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## Indian Cattle / Cattle Stealing / Cattle

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SEASONAL SHIFTS-AUTUMN COLOR  
Chris Edmonds

## INDIAN CATTLE

What did a Scot-Cherokee trader and a college-educated easterner have in common? Ties to the region's first source of marketable beef cattle.

The area's first cattle ranchers weren't Texans or Mexicans. They were the displaced American Indians who had been forced into Indian Territory, the land that conspicuously stood between Texas longhorns and the railroads.

Like Jesse Chisholm himself, the cattle he traded were products of a cultural collision. By the 1850s, just two decades after removal from their ancestral home, the Cherokees had amassed large herds of their own variety, a cross between Spanish and English breeds.

During the Civil War, when the Union government put a call out for beef, so-called "Indian Cattle" became targets for profiteers. Like Euro-Americans, American Indians split alliances between the North and the South, with each side viewing the other's cattle as contraband. With the promise of large profits, even federal and state legal action could not keep some Kansans, including some of the characters later tied to the Texas cattle trade, from raiding the herds of Union-loyal tribes.

Jesse Chisholm, who amassed as many as 3,000 head of cattle at his ranch in present-day Wichita, was among those who sold cattle to the U.S. Government. After the war, he was instrumental in negotiating the Medicine Lodge Treaty, a deal that would clear the way for the railroads and cattle trails, further diminish tribal lands, and put an end to the traditional way of life for Plains Peoples.

As they worked to protect both their decimated herds and grasslands, Cherokees turned to an unlikely ally. In 1880, they hired the man who transformed the cattle trade into the cattle industry.

—Joseph McCoy

## CATTLE STEALING

*The Daily Kansas Tribune*  
11 March 1865

*The Cherokee and Choctaw Indians in the territory south of us, before the present war, were in a flourishing condition. Many of them had large and well improved farms, and were very thrifty stock raisers. With the mild climate of their country stock was very easily raised and increased very rapidly. But little was required to winter a large herd of cattle. Indeed, they could winter quite well without hay or fodder.*

*The present war very sadly divided these Indians. One portion gave their adherence to the Slaveocracy, being either slaveholders themselves or in sympathy with those who were, while the other portion gave firm adherence to the Union cause. This division rent and scattered these once rich and powerful descendants of the aborigines of this country. Their farms were left to go to waste. Their cattle were turned out to fare as they might. They run wild very soon, and finding ample feed during*

*the winter as well as summer, they have increased so that thousands of cattle are running wild in the Cherokee country.*

*It may be asked, To whom do these immense herds belong? This question is very easily answered. A part of them belongs to the Union Indians, and the other portion belongs to the rebel Indians. If it is said these rebels like others have forfeited all claims to this property by their taking arms against the Government, then it is very evident the Government is justly entitled to the rebel portion.*

*Nothing can be clearer than this. A wholesale scheme of driving these cattle in small herds, or hiring certain Indians to drive them out into our settlements, has been going on largely. Not a few avaricious gentlemen have been engaged in what they denominate cattle dealing, but the Government calls it cattle stealing, and the most vigorous measures are going forward now to put a final stop to this disgraceful pilfering.*

*There are strong symptoms of a panic among these gentlemen of "fast cattle." As soon as they are detected, they are put into irons and held in close confinement. Many are implicated in this nefarious traffic, who*

*have claimed heretofore to be among the best classes of society.*

*We met one of the most intelligent and reliable citizens of Emporia yesterday, who said the general sentiment of the people of Southern Kansas is decidedly opposed to this cattle stealing, and that they have a detective in Emporia who cannot be bribed or bought, and the good work of ferreting out and punishing all engaged in this stealing business is sure to go on. We hope most sincerely all who are directly or indirectly implicated in this villainous business, will meet their righteous business, and thus a check to put effectually to the business. That is what should have been done long ago. Better late, however, than never.*

## CATTLE

*Emporia Weekly News*  
6 August 1864

*We have several times alluded to the cattle speculations which are now going on in the Southern and Southwestern part of this State. We have nothing that*

*would warrant us in making charges, but if current reports are anything like true, there is a demand for something to be done on the part of the Government, to put a stop to it, and that speedily [sic]. Our Southern frontier is swarming with these speculators. And one report is that 12,000 head of cattle have passed north this summer. We are informed that they are being driven out of the Indian country and Texas, in droves of thousands by Indians from the plains, and that white men pay them for doing it, and they immediately run them north. If the rebels in Indian Territory and Texas have forfeited their right to their property it does not belong to cattle speculators but to the Government.*

*If half the reports we hear are true, the subject is one that ought to be attended to at once.*

*This thing will certainly bring trouble upon Southern Kansas from the Texans and Indians, in the future. They will not submit to having their stock driven off without retaliation.*

*We understand that General Blunt, the new commander of the District, proposes to put a stop to these transactions immediately.*