

First 100 Years of the Alexander Ranch

D. Morris Blaylock

"Wagons Roll" was the order of the day for the Alexander family early one spring morning in 1886. The family was moving north from Mobette, Texas, to the south bank of the Washita River in the Texas Panhandle, Hemphill County, a long day's journey by wagon. The Alexanders camped near a Washita River crossing and began preparing to develop a home site. The initial living quarters were a dugout, where they lived until a two room frame home was constructed. The lumber for the home was hauled by wagon from Harrold, Texas, 200 miles away.

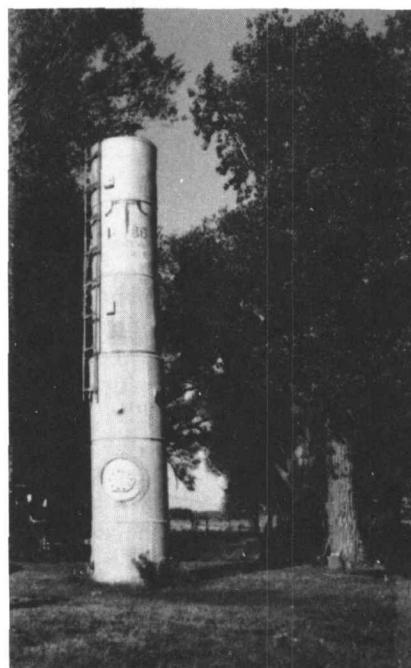


The old Alexander ranch house.

Hard work was the game plan to obtain the basics for survival—food, shelter and clothing. R.T. Alexander, the second oldest son, was only 13 years old. In 1887, R.T.'s older brother left home to become a minister, leaving R.T. as head of the house and in charge of the ranch. He worked hard to obtain food, shelter, and clothing. He drove wagon teams used in tearing out an ill-fated east-west drift fence that was constructed to keep range cattle from drifting back south in the winter. He sold hay to the Army Post at Mobeetie and to the Santa Fe Railroad Co. that was laying a rail line to Canadian, Texas. He also gathered and sold buffalo bones for \$8 per ton at Canadian. R.T. attended school in Los Angeles, California, from 1889 to 1891. In 1891, he started

teaching at the Cataline School located on the ranch. The salary was \$40 per month for a school term of five months.

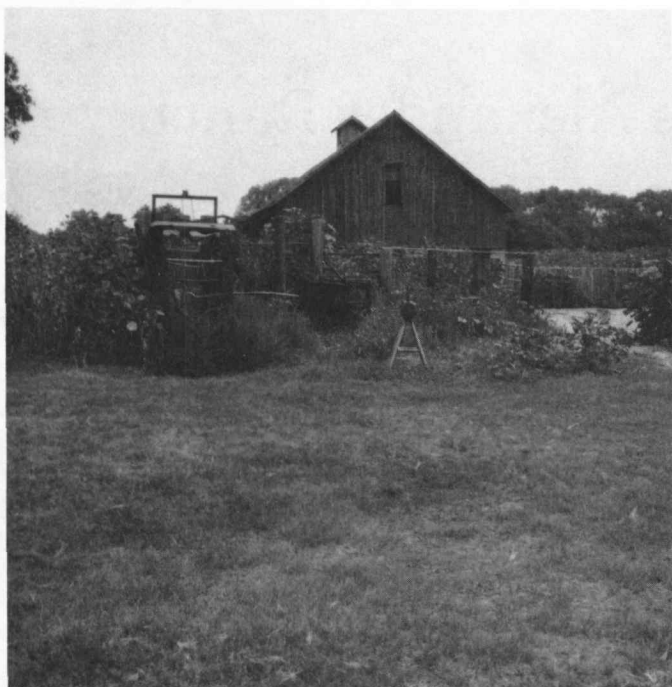
Cattle for the ranch were first purchased in 1887. A car load of spotted cattle were shipped via railroad from Midlothian to Clarendon, Texas, then trailed 100 miles to the Alexander ranch. In 1902, R.T. got into the Hereford cattle business with the purchase of 10 unregistered cows for \$15 per head. The



Water tower near the old Alexander ranch house.

next year he purchased three Gudgel and Simpson registered bulls and another registered bull at Amarillo, Texas. In 1909, the Alexander Ranch purchased 54 head of registered Herefords. This was the beginning of the excellent Hereford cattle produced on the ranch today. This line has furnished foundation cattle for different ranches.

In 1909, R.T. attended the Kansas City Royal Livestock Feeder Show. His comment about the feeder steers was, "I have calves by my Gudgel and Simpson bulls that are this good." The next year R.T. took a 20 head load of his feeder steers to the Royal Show and placed third. Since that time, the ranch has exhibited excellent Herefords at top livestock shows. The most recent was at the 1986 Fort Worth, Texas Livestock Show in January, where the Alexander Ranch entered two pens of heifers in the Texas Hereford Association



Barn constructed in 1914.



Three upstream flood control dams were constructed about 1960.

