

# Great Western Cattle Trail

**1874-1886: John T. Lytle, founder**

**The Great Western Cattle Trail - also known as the Dodge City Trail and the Old Texas Trail - was utilized from 1874 for the movement of cattle to markets East. The trail began at Bandera, Texas and ended, most often, in [Dodge City, Kansas](#). The entire trail extended from southern Texas to the Canadian border. Between 10 and 12 million cattle were driven north from Texas into Dodge City.**

## The Great Western Cattle Trail



*When driving between Lone Wolf in Kiowa County and Granite in Greer County, on Highway 9, or west out of Sentinel on Highway 55, even the natives of the area has trouble imagining six million Texas Longhorn cattle with hundreds of trail bosses, chuck wagons, and remudas of 40 to 50 horses ambling through and grazing contentedly in the lush, green grass during the period from 1866 until 1885.*

*In addition to the many enormous drives, cattle herds also traveled in fewer numbers until 1892 when homesteaders located and began fencing Oklahoma Territory. Local lore and history tells about the Great Western Trail traversing this area with it's origin at Bandera, Texas, just to the NW of San Antonio, about 450 miles south of the Red River, and it's destination of Dodge City, Kansas, about 45 miles north of Indian Territory. Some historians called the trail the old Doan Trail, because it crossed the Red River at Doan's crossing. Others called it the Old Dodge City Trail, because it ended at Dodge City. Some even confused it with the Chisholm or Chisum Trail, which actually lay further east near El Reno. Oklahoma State Highway Department called it the Old Texas Trail on their map published in 1933.*

*Doan's Crossing was a short distance from Doan's Store, which was the last supply station for those traveling to Kansas by way of the Indian Nation. C. E. Doan kept a perfect record of the herds crossing. 1881 was the peak of the cattle herds with 301,000 head driven through. He kept the name of the trail bosses, the number of cattle, and who they belonged to. One of the largest was the King Ranch, shipping 30,000 head divided into 10 herds in a single season.*

*The trail drivers could see one of the Wichita Mountains that stood out from the rest and looked like a huge Tepee. This was Mt. Webster, but the named was later changed to Mt. Tepee. Using Mt. Tepee as a land mark, drovers pointed the lead steer to the crossing on the North Fork of the Red River, about 1 1/2 miles south of Mt Tepee. NW of this crossing was a little mountain with a large grove of pecan trees on the south and good grass. It made a good windbreak and the herd bedded down for the night.*

*The next morning, the herd was headed north through a large sea of grass, 12 miles wide and 20 miles long, stretching from the North Fork of the Red River to Big Elk Creek. As they reached a point on the North Fork of the Red river, called Comanche Spring, where Lone Wolf is, they pointed the cattle east to the crossing on Big Elk Creek. This crossing was a mile north of old Highway #9 west of Hobart. This ford later became known as the Big Four Crossing, so named because it was located on land that was leased from the Kiowa by the Big Four Cattle Co, which was owned by the 4 largest Ranches in North Texas. Their brand was the # 4. After the Big Four crossing, the cattle were allowed to graze the good grass in the fertile bottoms of the twin Elk Creeks, and actually grazed where the present town of Hobart is.*

*At it's location in the bend of the creek is a most unique red sandstone bluff. It is an exciting*

*and eye-catching formation not yet destroyed by man, floods, or time. Universally, trail bosses hunted and hoped for rock crossings in all creeks and rivers to prevent bogging down and miring of herds of 2,500 to 3,000 head of cattle. A mud crossing became a disastrous quagmire for weak and straggling animals which always trailed at the end of the herd.*

*Whoever discovered Big Elk Crossing found an ideal place. To the south where the herd entered the crossing, a horseshoe bend in the creek assisted cowboys riding point to direct the leaders. The entrance to the crossing was almost like having a previously built corral in the middle of a gigantic pasture. The bend also aided the swing or flank riders to keep the herd moving smoothly. And finally, the curve made it easier for amateur drag riders to push slow and sore-footed animals across the creek.*

