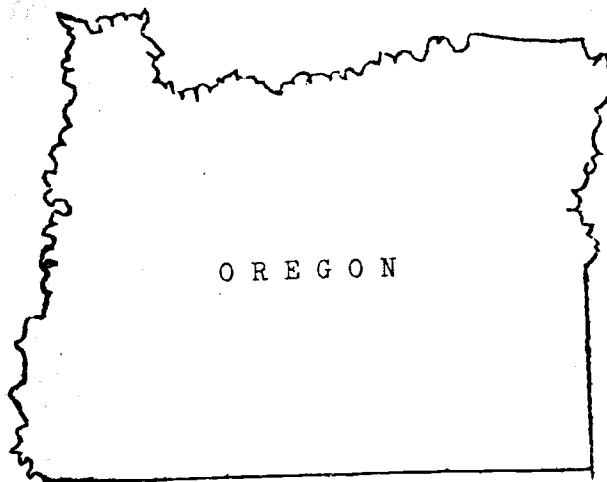


OREGON ODDITIES

AND

ITEMS OF INTEREST



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WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION OF OREGON  
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Portland, Oregon

The items in this bulletin, selected from the material compiled by the Writers' Project and the Historical Records Survey of the Works Progress Administration, are representative of the significant collections being made by these nation-wide programs.

The Historical Records Survey is inventorying all sources of early Oregon history, including county and state records, town and church archives, historic cemeteries, old manuscripts and imprints, old printing presses, monuments and relics, private diaries, letters, and memoirs, historic buildings, and Indian records and lore.

The chief undertaking of the Works Progress Administration Writers' Project has been the American Guide Series of Books. In Oregon as in all other states the work includes the state Guide, designed to acquaint Americans with America and to present to the visitor the history, industry, recreational advantages and scenic attractions of the state. The Oregon Guide, now in the final stages of editing will soon be added to the list of those already published which includes Idaho: A Guide in Word and Picture; Maine: A Guide "Down East"; Massachusetts: A Guide to its Places and People; New Hampshire: A Guide to the Granite State; Washington: City and Capital; Philadelphia: A Guide to the Birthplace of a Nation; Delaware: A Guide to the First State; Mississippi: A Guide to the Magnolia State; Rhode Island: A Guide to the Smallest State; South Dakota: A South Dakota Guide; North Dakota: A Guide to the Northern Prairie State; Vermont: A Guide to the Green Mountain State.

In addition to all the state guides, interesting publications now available include American Stuff; Cape Cod Pilot; Hoosier Tall Stories; The Hopi; Italians of New York; New Orleans City Guide; Whaling Masters; Who's Who in the Zoo; and Wisconsin Indian Lore.

Publications now in preparation by the Oregon Writers' Project include the Oregon Guide, an Oregon Almanac for 1939, Old Towns of Oregon, and Fire Prevention in Portland.

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## STOCK BRANDS

Stock raising has furnished the background for many western stories, poems and songs. In the early days the large ranch owners numbered their cattle by the tens of thousands. These large ranches have passed from the picture, but cattle bands numbering from 1,000 to 5,000 are still numerous.

So long as there are cattle, brands are necessary as signs of ownership. They are the cattleman's coat-of-arms. Ranches become known by the brand rather than by the owner's name. Although many ranches have changed hands since the original owners selected their brands, the cattle and the ranches are still known by the original brand titles.

Brands originated in the early 1800s. While the cattle "barons", so called because of their vast sections of land and enormous bands of cattle, controlled ranges large enough to make good sized counties, there was no need to use brands. But when the "little men" took up homesteads and ran their cattle on these ranges, there began to be trouble which was often settled by gun-fire at the fall round-ups.

Then cattle rustlers appeared on the scene. Branding as a means of protection against them became a necessity.

The advent of the railroad made cattle rustling easier. Short drives to the railroad made it possible for the cattle thieves to steal, drive away and sell thousands of head every season.

