

LIVESTOCK AT ROCK LEDGE RANCH, 1874-1900

By

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Introduction

This study was undertaken to determine from available historical records the quantity, types, and breeds of livestock that existed at Rock Ledge Ranch while under the ownership of Robert Chambers, with a particular emphasis on the year 1895. This year was designated a priority because of existing interpretive themes at White House Ranch Historic Site which focus on the year 1895 in telling the story of a working ranch/farm in the Pike's Peak region. The study is a part and preliminary step of a much larger project to develop a livestock plan for future interpretive programming at White House Ranch.

I initially determined that El Paso County tax and assessment records would be the best sources for information on the quantity and types of livestock owned by Chambers. Yet my first efforts at examining these records revealed that those for the Chambers' time period were scattered, incomplete, and, when dealing with County offices, somewhat difficult to obtain. Despite these obstacles, however, I was able to locate and copy tax assessment records for several years in the 1870s and 1880s. These came from El Paso County Tax Schedules in the possession of the Penrose Public Library. Beginning in 1883, the Tax Schedules also included a statement of agricultural statistics which

occasionally helped to clarify the information recorded elsewhere in the Schedules. Additionally, I received from the El Paso County Treasurer's Office a copy of a page from a volume entitled "Agricultural Statistics" for the year 1892 which included statistics for Robert Chambers, presumably gathered from the Tax Schedule of that same year. Unfortunately, however, I have been unable to locate any records, whether Tax Schedules or agricultural statistics, pertaining to Robert Chambers for the year 1895. I feel relatively certain, though, that there is a good chance that the Tax Schedules for that year still exist and future inquiries at the El Paso County Assessor's Office may yet turn them up.

Numerous other sources, including U.S. Census records, U.S. Department of Agriculture reports, and Colorado promotional literature from the late 19th century, were also consulted for this study. Consequently, while we may not have records for every year that Chambers operated Rock Ledge Ranch, I believe we have enough information to give us a good understanding of what livestock he had, including poultry, during most of his tenure on the land and to make some conclusions about its role on the Ranch that can be incorporated into the current interpretation and interpretive programming at White House Ranch Historic Site.

I have broken the study into sections covering individually each type of livestock found in the Tax Schedules and other records for Robert Chambers. In order to ease future research, all records containing agricultural information for Robert

Chambers that were used for this study were photocopied and are attached to this study as Appendix I.

Horses

In the first available Tax Schedule for Robert Chambers, 1875, the only livestock claimed is that found under the category of "American Horses." Chambers indicated that he had two horses and estimated their value at \$200.00. We can speculate, perhaps, that each horse was worth approximately \$100.00. In 1878, Chambers listed two animals under the category "American Horses and Colts" with a total valuation of \$80.00 (under-assessed?). The following year he again listed two animals under the same category but this time with a total valuation of \$140.00. The next available Tax Schedule for Chambers, the year 1881, includes additional categories besides "American Horses" with all categories containing several sub-headings indicating the ages of the animals. The other categories are "Half Breeds" and "Ponies and Bronchos." Chambers does not indicate owning any American horses or half breeds but does list four animals under the category "Ponies and Bronchos." There is one listed under the sub-heading "One year old and under" with a valuation of \$5.00 and three under the sub-heading "Four yrs. old and over, broke and brood mares" with a total valuation of \$75.00. In 1884, Chambers lists three animals "Four years old and over, broke and brood mares" under the category of "Half Breeds." The total valuation is \$105.00. The next year, 1885, there are four

animals again under the category "Ponies and Bronchos." They are "Four years old and over, broke and brood mares" and worth an estimated \$125.00. It is possible, considering the close valuations for 1884 and 1885, that Chambers may have mistakenly indicated he owned half breeds in 1884 when he actually owned broncos. The only other available record for Chambers identifying livestock ownership after 1885 found thus far is a volume of agricultural statistics containing a listing for Chambers for 1892. Under the category of "Horses" there is no entry, signifying that Chambers did not own any horses in that year, or, more accurately, at the time the statistic was gathered.²

I have been unable to come up with a satisfactory definition for the term "American Horses" found on the El Paso County Tax Schedules. The term could include almost any animal native to the United States, although it probably fits best those of improved breeding. Frank Fossett writes in his Colorado, its Gold and Silver Mines, Farms and Stock Ranges, and Health and Pleasure Resorts, first published in 1879, that