*After entering Big Elk Creek from the south, the cattle waded upstream on a rock and gravel bed around a small turn in the creek until they reached another rock formation. The exit from the creek bed is also evident where the old cut remains distinctly lower than other parts of the steep bank.*

*When cattle climbed out of this north exit, a small valley between hills provided grazing with abundant bluestem as high as a man's shoulder. The remuda of horses, usually tended by a young boy, crossed after all the cattle. The cook with his chuck wagon preceded the herd so he would have the meal prepared and ready to eat after every man and animal made the crossing.*

*At Big Elk Crossing the cook drove his four mules pulling the chuck wagon down the bank at the cattle crossing. He then drove further upstream in the creek bed to a place without rock bluffs and which had a more gradual upward incline, this old wagon exit was located one half mile directly south of Port, which came into being after the big cattle drives ceased.*

*The wagon exit became the mail freight crossing on Big Elk Creek for that particular area, and an educated guess would be this freight crossing created the development of Port. Many early pioneers used it for years, entering at the old cattle crossing and pulling out at the wagon exit. Eventually a wooden bridge was constructed at almost the same location where it is now.*

*A sad incident might be included in the Big Elk Creek Crossing history. Trail Boss John Leonard, brother of early pioneer, Finley A. Leonard, had the unhappy experience of having to bury a young 18 year old at the crossing. The young fellow was making his first trail drive and died during the night while they camped there. His horse fell on him two days south at Briggs Ranch Crossing, injuring him internally. The men cared for him the best they they could. He lay in the chuck wagon as they moved northward, but was too seriously injured to survive.*

*Next morning the cowboys buried him atop a hill to the east of the cattle trail, wrapped in his blanket and waterproof sleeping tarpaulin tied with a rope. They covered the grave with red rocks with one larger headstone engraved R.I.P. Trail boss John said a few appropriate words, then read a brief passage from his trail worn Testament.*

*For many years early pioneers who saw the grave believed that R.I.P. were the initials for the name of an outlaw named Pickett, who with his brothers roamed and terrorized the area. The truth was actually not known until the Leonard family moved there in the early 1900's and explained the grave. All traces of it are now erased. R.I.P. stood for "Rest In Peace".*

*Continuing directly north from Big Elk Creek Crossing of the Great Western Trail, there is a colorful bit of history that is almost lost forever. Located on the Bill Pierce farm was a large red sandstone bluff higher than a man's head. There was spring water gushing from it's face and spilling into a deep pool at it's base.*

*Soldier Spring was an excellent campsite for the cattle drives even though it had only one lone cottonwood tree at the time. The lowlands along Soldier Creek and Elk Creek provided abundant grazing in the tall bluestem. Night riders could easily guard the cattle as they road the crests of the surrounding hills all night. Two riders usually circled the herd during the evening after the cattle bedded down to sleep. This was the time when so many cowboys sang to keep the animals calm. Many of them had fine voices with a large repertoire of old songs. Their singing had a soothing effect on the cattle and also tended to cover up any unexpected or sharp noises that might create a stampede.*

*Two more riders relieved them before midnight when some of the cattle moved around to drink and graze. At 2:00 the third shift over and rode watch till daylight. In case of a stampede the night remuda of horses were saddled and ready. All the cowboy need do was pull on his boots and hat, run to his mount, and attempt to halt the running cattle by making them form a circular mill before they scattered too far.*

*In early days, before silt, erosion from farming lands, and man's excavations covered it, early settlers read many names and ranks of soldiers carved upon the the bluff and the rocks around it. Thus the location received it's title that is now given on historical maps: Soldier Springs. All that remains visible today, however are a few outcroppings of red rock and one small spring fed pool. There is nothing remaining of the high rock bluff.*

*No one seems certain when these names were carved on the rocks since they were there when the first settlers arrived in 1892. One plausible solution leads back to the spring and summer of 1886, when soldiers from Fort Supply, Fort Sill and Fort Elliott began patrolling Cheyenne - Arapaho lands to remove all intruders, unauthorized cattle and men. However the most important and dreaded duty of these troops was to safely escort cattle herds traveling north on the Trail.*

