff County in 1870 or 1871. Dennis Sheedy later purchased this cattle company. It became famous through the 7U brand.

David Rankin, of Seneca, was one of the first cattlemen to settle in this vicinity. His brand was Bar 7.

Bartlett Richards and Company, by the 1890's, had many thousand acres of land and several ranches between Lakeside, Ellsworth, Rushville and Gordon. The company's brands were Bar 6, Spade and O Bar.

Shiedley Brothers and Company, of Big Springs, were known through their OSO brand.

The Stone Ranch, which used the C brand, raised cattle east of Ogallala.

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NEBRASKA FOLKLORE PAMPHLET Number 18 will be issued in December and will contain NEBRASKA FARMERS' ALLIANCE SONGS OF THE 1890's.