

Spahomin - a native cattle company

The Spahomin Cattle Company is an Indian ranch operation run by the Upper Nicola Band. Chief Dan Manuel, the band's chief and brother of Spahomin ranch manager, Bernard Manuel, tells us about the ranch and how it got its start.

In the late 1960's, the band council conducted a study to determine what kind of economic development would best suit their reserves. Ranching turned out to be one of the top priority development projects.

Once the band, with the help of the Department of Indian Affairs, decided they were going to go ahead with ranching, work began to find funds for the project. The band received a grant from the First Citizen's Fund, and loans from the Indian Economic Development Fund and the Farm Credit Union.

The ranch began

operating in earnest in 1972 with 135 heads of cattle. Twelve years later, 320 heads roam the 22,000-acre range land which the company holds a long-term lease.

"It is strictly a cow-calf operation," explained Manuel, which means the ranch doesn't keep the calves over the winter months. The calves are sold at the B.C. Livestock Co-op in Kamloops, usually in November.

The Spahomin Cattle Co. experimented with yearling sales at one time, but, as it turned out, the expense of winter feeding did not justify that type of operation.

Chief Manuel finds that ranching "goes through a seven year cycle." Within that span there are some good and bad years. While the Upper Nicola Band's ranching operation may not reap bundles of money, it does make enough to

keep the ranch on its feet. Manuel says the ranch must be cautious with its money, however. On good years it puts aside part of the profits so that on a bad year, when beef prices are low, the ranch will have in stock enough capital to stay afloat.

Today, the ranch employs three full-time and six part-time workers. "A lot of jobs have been taken over by machine," reflects Manuel. People today are "needed to man machines."

Aside from ranching, the Spahomin Cattle Company is supporting the native 4-H Club and it built a greenhouse that is used by native students. Here, youths acquire first hand agricultural and ranching experience.

Now that B.C. Hydro installed two more power lines to supply the Douglas Lake region with additional electrici-

ty, the band is pondering the possibility of irrigating another 400 to 500 acres, bringing the total close to 900 acres under irrigation.

Today, twelve years

after the ranching operation began, the band is in the process of doing a stabilization plan to determine which direction the Spahomin Cattle Company will take in the years ahead.



Chief Dan Manuel explaining the symbols on the Spahomin Ranch map.

—Photo available at Herald Office.

FROM 1964 MERRITT HERALD FILES

Cattle rustling in the Nicola Valley

By L.E.M.

Cattle rustling is an old, old story; but, strangely, ever new. Ranchers of the Nicola Valley - a large, up-to-date, well-organized body of experienced cattlemen, are still concerned over yearly losses so much that, at their last annual meeting, they boosted the reward up to \$1,000 for information leading to the conviction of guilty persons.

I am not going to dwell on this age-old transgression but, meditating upon it, I am prompted to write a short story of recent incidents in this area, as well as some of the problems of the cattle rancher.

Last spring, at a representative meeting in the Shulus Community Hall, it was reported that, belonging to the group present, 65 head of cattle had mysteriously disappeared during the year.

Numerous suggestions were made to cope with the problem - such as hiring range riders, equipping cars with radios, establishing road blocks, getting assistance from the RCMP and Game Departments, etc.

One Shulus rancher reported a loss of six animals, one of them a

Shorthorn bull belonging to the Indian Department. As spring rolled on, W. F. "Manny" Bose, a long-time cow hand in this Valley, at present range rider for Coutlee Plateau Range Unit, rode down to the old Jerry Mellin place, a

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Another pioneer lost

By Maureen Curtis

April 15 of this year saw the passing of 96 year old Bartle Dodding, one of the last Nicola Valley pioneers. What changes he must have witnessed during the passing of time in the beautiful valley he first laid eyes on in 1901. A subdivision in Lower Nicola is named after the Dodding family.

Bartle was only 14 when he and his parents left Lancashire, England, and came to Lower Nicola (then known as Woodward) to begin a new life. His uncle had preceded them to the valley and it was his glowing reports that tempted the family to make the move.

There were only two stores and a church at what was later to become a residential community with the development of nearby Craigmont Mines in the 1960's. The population was made up of farmers and prospectors, who had long to wait before they would succeed in drawing interest to the mining potential of the valley.

Bart remembered the day in 1907 when the first C.P.R. rolled into town, because it carried a nurse who was to deliver his baby brother. The nurse was a few days late, but baby survived.

Before the railway came through, the four horse stage carriage was the principal means of transportation, freight behind hauled in by wagon. Bart Dodding witnessed the arrival of the first automobile in Lower Nicola with Archie Clemens at the wheel, dressed "all fit to kill" in riding costume and goggles.

Bart and his father operated a ranch (purchased from Harvey Woodward) and a small

sawmill. Later, Bart ran the only threshing machine in the valley.

In 1922, Bart married Beatrice Manning whose family farmed the Agate Ranch from the 1890's. They had a son, Fred, and a daughter, Barbara (now Mrs. Wilfred Pooley).

During World War I, Bart used his experience as a sawyer cutting timber and operating a sawmill for the French at Alsace-Lorraine. Having sustained serious injuries, he was discharged in 1918 and honoured by the Canadian Army for his service.

In 1958, Bart retired to a house in Merritt where

he enjoyed gardening and church activities. For 52 years he added his rich bass voice to the choir. Crippled by arthritis, as a result of his war injuries, Bart spent the last years of his life at Overlander Extended Care in Kamloops.

At his death, he was survived by his wife, son and daughter, five grandchildren and great grandchild. He was predeceased by his sister, Mary Woodward and brothers Robert, Dave, John and William.

Some of the Dodding Ranch was developed into a subdivision by that name in the 1960's. The rest is now part of the Ken Gardner Ranch.

Valley's 'French Connection' goes back to 1873

Continued From 6C

levelling of fields to facilitate irrigation. Rose may be more in debt, but he plans to be ready for the hoped-for turnaround.

"Expansion is limited by the amount of grass you can grow. I'm not going to flood the range with cattle," says Rose.

At present, Quilchena runs about 1,500 mother cows on the 33,000 acre ranch which produces an annual harvest of about 3,000 tons of hay.

Another way to increase production is by bringing in new breeds. The Roses breed their Herefords first to Red Angus and then to Charolais for hybrid vigour.

"The Hereford is very

hardy and can stand tough times. We don't know about this about the more pampered breeds," Guy adds.

Guy and Hilde have raised five children in the home they built in the 50's overlooking Nicola Lake. Steve supervises Quilchena Motors, a division of the ranch which sells and repairs today's complex farm equipment. This business was first acquired by grandfather Guichon in 1918, so that he could buy his equipment from International Harvester for a cheaper price, by eliminating the middleman. It has since blossomed into a full fledged farm equipment dealership serving the Nicola Valley.

Steve's wife, Jill, is the office manager of the local legal firm of Morelli, Chertkow, Griffiths and Hogg. Like her sister-in-law Carol, Jill has had to make a big adjustment from college and school life in Ottawa to the relatively quiet Quilchena area.

Mike prefers working with livestock and lives with his new wife in a little house near the Quilchena Hotel. Peter is studying architecture and Paul is still in high school. Ann plans to take agriculture at university after she finishes grad 12 at Merritt Senior Secondary.

"I hope they can keep the ranch going in the family," Rose concludes.



A watchful mother stands guard over her new calf at Quilchena's Triangle Ranch.

—Photo available at Herald Office.

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