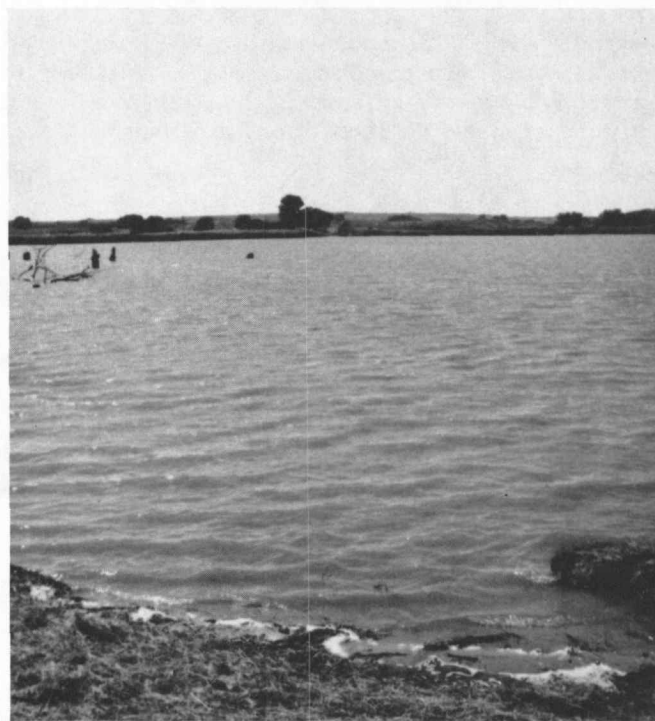
and sale. One pen brought top dollar in the carload sales.

While R.T. was improving his cattle and ranching business, he was also expanding the ranch land holdings. The original land was obtained by a patent for a section (640 acres) from the state of Texas less 3 acres taken out for a cemetery. Additional adjoining land was purchased when available and finally encompassed 8 1/2 sections along the Washita River. Soils along the river are sandy changing to loamy and clayey on the uplands.

The ranch is located in the eastern edge of the short-grass lands but has short, medium, and tall grasses. The average rainfall is about 24 inches but there are wide fluctuations in yearly amounts. Near the humid border, several years of above-average rainfall may encourage tall grasses and convert the short-grass land to tall grassland. Overall, about 18 1/2 acres of the grassland will support one animal unit (AU).

Before Texas became a state, the plains buffalo along with the pronghorn antelope and white-tail deer were the main grazing animals in the Texas Panhandle area. The main game birds on the ranch in the early days were the lesser-prairie chicken, bob-white quail and the Rio Grande turkey. Early day predators were the cougar, coyote, and grey wolf. Because of people pressure, almost all game and predator species have decreased except the coyote. A new wildlife species has invaded the ranch, the armadillo. The coyote and the armadillo will probably be around for a long time.

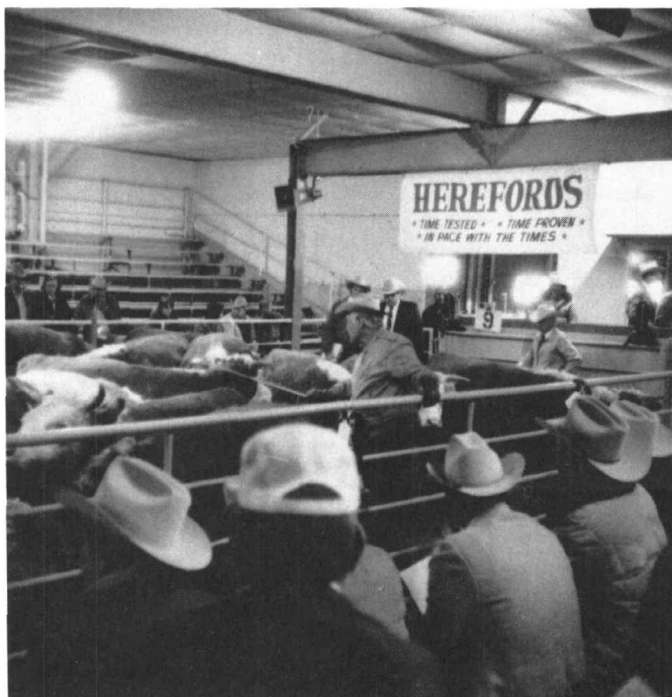
In 1946, R.T.'s son, R.T. "Ted" Alexander became the managing partner of the Alexander Ranch. He has continued to improve the ranch and the business of ranching. Three upstream flood control structures and a lake have been constructed on the ranch. Ted wanted to share a part of the ranch way of life with friends and neighbors at a fair price and ventured into the ranch recreation and hunting business. The lake was stocked with fish. Recreation and hunting on the ranch were not compatible with the cattle business and



Lake Alexander.

so the gate was closed on the ranch recreation and hunting venture. In addition to improving the Alexander Ranch and their Hereford business, Ted also contributed work and knowledge as an active member in the Texas Hereford Association.

In 1956, R.T. Alexander was made an Honorary Member of



Ted Alexander showing a pen of registered Hereford heifers at the Fort Worth, Texas, Livestock Show.



Ted Alexander checking his Hereford heifers.

the Texas Hereford Association and in January 1986, Ted Alexander was also designated as Honorary Member. It takes a special kind of person such as Mr. R.T. Alexander to succeed in pioneering in ranching and establish a herd of pure bred registered Herefords. It also takes a special kind of

person like R.T. "Ted" Alexander to follow in his father's footsteps and improve the ranch and Hereford beef business. It will take similar innovative progressive management, hard work and foresight for the Alexander Ranch to succeed another 100 years. ●

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