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Review of Renderbrook: A Century Under the Spade Brand

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BOOK REVIEWS

Renderbrook: A Century Under the Spade Brand.

By Steve Kelton. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1989. Introduction, maps, photographs, notes, index. x + 221 pp. \$15.95.

In the context of the current concern over the disappearance of the family farm, this work is important because it presents the story of one successful family enterprise. In the late nineteenth century I. L. Ellwood applied a fortune made from barbed wire to create a model cattle

operation in west Texas that exists today. His business expanded through careful management and an eye toward innovation. Kelton draws in various aspects of the operation that influenced the evolution of the ranch by considering new technology, diversification, changes in daily ranch operation, and the new role of the cowboy in keeping enterprise running. As journalists are wont to do, Kelton relies on anecdotes, but he writes well and presents an enjoyable case study of large-scale cattle ranching and its unfolding history over the course of one century. What emerges is a sense of how the maturing cattle industry helped develop the rural West.

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