

Beef Plentiful 'Out Where West Begins'

by Winn Nelson

*Lincoln Journal and Star
February 20, 1944*

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Courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society

Left Top

Beef Plentiful



Courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society

Center Top

Out Where

Sunday Journal and Feature SECTION

February 20, 1944

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A herd of happy bellies—with plenty of water on hand and delicious hay just ahead, (center right). These pictures snapped in the sandhills recently, show only a few of the thousands of the cattle being fattened on the range in Nebraska today. Corn-feeding is out for most cattle because of a high price ceiling on grain and a low price ceiling on the wholesale cuts of beef.

These cattle—(lower right) belonging to Rancher Christopher J. Abbott of Hyannis, munch the hay that is being distributed by a cow-hand from the rear of a hay-sled. That giant contraption is like a hay-rack on runners and glides over the snowy fields to gather quite a following of hungry cattle.

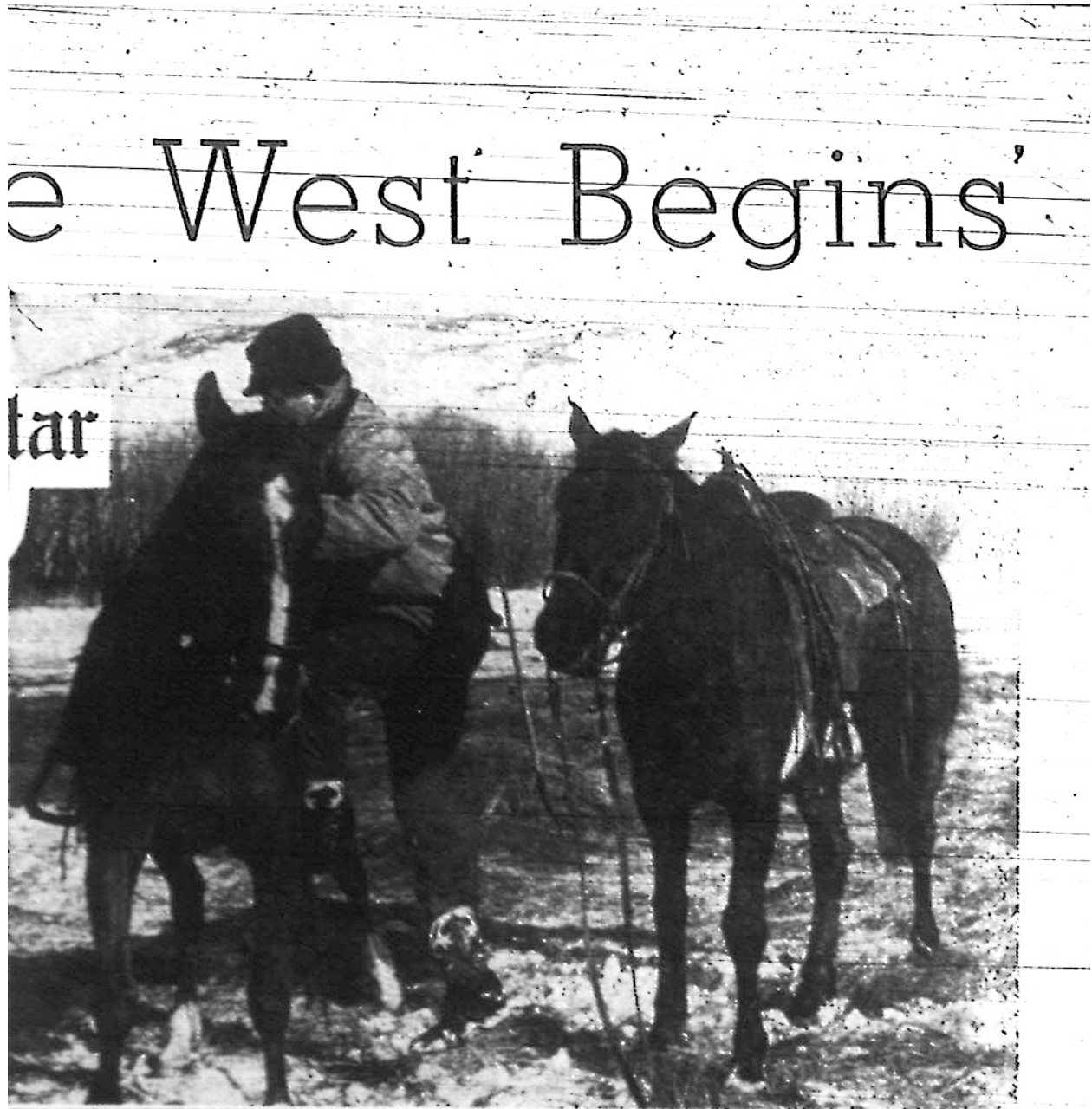
"How are ya, rascal," says Chris Abbott to a thoroughbred hunting dog he received as a Christmas present last year, (left). He calls the thousands of range cattle on his ranch by the endearing title of "rascals" too.