"Wild-cat" brands appeared everywhere. Cattlemen went to the western states' legislatures and demanded that only one brand of a kind be issued in a state and that all brands be recorded.

At first Oregon stock brands were recorded with the clerks of each county. However, this did not eliminate duplications and conflicts.

In 1915, W. H. Lytle, state veterinarian of Oregon, and the Advisory Committee of the Oregon Cattle and Horse Raisers' Association worked out and adopted the following rules as a means of adjusting the conflicts among stock raisers:

"In comparing brands of those that conflict, the brand which has been on record the longest will receive preference over other brands which conflict.

"Brands partly similar but on different parts of the animal will be allowed to be used.

"Brands which are duplicated and must be changed, owing to conflict, must first be vented.

"Owners of conflicting brands will be notified and will be advised of all other owners, so they may negotiate with them for any adjustment desired.

"By terms of the brand law all brands must be used on some stated place."

In 1917 the Oregon State Legislature adopted a law, which provides that brand records be left exclusively with the state veterinarian, who, however, must furnish the clerk and the stock inspector of each county with a record of the brands of all owners within their respective counties.

According to the Oregon law the exclusive right to use a brand in the state exists indefinitely once it is properly recorded with the state veterinarian. The owner, if he so desires, may by bill of sale or other legal means, transfer the ownership of the brand to some other person.

In the early days a stock owner, when registering his brand, was required to send to the county clerk a facsimile burned on a piece of leather. At present a drawing of the brand is registered in a book with a description of where the brand is placed on the animal.

Both cattle and horses were often marked by brand and by crops in the ear. Hogs were most always identified by ear marks. Nearly all animals are branded when young.

Along in the 1870s and later, the newspapers published, free of charge, descriptions of brands of their paid subscribers. Example: "J. R. Hicks, Birch Creek; cattle, three dewlaps, crop and hole in left ear. Horses, 7 on left shoulder."

Some cattle owners branded their stock between the toes in an effort to catch rustlers.

The earliest brands were recorded in Clackamas county. Descriptions of these

were registered with the county clerk, a typical registration being that of Philip Foster whose brand description, dated October 30, 1854, read: "Hogs marked, a crop off the left ear and a slit in the right. Cattle marked with a slit in the left ear and branded on the horns with P.F."

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The best brands are simple, distinct, easily read and hard to alter. Many figures and letters can easily be changed by rustlers. For example HK could be transformed into BR with little difficulty.

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According to the old-time cowhands the proper way to make a brand is to heat the iron "to a rich, red glow, shake off the ashes, and slap her on and let her burn, rock the branding iron gently to and fro, bearing hard and setting it sharp and square."

The hip, the cheek of the rump, the jaw, the shoulder and the neck are all suitable spots for a brand, but no place offers such a broad smooth surface as the hind quarter or the side near the backbone.

Copper branding irons are better than wrought iron because the copper retains heat longer. The thinner the iron the more quickly it can be heated. The face of the branding iron should be smooth, with its edges sharp and square, to make a lasting and distinct brand. Rusty irons should never be used nor time wasted using an iron that is not red hot.

The brand claims the brute so it should be distinct. Indistinct marks lead to confusion, dispute and ill-feeling. Most of the fighting and killing of the early cattle days was the result of disputes over brands.

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Hides, bearing brands, are often used as evidence in both civil and criminal law suits. These exhibits may be placed under seal in some refrigerated space, but sometimes they are filed away in a basement vault, or room. In such cases the vaults soon acquire an extremely offensive odor. Recently a field worker of the Historical Records Survey found such a green hide keeping her company in a county courthouse basement vault.

Laws today provide that any movement of herds of cattle, sheep, or horses from one county to another must be reported by the owner, who must file with the county clerk the brands of the stock so moved.

When individuals or transportation companies move small bands of stock they must show bills of sale to stock inspectors, state police and sheriffs, if this is demanded.

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The modern cattle rustler does not ride on horseback but drives an automobile, swoops down upon the cattle at night, and slaughters his booty.

