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Review of *The Chisholm Trail: High Road of the Cattle Kingdom* By Don Worcester

Joe A. Stout Jr.
Oklahoma State University

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The Chisholm Trail: High Road of the Cattle Kingdom. By Don Worcester. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press for Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1980. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. xx + 207 pp. \$14.50.

For two decades after the Civil War, Texas cowboys drove herds of wild longhorns up the Chisholm and other cattle trails from central Texas to Kansas railroads. This book is about the boring work of the trail drovers, the release of their energies at trail's end, and the successes and failures of the great ranches of Texas and other western regions. Don Worcester notes that the cowboys referred indiscriminately to all cattle trails north out of Texas as the Chisholm trail; he sees no reason to change this. Although he has titled this work *The Chisholm Trail*, it is a general history of cattle trailing and ranching.

In his description of cowboys, Worcester relates that there "was nothing glamorous or captivating about these early cattle drives or the men who made them" (p. xiii). Even the origin of the trail drives after the Civil War was unromantic. Texans, returning from the war, saw in the thousands of wild cattle the best available resource from which to extract a living. They were able to profit from their activity because Joseph G. McCoy and eastern buyers provided "a large and stable market for their cattle" (p. 16). The range cattle industry then spread northward into Montana and other regions because of good grazing, the demise of the buffalo, and the confinement of Indians to reservations. During the harsh winter of 1886–

87, the range cattle industry suffered huge losses because of extensive freezing and starving of cattle. Worcester notes that this "Big Die-up marked the end of an era by hastening the end of the cattle boom" (p. 173).

There is no new information or interpretation in this book. However, Worcester's discussion of "Brush Poppers" (tough cowboys who rode into thorny brush country to capture wild longhorns) provides valuable insight into the lives and hardships of the men and the horses. He has gleaned additional information about the range cattle industry from selected articles and books on the subject. Excellent pictures from the Amon Carter Museum are included.

This work is not a personal reminiscence like that of old-time cowboy Andy Adams, nor is it similar to Gene Gressley's exhaustively researched work on eastern investment in the western livestock industry. Rather, it is a well-written, general synthesis best suited for the western history buff.

JOE A. STOUT, JR.
Department of History
Oklahoma State University