*During these years the Indians became more hostile and belligerent and also demanded a larger bounty of beef from the trail boss than they had in the years past. they were hungry, and their way of life had been destroyed when the government forced them to live on the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation. The last of their buffalo disappeared in 1880, so the Indians*

*had little food and skins for making shelter and clothing. The government appropriated only \$3.00 a year for each Indian's subsistence. It is easily understood why the Indians harassed and attacked the cattle drives as the herds passed through and grazed the grasslands of their territory.*

*The Washita River Crossing near Edwardsville Rock was the main headquarters for the soldiers assigned to patrolling the Cattle Trail. Soldier Springs was a likely bivouac for these troops while they monitored the trail in the particularly dangerous area. In 1888 Fort Sill troops met the cattle herds at Doan's crossing at the Red River, then escorted them north to the Washita River. Going on from the Washita River, Fort Elliott and Fort Supply troops continued with the escort. Fort Elliott abandoned its participation in 1890 and Fort Supply became responsible for all the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation. After the Run in 1892, Fort Sill guarded the Trail as far north as the Cherokee Outlet. It can be presumed that any or all of these troops may have carved names at Soldier Spring.*

*Also, Fort Supply soldiers patrolled and traveled throughout the area using the old Fort Supply Road which followed the Cattle Trail from Doan's Crossing to Fort Supply. As the name denotes, Fort Supply was responsible for providing Indians and soldiers with necessities of food, supplies, and ammunition. The ghost town of Yandell, which began in 1888 east of Altus, was the division point for this old supply route. Here horses were exchanged for the return trip.*

*However, even before the Army troops were necessary to conduct cattle drives safely through the Indian Lands, Soldier Spring was the evening destination after leaving Big Elk Creek Crossing in the morning. Cattle grazed northward along the distance which cut through the grassy hills parallel to Big Elk Creek. Curly mesquite and buffalo grass covered the rolling red uplands and lush bluestem grew in the sandy lowlands of the creek.*

*Bands of Cheyenne-Arapaho hunted and camped throughout the bottom lands of Little Elk and Big Elk Creeks on both sides of the Trail. None of the Indians were ever known to be hostile to the early cattleman. These Indians supplemented their wild game, fruit and fish diets with Texas Longhorn Beef from the trail herds after the white man destroyed their antelope and buffalo. At that time the trail drivers anticipated giving the hungry Indians beef, a cheap toll charge for the repayment of excellent grazing as they passed through Indian Territory. Usually the Indians asked for 7 or 8 head, but no trail boss was ever that generous. He bargained with the Indians and then gave them 3 or 4 thin, weak or lumpy jawed animals, which would die on the trail or fail to bring a good price at Dodge City. Later drives that came through during a season would pick up the strays from the herds that went before, and these cattle were given to the Indian for their toll.*

*If the Indians did not receive beef from the trail boss, they stampeded the cattle during the night. A stampede created misery for both cowboys and cattle, and a much greater loss resulted than from peacefully giving the Indians 2 or 3 beef.*

*A stampede is well-remembered by an early settler whose parents homesteaded in 1892, 3 miles NW of Soldier Spring. Two thousand head of full grown Longhorn steers rushed through their yard and field and destroyed everything in their path. Luckily, the family had just moved into their sturdy new frame home. Every family member was safely inside as the maddened animals surged by on all sides of the house. The dugout the family had previously lived in was completely demolished as were the few things they left stored in it. Had it not been for the new house, the entire family would have been killed. As it was, the only loss was all the family's clothing which was hanging on a clothes line. The day of the stampede had been wash day. They never found one piece of clothing, not even a tattered rag! Kind neighbors shared with them as no one had money to buy anything new.*