There is a remarkably large amount of money invested in horse flesh in Colorado, and the average quality of the stock is very high in some quarters. The liveryies and private stables (especially the latter) of such cities as Denver, Leadville and Colorado Springs are of a very high order. On the farms are large numbers of horses, some of them splendid draft, work, or saddle animals. Good blood is as manifest there as among the fast trotters of the towns.²

The "American" horses Chambers owned in the 1870s were likely improved domestic horses of a recognizable breed or type (i.e.,

trotter, saddle), especially considering the value of the animals in 1875, approximately \$100.00 apiece. The category of "American" horses could have also included blooded or purebred animals (animals with pedigrees). But while available in the West at this time, purebred animals would probably have been more expensive and would have been used primarily for breeding purposes. With only two animals from 1875 to 1879, it seems unlikely that Chambers was doing any breeding of livestock.³

It is very interesting that beginning in 1881 Chambers no longer claims any American horses but instead owns animals under the category "Ponies and Bronchos." Broncos were common in the West and were considerably cheaper than American horses.⁴ A writer for the Philadelphia Telegraph stated in 1872 that

The bronchos, or Spanish horses, are a small breed, but they are very strong and active, and have great endurance. Immense herds of them are bred by the old settlers of Southern California from whom droves numbering from one thousand to two thousand are bought at prices ranging from \$5 to \$10 per head, and driven into the territories for sale. I saw during my stay at Laramie [Wyoming], several such droves, from which three-year-old breeding mares were bought at \$25 per head.⁵

The broncos owned by Chambers were likely used for some of the same purposes on his ranch as his American horses, from saddle to draft. Although described as smaller than the American horse, broncos were still probably capable of pulling a small plow or a mowing machine. An 1894 catalog for a Denver implement company advertised "Pony and Light Steel Plows," presumably intended for ponies or small horses. The catalog claimed that "These Plows are well adapted to corn, stubble and sod land, and fruit

orchards."⁶ Chambers had three acres in orchards by 1885.⁷

The half breed horses Chambers claimed to own in 1884, although already mentioned above as a possible error on Chambers' Tax Schedule, are also worth treating in more detail. The term half breed is probably very close to the term "graded," which essentially means an animal resulting from the pairing of an improved male with an unimproved female.⁸ In this case, it could be the cross between an American horse and a bronco. Breeding and the improvement of horses in the West was quite extensive at this time. As early as 1872 bronco mares were being bred with stallions of "thoroughbred imported stock."⁹ And in 1885 a report on the livestock industry in Colorado stated that the "quality [of horses] is being improved very much of late by the importation of animals from the East, principally of Percheron blood, which are crossed with native stock." The report goes on to explain that the native stock "originally came from Texas with the cattle imported from that State, and that class of horse is still used on the range for handling range cattle." The reporter is actually describing the bronco, although he states that these native horses were called "cow ponies."¹⁰

As we have no agricultural records for Robert Chambers from the year 1895, I can only speculate on the types of horses he may have owned, if he indeed owned any, at that date. Several breeds would have been available to him by this time. The premium list for the 1890 Pueblo State Fair included classes for six distinct breeds, both American and foreign.¹¹ But again, it is unlikely

that Chambers would have owned an exhibit-quality or purebred animal for work on his ranch. It is more probable that he would have been using less expensive animals. The following classified advertisements from the Colorado Springs Gazette give one a good idea of some of the horse types available in 1894 and 1895. Notice that only one of the classifieds specifically mentions a purebred animal.

