



Davy Wright in feed wagon, circa 1924

The Cattleman

WHEN DAVY WRIGHT WAS BORN near the frontier town of Mobeetie, Texas on March 20, 1892, the long trail drives to the railheads in Kansas were a thing of the past, and the large English-owned ranches on the Texas Panhandle were being broken up due to economics and pressure from settlers. The southern railroads were well established and the ever-changing cattle business was set to take another leap. Davy's father, English immigrant John Robert Wright, died in 1898, leaving Davy's mother Cecelia with seven children. Cecelia sold her husband's Canadian, Texas business interests and invested in cattle. Her brothers, Tom and John Jones, let her graze her stock on their ranch. In return, Cecelia's four boys—Davy being the youngest—worked on the ranch during the summers.

While still in their teens the Wright boys got into the cattle business full time when they formed the Wright Brothers Partnership, purchased several sections [1 section = 640 acres] of land along Gibson Creek in Lipscomb and Ochiltree Counties, and leased ten sections of neighboring land.

Like his eldest brother Jim, Davy attended Kansas City Business College and upon graduation, rejoined his brothers on Gibson Creek. In 1909, their brother Johnny, while roping a steer, was killed when his horse fell on him. Jim and Wiley looked after Davy's business ventures during his World War I tour of duty in France.

*“So I ask myself if I can still
remember
How a myth began this
morning and how the people
Seemed hardly to know that
something was starting over.”*

THOMAS FERRIL FROM “WESTERING” (1934)

With the beginning foundation of their parents' business savvy, their uncles' knowledge of ranching, and their own business and "cowsense" training, the Wright boys took advantage of new marketing possibilities in the cattle business. They learned how to buy and sell large numbers of cattle. Wheat pasture up on the "flats" became a major tool in their seasonal grazing program. And they used the railroads to get the cattle to favorable market and feeding centers.

Jim, Wiley, and Davy dissolved the partnership in the late '20's and went on to put their own ranches together. During this time the new U. S. cattle feeding industry was located in the Midwest "Corn Belt." Davy raised and bought feeder steers that he, in turn, shipped by rail to the Corn Belt market centers. He made many trips to Kansas City and Chicago, sometimes accompanied by May or his foreman Ode Price.

Eck Barton of Booker, Texas tells the story of one Chicago trip where Davy had to find pasture for a shipment of steers until a bank draft cleared. Davy told his local contact that he needed two men on horseback the next morning to help load the cattle. The next day he arrived to find two men mounted on one horse, ready to go to work. Davy declared that they knew how to feed cattle "up there," but it sure wasn't cow country.

Ode Price, whom Davy always referred to as "Oat," told about one of their early-day Kansas City trips when Davy, seeing for the first time one of the new cars with "turn signals," declared, "Jesus Lover, Oat, that car sure has a bad electrical short."

Glazier, Texas, on the main Santa Fe Railway line, became Davy Wright's main shipping point. When Glazier was leveled by the April 9, 1947 tornado, Davy was instrumental in getting the Glazier stockyards and scales rebuilt. Davy in time made Ode Price a partner in his business. And he helped other young ranchers in the area get established in the cattle business.

Davy could also be ornery. On his way to town with Ode one day, he spotted his brother Wiley and crew unloading cattle at Glazier. Davy climbed over several fences to where Wiley was counting steers coming down the loading lane. "Wiley, what's your count?" hollered Davy. Wiley went on counting. In a little while, Davy hollered again, "What's your count now, Wiley?" That did it. "Dammit, Davy," said Wiley. "Okay, bring 'em back by, boys. I lost my count." Whereupon Davy climbed back over the pens and headed on to town. Grinning, no doubt.

All it takes to make it in the cattle business: High Plains grass with lots of "strength," good stock, good neighbors, fair weather, favorable markets, and good weight on shipping day.



The truth of the season, the planning, and the care is revealed when the cattle go across the scales. Based on the old scale houses, "The Cattleman" stands on a base made from a section of barn door track, braced with scrap rod and baling wire. Moore house weathered gable and rake trim is reworked for the case and trim with the doors coming from parts of the house's west entry door. Side panels are cut from a wind-battered metal roof sheet.

Main door panels highlight a 1929 Cattleman Magazine cover and plans for the replacement stockyards in Glazier, Texas after the April, 1947 tornado. A 1950 Santa Fe Railway shipping manifest for cattle going to Matfield Green, Kansas, and a 1923 Kansas City stockyards letter make up the bottom panels. Inside door panels are taken from Davy's cattle ledger books showing 1929-30 sales from area cattle herds.

Grasses, including big and little bluestem, switch, and Indian, fill the interior friezes, held in by strands of ribbon wire. When the railroad came through in 1886-87, the ribbon wire was used to fence off the right-of-way.