*Early settlers never actually knew if Indians stampeded the herd or if they spooked at some unusual noise. The night before the stampede had been stormy, and cattle were always more nervous during unsettled weather. The cowboys rounded up cattle for days. No one ever knew if they found all of them. It is likely that the Indians managed to dispose of any that may have been left behind.*

*The Texas Longhorn was tough, cunning and mean. He was on his own from the minute he was born, and after living several years in the brush, he did not take kindly to being roped, hog-tied, road branded and thereafter held loose herded until the drive got underway.*

*The cowboys that came up the Great Western Trail behind these herds were a tough breed. They contributed in no time at all to the new Boot Hill Cemetery of Dodge City, some of them occupying lots themselves, and others adding Dodge City names to the grave markers, and..... sometimes.....a town marshall. The main street of Dodge City became a Hell's Highway, charged with six shooter smoke, bad whiskey and wild women.*

*The cowboy who rode up the Western Trail was spoiling for trouble and in Dodge City, it didn't take long to find it. The guns he packed were those he fetched home from the Civil War. They may have been the Confederate Griswold and Gunnison, the Union Colt model 1860, or a Remington 1856. Remington made more than 140,000 of these big revolvers during the Civil War, and many of them ended up in Texas and later, Dodge City. The cowboy strapped on his gun belt when he put his pants on in the morning. Many of them carried a pair and could use each equally well. The first thing a Texas cowboy did to a calvary holster was to cut the flap off and swing the but to the rear. The soft leather didn't hold the shape very well and soon they were made of thick rawhide, which made the guns easier to draw. A working cowboy also needed a rifle, and these were either a Spencer, a Henry and later a Winchester, which was carried in a scabbard under the stirrup leathers.*

*Cattlemen played an important part in developing the western prairie, but it was the homesteader who really brought civilization. The railroad made this possible by eliminating the need for cattle drives and opening nationwide markets to both the cattlemen and the farmer.*

*Some of the cowboys who drove the herds over the Great Western Trail later became citizens of Kiowa County. Perry Jones was born in 1861, 9 miles south of Greenville, TX in Hunt, Co. He moved to Indian Territory and worked on the Jim Knox Ranch. In 1888, he went back to Texas and married Beckie Riley. In 1890, they moved back to the Territory 25 miles east of Duncan till 1901, when they moved to their Kiowa Co. claim.*

*Jess Lynn also moved cattle from Texas over the Trail. He worked as an "outside man". meaning he owned his horse and gear and traveled to ranches in a hundred mile radius to work. In 1901/02, he worked for Hezakah Williams' Tumbling A Ranch. He took a claim 3 miles south of the old Barton Store, that had a grove of 300 paper shell pecan trees. Another early cowboy was Dick Holly. You can read more about him on [The Prairie Tales](#) page.*

*Other cowboys who drove the herds through and came back to live were Samuel Parson, who came to the Nations at 13, and worked for Edd Louder, until he got a claim in 1901 on North Fork of the Red River. J.B. Haley started working cattle when he was 13. By the time he was 16, he was making the drives. He became a foreman on the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Reservation working with large herds belonging to Texas cattleman. In 1893, he filed for land in the Cheyenne-Arapho Reservation and brought his new wife Effie there. When the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache lands opened, his wife filed for and got land in NE Comanche Co, where the beginnings of the Lazy H Ranch began to develop.*

*Cattleman, Cowboy and Farmer took this land and turned it into Kiowa County, while still remembering the people that lived here before. This information is part history, and part stories I heard growing up in Kiowa County. With the fields of cotton, wheat and alfalfa planted along the bottoms of Big Elk and Little Elk creeks, It's hard to imagine, a sea of Texas Longhorns Moving across the prairie where there were no fences, cotton and wheat. Where the bluestem was as high as a man on a horse. And just to realize this happened only 100 + years ago. From cattle drives and raging Indians to jet planes in the skies..... You've come a long way, Baby!!!!!!*

*Today, Doan's Crossing consists of the original 1881 store, some abandoned residences and a granite historical marker in bronze relief. Doan's Crossing is at the juncture of Farm to Market Road 2916 and Farm to Market Road 924 in northern Wilbarger County.*