For Sale -- Work horse, cheap or will trade for typewriter or bicycle. W.H. Bacon [Aug. 25, 1894]

For Sale -- A fine sorrel team, white manes and tails, seven years old, and weigh about 1200 each. Can be seen at the El Paso Stables, 9 and 11 North Cascade. [Aug. 25, 1894]

For Sale -- A black horse; drives single or double and saddle; in good condition. Call at Herbert Hunter's, rear of No. 17 Pike's Peak. [Aug. 25, 1894]

For Sale -- Four-year-old, thoroughbred Forigers [?], all bays. Can be seen at Oakhurst Ranch, north of city, or address 311 North Cascade ave. [Aug. 25, 1894]

For Sale -- At a sacrifice, horse, buggy and harness (horse, saddle and draft). Address J.I.H., Gaze te. [Sept. 14, 1895]

For Sale -- Big team for sale or trade. Weight 1100 to 1200. Surrey and an English cart. A road horse and a road cart. 14 South Tejon st. [Sept. 14, 1895]

For Sale -- Bay mare, 6 years old, trot or lope; also drives. Price \$20. Address room 18, Alamo hotel. [Sept. 14, 1895]

For Sale -- Horse, buckbord [sic] and harness; also fine young single driver and one large team bay mares, weight 1300 pounds. Call at North End Boarding stable. [Sept. 14, 1895]

Cattle

In reminiscing about the early years at Rock Ledge Ranch,

Mary Chambers DeLong, a daughter of Robert Chambers, wrote that

There was...much tough going for Father. First, the terrible scourge of grasshoppers which lasted for three years all over the Middlewest. On account of this, he bought milk cows and ran a dairy. The grasshoppers devoured every spear of green and he had to buy feed for the cows.¹²

Locusts struck Colorado in 1875 and 1876.¹³ The first available Tax Schedule for Robert Chambers after those years is that of 1878 and his dairy herd is extant at that time. In this particular year, two areas appeared on the Tax Schedule in which to list cattle and horses. One of the areas had only a single "umbrella" category for cattle, which read "Cattle -- American, Half-breed, Texas." Under this category Chambers listed just two animals with a valuation of \$40.00. In the other area, however, there were five separate categories for cattle with sub-headings indicating the ages of the animals. The categories were Thoroughbred Cattle, Dairy Cattle, American Cattle, Graded Cattle, and Texas or Mexican Cattle. Chambers had ten dairy cattle that were "Over 3 mos. and yearlings" and twenty "4 yr. olds." Under the category for Texas or Mexican cattle Chambers listed two four-year-olds. These were probably the animals which appeared in the other area of the form that were valued at \$40.00. Unfortunately, no valuations are given for the animals in the more extensive listing.¹⁴

In the Tax Schedule for 1879 only the one general category, "Cattle -- American, Half-breed, Texas," is offered for recording cattle. Chambers listed 38 animals, but above the category handwrote the word "Mixed," apparently indicating he had some animals

of each class. The total valuation for the 38 cattle was \$500.00. Two years later, Chambers' herd had dropped to ten animals. In his Tax Schedules for 1884 and 1885 Chambers listed only one dairy cow. However, in the 1885 Colorado Census Chambers was listed as having two animals under the category "Neat Cattle and Their Products." One animal was marked in the column designated "Milch cows" and an additional animal was indicated in the column designated "Other." The last record thus far discovered for Chambers, the agricultural statistics for El Paso County for 1892, does not show Chambers owning any cattle at that time.¹⁵

The dairy cattle Robert Chambers purchased for his ranch in the late 1870s could very well have included a mixture of regular dairy breeds and crosses with range stock or Texas cattle. The following article, which appeared in the Colorado Springs newspaper Out West in 1872 illustrates the interest in improved dairy herds at that early date:

Improving Our Dairy Stock -- The dairy interests of [the] territory are being gradually developed by the introduction and breeding of some of the finest cattle in the country....Yesterday afternoon it was our good fortune to spend a couple of hours on the stock rancho of our friends Messrs. Scott, Ward & Porter, some two miles northwest of Denver, between the Platte and Cherry creek. These gentlemen have 640 acres of fine range, finely located, and have already stocked their property with one of the choicest and largest herds of Jersey and Ayreshire cows in America....There are in the herd 42 Jersey cows, and 3 bulls of the same class, 10 Ayreshire cows and 2 bulls, all blooded animals, together with a number of graded Durhams, Ayreshires and Jerseys all noted for their fine qualities. Three of the Jersey cows are imported. The Jersey cows stand pre-eminent for their excellent and rich milk, while for quantity the Ayreshires cannot be excelled. It is

the intention of the gentlemen owning this herd to build up a first class dairy stock for this Rocky mountain and far western country, and to breed a superior class of milch cows for city use....The cattle now on their rancho were purchased in Maine, Massachussetts [sic] and Kansas, many of them from the herd of J.O. Sheldon, the acknowledged leading short-horn dealer of America. Their breed places them at the head of all dairy stock, while their pedigree is unquestionably first-class....²⁶