Rancher Chris Abbott demonstrates aptity, (upper right) the author's horse at the right demonstrates training as it stands with "reins down." Since there are no hitching posts in the sandhill "cow country" the horses are trained to stand with reins touching the ground. A snow that is knee-high to a tall Indian covers the hills in the background, enhancing their beauty.

(Photos taken by Winn Nelson.)

Courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society

Right Top



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And the 1,000 whitefaced Herefords gazed back at him, as cattle will, with a studied look in their collective eye.

The sandhills region embraces north-central Nebraska, 20,000 square miles of grasslands known the nation over as the best in the country for raising range cattle.

It is the only agricultural region that remained financially intact when the bottom fell out of the farm situation during the 1930's, and Old Man Drouth stalked the mid-west in his trailing gown of dust.

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Pre-War Processes

In normal times, range cattle, that is, those fed on grass, were left on the range for a year and then were put through a "finishing" process which consisted of fattening them on corn for two or more months.

The result was a high-quality grain fattened animal. Nowadays, the sandhills ranchman explained, the high price ceiling on corn has caused meat producers to skip the "finishing" process and leave the cattle on grass feed for extra seasons, necessary to bring the animal to the same weight it would attain on corn in a few weeks.

In this way the slaughterer's demand for a lower-price, middle-class critter has been met.

And therein lies the story of why the New Yorker or the Nebraskan is not getting a great enough supply of legitimate beef—the cattle are roaming the range, being fattened for the market through the dreadfully

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Left Middle 2

Overrun By Steaks On Hoof

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There in Cherry county, which produces annually one million cattle, it is hard to realize that metropolitan newspapers daily lament the butcher shop's shortage of beef cuts.

Countless herds of big steers having beef to the hock darken the rolling hills and intermittent valleys. The herds are a sight which might panic a beef-starved New Yorker, as he remembers that in his city the department of agriculture posts each day not only regular selling prices but also black market prices of meat; and that his mayor, Fiorello La Guardia, stated recently: "With the exception of pork there is little meat sold in the east at retail selling prices."

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Ranchers claim that the substitution of an artificial for the natural economy in the cattle business has raised a barrier between the meat-producing west and the meat-consuming east.

Patriotism Abundant

Cattlemen do not lack in patriotism. They are not interested in enormous profits, but rather in maintaining production to provide meat for the army, the navy, lend lease and for the civilian population. They claimed that if allowed to, they can do it.

A number of the sandhills ranchers interviewed by this roving reporter on horseback, declared that the way to get production is to maintain a reasonable profit incentive, which has built America and continued private enterprise, and which has made possible the enormous war production found in this country today.

Courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society

Left Bottom

Best Customers In East

Industrial workers living in New York City are the cattlemen's best customers in the entire country. Statistics show that two-thirds of all the meat in the United States is produced west of the Mississippi river and that two-thirds of it is eaten east of the Mississippi.

Those customers aren't getting the meat now unless they resort to black markets and exorbitant prices.

Most Lincolmites have observed that a short trip past the outskirts of a metropolitan center usually brings them to a not-so-well-lighted roadhouse where steaks are featured on the menu with large dollar signs.

Mayor La Guardia summed it up when he told a convention of meat producers: "The black market has been created because the legitimate slaughterer who sells at ceiling prices sells at a loss. This being true, the retailer cannot get sufficient meat from him at ceiling prices. So the retailer goes to the black market, pays above ceiling prices and in turn sells above ceiling prices."

How this affects the cattle-raiser was told recently by Christopher J. Abbott of Hyannis, the "old cowhand" who made the jesting remark in this story's opening paragraph. Abbott, who might easily contend for the title of owner of the largest landholdings in Nebras-

"Although the government has asked for a speed-up in food production, the new economics it has thrust into the battle business has destroyed the feeder market and taken away incentive to produce beef the fastest way possible—on corn."

The cattlemen asked that they be treated just as the other essential war industries, which are getting, at least, the cost of production.