The law designed to protect cattle from the raids of motor car rustlers are generally referred to as the "Gasoline Cowboy Laws."

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In the gay '90's, a favorite pastime of the Yakima Indians was lariatting coyotes and pressing the red hot brand of ID (Indian Department) upon their flanks. Many of the animals were frequently seen slinking about the Yakima Indian Reservation. It was claimed by some spinners of tall tales that the sport became so popular that young coyotes were born bearing the brand.




For centuries tattooing has been used to brand slaves, criminals, and other persons.


Poultry raisers throughout many sections of the United States tattoo brands between the toes of fowls as a means of stopping thefts.


Stock brands have no common alphabet; each cattleman evolved his own to suit his fancy. As cattlemen are notoriously individualistic it is small wonder that, to any great extent, brands defy definite cataloging.

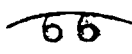
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A study of history reveals that human beings were branded for various purposes since time immemorial. The ancient Greeks branded their slaves with the letter "Dolta," being the first letter in the word "Doulos," meaning slave. The Romans branded slaves, criminals, and gladiators. It was the custom to brand the faces of criminals with a hot iron. Constantine abolished the practice of disfiguring the face and limited branding to the hand or arms.


-3-



A favorite brand is the Rocking Chair  Another is the flying brand, such as the Flying Ladder  or the Flying W Lazy J 


A stock man would read this brand  as V dash open A.


A parochial school, which owned large holdings of cattle, adopted as its brand the Cross Half Circle 

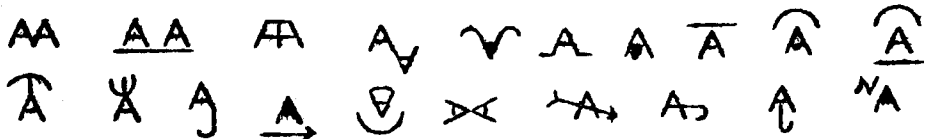
Brands are swinging when supported by a quarter circle. Swinging 66 

Swinging Lazy H 

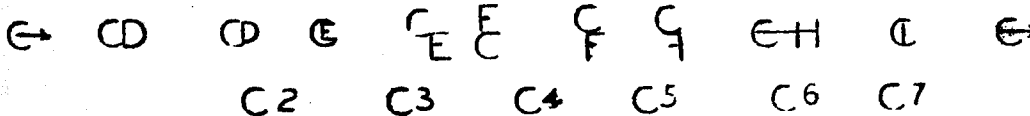
An unattached quarter circle is read Quarter Circle J  Or Half Circle P 

A quarter or half circle below modifies the symbol. It becomes T Half Circle 

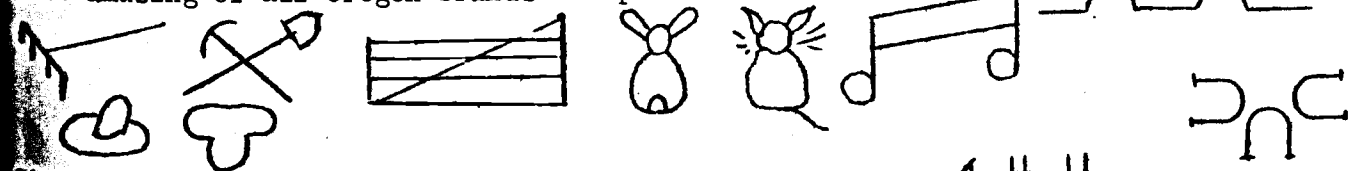
If attached, it is rocking, as Rocking H 

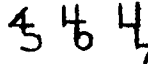
Of the many hundreds of brands recorded with the State Veterinarian, the letter A is most popular. 


The C or a half circle is shown in many variations in the registered brands.



Most amusing of all Oregon brands are pictorial.



Stockmen often combine the number four with other numbers. 

Whether the stockman calls it a circle or an O, this symbol occurs in many variations. 

Many registered Oregon brands are simple marks such as the following:



The letter X vies with A in popularity.