The efforts at establishing dairy herds in Colorado quickly met with success. It was estimated in an 1885 report on the livestock industry in Colorado that 60,450 cattle were "devoted to dairy purposes." That same report stated that the "most acceptable dairy breeds for Colorado are Jerseys, Holsteins and Aldernays."²⁷ Jerseys and Holsteins appear to have remained popular in the State, as evidenced by the following article, "Colorado Springs Cattle at Pueblo," published in the Colorado Springs Weekly Gazette of October 11, 1890:

Pueblo, October 8. -- The Colorado Springs Garden company exhibit of Jersey and Holstein dairy cattle is the finest ever seen on the fair grounds. Their Jerseys made a clean sweep of all the prizes. In the Holsteins they got first prize on Lady Baker and her calf, and on the other awards the honors are divided.

Based on the above information, it is quite likely that Chambers' dairy herd included some Jersey cattle. The Texas cattle he indicated owning in 1878 were what are today known as longhorns. These were beef cattle but he may have been crossing them with his dairy animals. After 1881 Chambers apparently got out of the dairy business, as he only owned one milk cow after that date. This animal was probably retained from the original herd as a family milk cow. It is surprising that this animal

does not show up on the agricultural-statistics for 1892. If Chambers did acquire another milk cow after that date, however, it might have been like the one offered in the following classified from The Colorado City Iris of March 28, 1891:

Cow For Sale. A two-thirds Jersey cow for sale. Fresh six weeks; gives 3 1/2 gallons of milk per day. \$30 will buy her. Call at this office

Swine

Of all the records consulted, only the Tax Schedule for 1878 shows Robert Chambers owning any swine. Chambers indicated that he owned two swine with a total valuation of \$20.00.¹⁸ Hogs had come to Colorado both from the New Mexican settlements and also over the plains from the East. In 1861 a drove of 252 hogs reached Denver from the Missouri River, "probably the largest drove ever brought that distance."¹⁹ In 1885 it was reported that the hog "industry has been very much increased and improved the past year by bringing in many animals from the East of the best grades."²⁰

As Chambers appears only to have owned swine for a very short period in the late 1870s, it is unlikely that he owned any swine in 1895. If he did, they could have been of several different breeds. The Pueblo State Fair premium list for 1890 had nine classes for distinct breeds of swine, including Poland China, Chester White and Victoria.²¹ An advertisement in the El Paso County Democrat of June 15, 1895, offered "Thorough-bred Poland China pigs, \$10 Each." They were offered for sale by H.T. O'Brien, a Colorado Springs saddler.

Poultry

The only record of poultry owned by Robert Chambers comes from the 1885 Colorado Census. The reason for this, I believe, is that this is the only record which specifically asks for an accounting of poultry. Neither the Tax Schedules nor the Agricultural Statistics of El Paso County have a column for poultry. The Tax Schedules do have a category titled "All other animals," but Chambers does not list anything in this area on any of the Schedules consulted, including the Tax Schedule for 1885. Perhaps poultry were not considered "Animals." There is, of course, the additional possibility that Chambers was simply ignoring this particular category on the Schedule.

The 1885 Colorado Census shows Chambers owning a total of forty "Barn yard" poultry as of June 1, 1885, exclusive of spring hatching. The eggs produced in 1884 were listed as forty dozen.²² Unfortunately, the census does not tell us what types and breeds of poultry were considered to be "Barn yard." The poultry class of the Pueblo State Fair premium list for 1890 includes a division for "all varieties of pure bred Turkeys, Geese, Ducks, Swans, Pea Fowls, Guinea Fowls" as well as a large division for chickens. Thus, it may be that Chambers owned other types of fowl besides chickens, especially as the number of eggs produced in a year, forty dozen, seems somewhat low if all forty of the birds claimed were chickens.