"The cattle have been backed up in the country to get big and tough," Rancher Abbott complained, pulling on a cowboy boot in preparation for a nine-mile ride through the snow to his Raymond Lake ranch.

Older Beef Demanded

Abbott's sentiments were voiced by several "big ranchers" in that region. They declared that the older, heavier beef is now in demand simply because no costly grain is required to prepare him for market.

The official estimate by the department of agriculture of cattle being fed corn last August 1, was 11 per cent smaller than August of 1942, and the cattle on feed in 1942 was 19 per cent less than in 1941. In other words, only 70 per cent of the cattle were on corn feed last August 1 as compared to two years ago.

Another big concern is the fear that the people of the na-

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tion, denied their beef helpings, will find they can get along without meat and still be happy as far as appetites are concerned. It took years to restore the nation's meal-eating habits after the last war, and the former level has never been equaled. The public doesn't need meat for its appetite but it does need meat for nutrition, which means good health. Meat, a concentrated protein food, contains everything necessary for the human diet, a fact born out by laboratory tests and human experiment.

In normal times the meat production business has been, from the standpoint of dollar income, the greatest single industry in the nation. Livestock products provide by far the greatest percentage of all farm income, providing 70 per cent

of it in the two Dakotas, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska. (1941 Bell Telephone statistics.)

Hyannis, Beef Center

Center of this great industry in Nebraska and mecca of the sandhills, is Hyannis, which was famed in former years for having the greatest number of millionaires per capita of any town in the United States.

Tales of gold-plated bathtubs and marble houses have come down out of the sandhills to the oft-times poverty-ridden farm crop section all around it.

Hyannis is the center of operation for many big cattlemen, and they surround themselves with ranch properties in the neighboring territory.

A good-sized sandhills ranch has about 30,000 acres of grass-

land. Many city-folk never come to realize the vastness of such a holding. They may even have as erroneous an idea as the Yale student, who was asked by his professor after a lecture on the cattle industry, how many acres he thought necessary to raise 1,000 cattle. The student considered seriously and answered, "I think 30 acres would be enough, sir." Actually, 10,000 acres would have been a better estimate.

The sandhills region is prodigious to the point of make-believe. Its residents in pre-war days bragged that any couple coming there to ranch could be positive of more than average financial security inside of 20 years, if they managed properly. Those claims have been born out repeatedly.

The region weathered the '30s when agricultural men

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Right Bottom

everywhere else were taking out bankruptcy.

"It's a haymaker's heaven," declared Rancher Abbott as he started enumerating the reasons why the area is so fabulous and different from any other spot in the country.

"Nature gave Nebraska an ideal water storage area when she formed the sandhills. The region is a natural sponge, leaving a soil formation that soaks up rainfall and retains it just under the surface

where the grasses' roots can still reach it. That's why a complete hay-crop failure is unknown to the sandhills, although the short-grass country extending from the edge of the sandhills to the northwest corner of Nebraska, and known as the Panhandle, becomes withered by drought's touch.

(The Panhandle was the hunting grounds of "Old Jules," gun-totin' northwesterner whose name is the title of one of Marie Sandor's best-seller.)

The sandhills ranchers have learned that they can sink wells on the range wherever they wish, eliminating the necessity of cattle walking long distances to water; moreover, warm water Artesian wells and natural lakes are plentiful.

Nutritious Grasses

"The grasses of the sandhills are lush and nutritious," Abbott continued. Corn feeders find that it is often easier to fatten sandhill steers than range cattle from other regions, because of the grasses' nutritious quality.

With the abundant grasses is combined a healthful climate, practically free from Texas fever, tuberculosis and other "cow" diseases.

The health feature is aided by the land's drainage system. There is no surface drainage since the water passes underground as sub-irrigation. In soils that are tighter and heavier, the water remains on top and the cattle's hoofs soon create great mud-holes that collect filth and disease.

Finally, the convenience of transporting the cattle to market makes the sandhills a favored front. Three major railroad lines of the state pass through the northern, southern and central section of the sandhills, and cattle need not be trailed long distances, as in Texas, to reach the steel rails that bear them a short distance to market.

The sandhills people, to a greater degree than any other agricultural group in Nebraska, have made the most out of the land they occupy. Its soil is too sandy for crop farming so

they don't try to make it produce corn and wheat—they stick to beef-steak farming.

Rancher Abbott, whose towering 6 foot 2 figure is a western landmark, believes that the nation should give greater heed to the call of the open prairies, to the skies unflecked by industrial smokes, thus relieving the extreme competition among wage-earners in large cities.