**WESTERN TRAIL.** The Western Trail, also known as the Dodge City Trail and the Fort Griffin Trail, was blazed in 1874 by cattle-drover John T. Lytle,<sup>qv</sup> who herded 3,500 longhorn cattle<sup>qv</sup> along the leading edge of the frontier from South Texas to the Red Cloud Indian Agency at Fort Robinson, Nebraska. Following the defeat of the Plains Indians in the Red River War,<sup>qv</sup> Lytle's route supplanted the farmer-laden Chisholm Trail<sup>qv</sup> to the east. By 1879 the Western Trail was the principal thoroughfare for Texas cattle bound for northern markets. Feeder routes such as the Matamoros Trail from Brownsville, which ran northward through Santa Rosa, George West, Three Rivers, San Antonio, Beckman, Leon Springs, Boerne, and Comfort, and the Old Trail from Castroville, which ran northward through Bandera and Camp Verde, converged in Kerrville to form the Western Trail. The trail proceeded northward, crossing the James River near the site of present Noxville, the Llano at Beef Trail Crossing, the San Saba at Pegleg Crossing,<sup>qv</sup> and Brady Creek west of Brady. The trail left the Hill Country<sup>qv</sup> through Cow Gap, where minor feeder trails from Mason, San Saba, and Lampasas counties converged. It crossed the Colorado River at Waldrip and passed through Coleman, where a trail from Trickham and one of two feeders from Tom Green County merged with the trunk route. Beyond Coleman, the Western Trail fanned out to take advantage of grassy prairies; branches passed through the sites of present Baird, Clyde, and Putnam and reunited at Albany, where the Potter and Bacon Trail (or Potter-Blocker Trail<sup>qv</sup>) diverged toward the Llano Estacado<sup>qv</sup> and Colorado pastures. The Western Trail crossed the Clear Fork of the Brazos near Fort Griffin at the Butterfield-Military Road crossing, where the second feeder trail from Tom Green County, which ran through Buffalo Gap, joined the trunk route. Thence the Western Trail proceeded through Throckmorton, crossed the Brazos at Seymour and the Pease at the site of Vernon, and veered northeastward to leave Texas at what later became known as Doan's Crossing, on the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River. Several alternative routes crossed Indian Territory to Dodge City, Kansas, on the Santa Fe Railroad, the first and most important terminus of the trail; to Ogallala, Nebraska, on the Union Pacific, the principal alternative for rail shipment; and to northern ranges. Some herds were delivered to Indian reservations on the northern plains.

Several factors such as barbed wire,<sup>qv</sup> the introduction of beefier cattle breeds, and the settlement of the frontier contributed to the demise of the Western Trail, but a principal cause was the Texas fever<sup>qv</sup> controversy. Carried northward by longhorns, the disease decimated northern herds, giving rise by 1885 to quarantines in many northern states and territories which banned the importation of Texas cattle during warm months. In an attempt to circumvent state legislation, Texas congressman James Francis Miller,<sup>qv</sup> Lytle's brother-in-law, introduced legislation that would have plotted a National Trail<sup>qv</sup> north of Texas under federal supervision, but the proposal did not pass. The last reported drive on the Western Trail was made in 1893 by John Rufus Blocker<sup>qv</sup> to Deadwood, South Dakota. By then, three to five million cattle had been driven to northern pastures and markets along the route.



The **Great Western Cattle Trail** was used in the 19th century for movement of [cattle](#) to markets in the East. It ran west of and roughly parallel to the [Chisholm Trail](#). The Great Western Trail began at [Bandera](#) west of [San Antonio](#) and passed near [Buffalo Gap](#) and [Abilene](#) in [West Texas](#). It concluded at [Dodge City, Kansas](#).

The trail was also known as the Western Trail, the Dodge City Trail, or the Old Texas Trail.