Of the different types of fowl available in Colorado, I was

only able to obtain detailed information as to breeds for chickens. The Pueblo State Fair premium list presented several classes of chickens under which were included numerous varieties. The classes were Asiatics, Americans, Dorkings, Hamburgs, Spanish, French, Polish, Games, Bantams and Game Bantams.²³ The chickens Robert Chambers owned in 1885 could have included any of the above types. If he owned chickens in 1895, and there is probably a good chance that he still did, they may have included some of the breeds advertised in the two classifieds below from the Colorado Springs Gazette for June 5, 1895:

For Sale -- Eggs for hatching from thoroughbred Plymouth Rocks and Brown Leghorns, \$1 per 13. Apply 511 N. Wahsatch.

For Sale -- A few settings of eggs from the celebrated Buff Leghorn fowls -- the finest fowls ever brought to the city: eggs \$1 for 13. Also Black and Brown Leghorns: \$1 per setting. Call on or address J.O. McCracken, 615 E. Cimarron.

Livestock Not Recorded

The following types of livestock, while included as categories on the available Tax Schedules and other records, were not indicated among Robert Chambers' personal property during the time period studied: mules, asses, sheep, and goats. I will not venture into speculation as to why these animals were not owned by Chambers. However, I will make one comment in regard to mules. While researching the horse industry in Colorado, I came across several statistics that showed the mule to be much less common in the State than the horse. In 1889, for example, there was estimated to be 130,033 horses in Colorado while the estimate

for mules was only 8,000.²⁴ Additionally, I did not come across any advertisements for the sale of mules in my brief survey of local newspapers.

Conclusions

Other than those years in which Robert Chambers operated a dairy, it is obvious that his efforts to derive a livelihood from Rock Ledge Ranch were not centered on livestock. The same records consulted for this study, however, do present good evidence of what was probably the primary source of income for Chambers and almost certainly was the major agricultural endeavor at the ranch in the late 1880s and '90s. That was apple and small fruit growing. In 1885 Chambers reported that he had three acres in orchards and three acres in small fruits. From his small fruits he had harvested 300 quarts of currants, 150 quarts of gooseberries, fifty quarts of raspberries and twenty quarts of strawberries. Seven years later these figures make a significant jump. At this time, 1892, Chambers had doubled his orchard acreage to six. His small fruit acreage remained the same but his harvest had increased dramatically with some fruits. Of currents he harvested 2000 quarts, gooseberries 1000 quarts and raspberries 200 quarts.

The above does not diminish the importance of livestock on Rock Ledge Ranch. Rather, it places in perspective its role on the ranch during Chambers' ownership. If White House Ranch Historic Site maintains its interpretive focus on the year 1895, however, it will have to make some decisions about its current

and future livestock holdings, especially if it intends to represent Chambers' Rock Ledge Ranch during that year. It has been suggested that White House Ranch Historic Site should instead portray a "representative" ranch/farm, thus giving the site more flexibility in the types and numbers of livestock displayed and interpreted. This option should be approached with caution, however. It is very doubtful that the site could become truly representative, largely because there was probably no such thing as a representative ranch/farm in the past. No ranch/farm was the same. Each varied to some degree from owner to owner and area to area.

Another reason for avoiding the "representative" option is that so many living history sites in the United States consider themselves "representative" of a certain time and place. White House Ranch Historic Site is extremely fortunate in that it has a large body of primary documents pertaining specifically to the family who lived on the site for over 25 years and built one of the few original structures that it maintains and interprets. To present the site as representative would diminish the important and significant story of the Chambers and their role on the land. There is great potential for the site in interpreting the apple and small fruit production that occurred there historically. To portray this type of agriculture at White House Ranch Historic Site, as well as the function of Chambers' livestock, would not only be unique, it would be an important contribution to our understanding of some of the varied agricultural endeavors of the

late 19th century in the Pike's Peak-region.

In concluding, I will quote from the White House Ranch Master Plan where it lists concerns of the site staff in regards to that plan's recommendations:

Wherever possible, according to the availability of authenticating documentation and funding, the plan should provide recommendations that will return the property to conditions that were known to exist on the Ranch at the relevant time periods.²⁵

This is an admirable request that should not be forgotten when taking the findings of this study on Rock Ledge Ranch livestock and incorporating them into the interpretive programming at White House Ranch Historic Site.