"There is no greater happiness or security than settling in the cow country and aiming for the goal of providing a family with a better-than-average living," Abbott said.

'Dad's Top Man'

A cow and 10 acres of land is the first step in the business of becoming a cattle-rancher. Abbott started the business at a tender age as his "father's top man," and together the Abbott family accumulated through the years several western Nebraska ranches, including the West ranch near Ashby which is said to be the largest single holding in the sandhills.

Chris Abbott has reached his goal of providing a better-than-average livelihood for his family. He claims to be "just a country boy," but his record shows that he is a college-trained man who let methodical, scientific thought and aggressive action work wonders for him in the sandhills.

While attending the University of Nebraska he concentrated on work but allowed some time for play, balancing the two so that one would not make him physically unable to perform or enjoy the other.

Systematic Study

When he studied, he studied hard, arriving at the campus library as the doors swung open in the morning, and leaving it nine hours later. That many hours of mental exertion is about the human saturation point, he believes, and at the end of his library session, Chris would grab a college chum and head for a movie-house. Thus he let relaxation and diversion wipe away the cobwebs of mental fatigue.

He carries out method even to

(Continued on Page Four)

Squadron



Miss Hawley, Cpl. Norma Stinchert, Sgt. and Pvt. Harriet Turner. Stand- ing: Pvt. Peggy Morey, Pvt. Sherrill Annabelle Biehn, Pvt. Pearl Griener Mendis. (Staff Photo.)

Corporal Mae Briggs, Helen Fell, Lydia Snyder, Nora Moore, Dorothy Boettcher, Delores Bloom, Mary Derrick, and Ruth Duerr.

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Prospective members will be interviewed and will have a chance to become acquainted with other C. A. P. members Thursday night.

L. K. D. Kimmel, commander of the Lincoln squadron has announced that although the meteorology and code classes have been underway for a couple of weeks, the new members may still enroll.

Classes are held 1 1/2 to 3 p. m. on Monday and at 8 p. m. on Wednesday night of each week at the office headquarters. Members must be 16 years of age or over.

May Organize Separate Squadron.

All young women interested in the furthering of aviation through the civil air patrol are urged to join up during open house Thursday so that class enrollment will be complete. If 50 women are recruited, the Lincoln squadron will organize a separate women's group. At present, the women, men and cadets are united in their meetings.



Open house has become a favorite spot for Sunday afternoon meetings of the women's squadron of the Lincoln civil air patrol which is recruiting new members this week. Aviation enthusiasts pictured above are: front row, left to right: Sgt. Ann Connors, Pfc. Mary and Pfc. Marilyn Mendis. (Staff Photo.)

The personnel of the women's flight, Harriet Turner, Peggy McCormack, Mae Butler, Helen Fell, Norma Slagter, Eileen Boer, Marilyn Mendis, Madeline Wisbey, Mary Derrick, and Ruth Duerr.

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TRANSCRIPT

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A herd of happy heifers — with plenty of water on hand and delicious hay just ahead. (center right). These snapped in the sandhills recently, show only a few of the thousands of the cattle being fattened on the range in Nebraska today. Corn-feeding is out for most cattle because of the high price ceiling on grain and a low price ceiling on the wholesale cuts of beef.

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Best Customers in the East

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(continued on Page Four — *Not Available*)

(Center Bottom p. 12)

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Photo Caption: Union airport has become a favorite spot for Sunday afternoon meetings of the women's squadron of the Lincoln civil air patrol which is recruiting new members this week. Aviation enthusiasts pictured above are: first row, left to right. Sgt. Ana Cerovski, Pfc. Neva Axon, Y/Sgt. Audra Hawley, Cpl. Norma Slajchert, Pvt. Eileen Boerrigter and Pvt. Harriet Turner. Standing left to right are Pvt. Peggy Morey, Pvt. Sherrill Von Birgen, Cpl. Annabelle Birnie. Pvt. Pearl Grieser, and Pvt. Marilyn Mardis. (Staff photo)

The personnel of the women's group now includes: Ana Cerovski, Neva Axon, Audra Hawley, Norma Slajchert, Eileen Boerrigter, Harriet Turner, Peggy Morey, Sherrill Von Birgen, Anabelle Birnie, Pearl Grieser, Marilyn Mardis, Madeline Wisbey, Cora Mae Briggs, Hellen Fell, Lydia Snyder, Nora Moore, Dorothy Boettcher, Delores Bloom, Mary Derrick, and Ruth Duerr.