**Old Dodge City Trail** Another name for the Great Western Trail.

## WESTERN TRAIL

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century Texas cattlemen sought routes to trail their herds to northern markets. As the line of settlements moved westward, the trails that served cattlemen were closed. First the Shawnee Trail, then the Chisolm Trail became unusable. In 1874 John T. Lytle blazed a new path beyond the western edge of settlement, stretching from the grazing ranges of Texas to Fort Robinson, Nebraska. When the U.S. Army successfully concluded the Red River War in early 1875, driving the Comanche and Kiowa onto a reservation, Lytle's trail became the most popular path to the railheads in Kansas and Nebraska. It remained the most used until the cattle trailing industry ended in the 1890s.

The Western Trail was also called the Dodge City Trail or simply the Texas Trail; it began in the hill country of Texas near present Kerrville, where various minor trails converged. The trail crossed the Llano River near present Brady, Texas, and passed over the Clear Fork of the Brazos near Fort Griffin. It reached the Red River about ten miles north of present Vernon, Texas. Corwin Doan, who opened a trading post on the river in 1878, maintained a detailed account of the herds moving north for many years. He recorded that more than three hundred thousand longhorns had passed by his establishment in 1881. The ford soon became known as Doan's Crossing. Across western Texas, minor trails fed into the Western Trail, bringing cattle from a wide area. North of Abilene, the Potter-Bacon Cutoff left the Western Trail to cross the Llano Estacado, ending in Wyoming.

The Western Trail crossed the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River a few miles north of Doan's, utilizing gently sloping embankments to enter Greer County. The trail then pushed northward, crossing the North Fork of the Red River near present Warren, Oklahoma. Leaving the river, the trail entered the most dangerous section of the route, the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation. Here the drovers frequently met American Indians who wanted to supplement their meager government rations with fresh beef. Usually the meetings ended amicably, but in the mid-1880s military escorts were frequently assigned to the trail.

The trail broadened here to let the cattle graze but coalesced at the fords on Elk Creek near present Canute and on the Washita River south of present Butler. After the Washita the trail turned eastward to avoid the Gypsum Hills and then back north to the main Canadian River near present Camargo. It then turned eastward again, following the terrain, to bisect the old Camp Supply spur of the Chisolm Trail near present May, Oklahoma. Before 1884, herds turned westward here to cross the Public Land Strip (Oklahoma Panhandle) to reach Colorado, Wyoming, and eventually Canada on the International Trail. The U.S. Congress briefly considered designating the International Trail as the "National Route" for cattle drives.

Directly northwest of May, Oklahoma, the route crossed the Beaver River (North Canadian River), fording on the sand bar at the mouth of Clear Creek. It then passed near present Laverne and Rosston; it crossed the border into Kansas just east of the Cimarron River and then crossed that stream at Deep Hole Crossing. Here the drovers could visit the Long Horn Round-Up Saloon or the Dead Fall Saloon. From the Cimarron the trail veered slightly eastward to cross the Arkansas River at Dodge City. The final section followed the Arkansas westward to the stock pens at the railhead on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway.

During the 1880s the drives frequently passed by Dodge City, heading to Ogallala, Nebraska, and Wyoming. Some herds traveled to Canada. However, the large majority of the more than two million longhorns that traveled up the Western Trail were shipped out of Dodge City. The route remained busy until 1891, when traffic fell drastically. In 1894 John Blocker drove his herd from West Texas to South Dakota on the Western Trail, its last recorded use. By the turn of the twentieth century the cattle driving industry was no more.

### **GREAT WESTERN CATTLE TRAIL**

During the 1800's Texans were looking for a way to make a living. There were no markets for the abundant cattle abandoned during the Civil War. The demand of the cattle in the North was high and the North had already established railways to accommodate the cattle, thus the Great Western Cattle Trail was developed on the simple theory of supply and demand.

In 1874 Captain John T. Lytle and several cowboys left South Texas with 3,500 head of longhorn cattle and a remuda of saddle horses. Five years later, the route Lytle cut out of the prairie to Ft. Robinson, Nebraska, had become the most significant cattle trail in history – the Great Western Cattle Trail.