NOTES

¹Tax Schedules of Real and Personal Property for Robert M. Chambers for the years 1875, 1878, 1879, 1881, 1884, and 1885, Manuscript Collection, Penrose Public Library, Colorado Springs, Colorado; and R.M. Chambers listing, 1892, Agricultural Statistics for El Paso County, p. 221, copy provided by El Paso County Treasurer's Office, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

²Frank Fossett, Colorado, Its Gold and Silver Mines, Farms and Stock Ranges, and Health and Pleasure Resorts (New York: C.G. Crawford, 1880), 170-171.

³The 1878 Tax Schedule has two areas for recording ownership of livestock. One is very detailed in that it breaks down horses into several categories with sub-headings for ages. The categories for horses are Blooded Horses, American Horses, and Graded Horses. Blooded horses would be those animals that are purebred, both native and foreign. The category of American horses might cover several improved breeds native to the United States. Graded, according to one definition, is an animal with a "preponderance of the blood of a well-recognized improved breed." (L.H. Bailey, ed. Cyclopedia of American Agriculture, 4 vols. [New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908], 3: 421) Unfortunately, Chambers does not indicate that he owns horses in any of these categories. However, in the other area for recording livestock ownership, which is not nearly as detailed, he does list the two

"American Horses and Colts" already mentioned in the text above. The Tax Schedules for 1875, 1878 and 1879 also include a category for ponies but these are not marked by Chambers. 1878 is the only Tax Schedule in which two areas are given for recording livestock ownership.

⁴In Colorado Springs in 1872 "Bronco Horses" were listed as bringing \$75.00 and "American" horses, \$125.00 to 150.00. Out West (Colorado Springs), May 23, 1872.

⁵Out West (Colorado Springs), November 14, 1872.

⁶"Catalogue of Seasonable Goods handled by The Lee-Kinsey Implement Co." in Colorado State Business Directory...1894 (Denver: The Colorado Directory Publishing Co., 1894).

⁷R.M. Chambers Tax Schedule for 1885.

⁸Bailey, Cyclopedia of American Agriculture, 3: 42.

⁹Out West (Colorado Springs), November 14, 1872.

¹⁰S.H. Standart, "The Live-Stock Industry of Colorado and the Territories of the Northwest," in U.S. Department of Agriculture Second Annual Report of the Bureau of Animal Industry, for the year 1885 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1886), 329.

¹¹The Pueblo State Fair Association Premium List, of the Fourth Annual State Fair, to be Held at Pueblo, Colorado (Pueblo: Wayland-Barkley Printing Co., 1890), 67-71. This premium list is included with this study as Appendix II.

¹²Mary Chambers DeLong, "Excerpts from the Chambers Family History," Chambers Family History File, White House Ranch Historic Site, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

¹³See Alvin T. Steinel, History of Agriculture in Colorado (Fort Collins: The State Board of Agriculture, 1926), 73-78.

¹⁴Tax Schedule of Real and Personal Property for Robert M. Chambers for the year 1878, Penrose Public Library.

¹⁵Tax Schedules of Real and Personal Property for Robert M. Chambers for the years 1879, 1881, 1884, and 1885, Penrose Public Library; and R.M. Chambers listing, 1892, Agricultural Statistics for El Paso County, p. 221.

¹⁶Out West (Colorado Springs), December 26, 1872.

¹⁷Standart, "The Live-Stock Industry of Colorado," 326.

¹⁸Tax Schedule of Real and Personal Property of Robert M. Chambers for 1878, Penrose Public Library.

¹⁹Steinel, History of Agriculture in Colorado, 438.

²⁰Standart, "The Lives-Stock Industry of Colorado," 330.

²¹Pueblo State Fair...Premium List, 64.

²²Colorado Census for 1885, Schedule 2, "Productions of Agriculture in the County of El Paso," Enumeration District No. 3, page 7.

²³Pueblo State Fair...Premium List, 62. See Appendix II.

²⁴Frank Hall, "Colorado," in Wm. F. Switzler, Report on the Internal Commerce of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1889, Treasury Dept. Doc. No. 1243b (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 96.

²⁵David Jones and Deborah Abele-(Land Resource Associates),
White House Ranch Master Plan, Final Report to the City of
Colorado Springs Parks and Recreation Department (March 1990), 21.