Though less well known than the Chisholm Trail, the Great Western Cattle Trail was longer in length and carried cattle for two years longer than the Chisholm. The Great Western saw over seven million cattle and horses pass through Texas and Oklahoma to the railheads in Kansas and Nebraska, therefore, developing the cattle industry as far north as Wyoming and Montana.

A typical head would move 10 -12 miles a day and included the trail boss, a wrangler, and a cook. The drive from South Texas to Kansas took about two months at a cost of \$1000 in wages and provisions. At the end of the trail, cattle sold for \$1.00 to \$1.50 per head.

In Texas, feeder trails from the Rio Grande led to the trailhead near Bandera and the Great Western passed through, Kerrville, Junction, Brady, Coleman, Baird, Albany and Fort Griffin. It is believed that the main streets of Throckmorton, Seymour, and Vernon run north and south because of the trail.

Seymour was a major supply center and became a popular campsite for cowboys. Cowboys and Indians alike camped out on the Salt Fork tributary of the Brazos River where Seymour is quietly nestled today. The herds were bedded on high grounds on the east side of the Seymour Creek that runs through the City Park. In 1972 the Seymour Historical Society placed a marker at the northern edge of the community commemorating the trail passing through Seymour. In addition to its 1972 marker, Seymour now has four cement markers more closely marking the trail through Baylor County. The Great Western Cattle Trail entered Baylor County on its southern border along Highway 183. A marker is located at the entrance of the Hash Knife Ranch headquarters where the untamed Millett Brothers Ranch once reigned in the 1800's. The trail lead northward to Seymour Creek on the Salt Fork tributary of the Brazos River. The Vernon Rotary placed a marker in the City park in 2004, near the popular 1800's campsite and watering hole. Another marker was placed on Highway 183 as the trail meandered through rough terrain passing where Lake Kemp is located today. The last marker in Baylor County is located on Highway 183 north as the trail travels toward Vernon crossing Waggoner Ranch, one of the largest ranches in Texas.

Traffic on the Great Western Trail began to decline in 1885 with the introduction of barbed wire. In 1893, the last large cattle drive up the Great Western crossed the Red River, headed to Deadwood, South Dakota. By this time an estimated six million cattle and one million horses had left Texas, crossing the Red River into Oklahoma, as it continued up the trail.

For many years prior to 1896, Seymour had been the rallying point for cowmen from all over the West. A retired cowboy named Jeff Scott broached the idea of a Cowboy Reunion. Scott proposed contests and diversions that vividly recalled old scenes and old associates. The idea "took" and the Cowboys' Reunion of 1896 was organized. 10,000 spectators assembled at the first rodeo and reunion. The following year, 1897, Indian Chief Quanah Parker with three to five hundred of his braves performed war dances for the occasion. The Seymour Rodeo and Reunion continues today, and is celebrated the second weekend of each July.

In 2003 a project was launched to mark the entire Great Western Trail with cement posts being placed every six to ten miles along the trail from the Rio Grande to Ogallala, Nebraska. Oklahoma set the first post south of the city of Altus and challenged Texas to follow suit. The Vernon, Texas Rotary Club adopted the project for Texas. Oklahoma donated the first post in Texas which was set in 2004 during the 121st Doan's May Day Picnic in Vernon Texas. The mold

and the challenge was passed on to the Vernon Rotary Club. Through much effort of the Vernon Rotary Club, markers have been placed accordingly across Texas making it easy to follow history down the Great Western Trail as it stood in the 1800's. As you travel the Western Trail today, one can not be amazed how the cattle drovers traversed the different land formations and survived the many adversities to drive 7 million cattle approximately 2000 miles across the United States starting at the Southern most Mexico border leading up to the Northern most Canadian border. Visit the almost mythical cowboy legend trail called the Great Western Cattle Trail, visibly marked for your pleasure. A complete Texas guide can be viewed on the next page called The Great Western Cattle Trail Map.