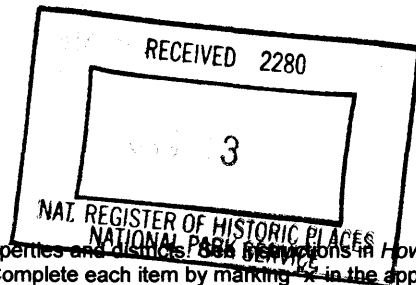


National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Cross S Ranch Headquarters

other name/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 1.3 miles W and .4 mile N of intersection of County Roads N199 & E1750 not for publication

city or town Olustee vicinity

state Oklahoma code OK county Jackson code 065 zip code 73537

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Bob Decker 1-19-06
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) _____

Edson H. Beall 3/8/06
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Cross S Ranch Headquarters
Name of Property

Olustee, Jackson County, Oklahoma
City, County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant / Not in Use

7. Description
Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Stackhouse

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: Sandstone

walls Stone: Sandstone

roof Wood Shingle

other _____

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Cross S Ranch Headquarters
Name of Property

Olustee, Jackson County, Oklahoma
City, County and State

8. Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Exploration / Settlement _____

Agriculture _____

Period of Significance

1891-1935 _____

Significant Dates

1891 _____

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository:

Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Cross S Ranch Headquarters
Name of Property

Olustee, Jackson County, Oklahoma
City, County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/4 4/5/9/9/3/1 3/8/1/5/7/9/0
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property Tax No.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

Michael Cassity, Ph.D.
Historical Research and Photography
304 W. Albuquerque
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma 74011
Phone: 918 451-8378 • Fax: 918 451-8379
mcassity@valornet.com

date October 25, 2005

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name/title John Thomas, Thomas Family Trustee

street & number Route 1, Box 3100 telephone _____

city or town Elk City state OK zip code 73644

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Cross S Ranch Headquarters, Olustee, Jackson County, OK

Narrative Description

Visible for a distance of more than a mile from virtually every point of the compass, and often farther than that, the Cross S Ranch Headquarters is a two-story stone building that rests on a slight rise of a gently undulating wheat field that once was open prairie about five miles south of Olustee, Oklahoma. Constructed in 1891, the headquarters, in fact, was placed in that location specifically to avoid the flooding from the nearby Gypsum Creek, also known locally as Boggy Creek, that flows west and south of the building. The cream-colored rock building faces the east but also has a commanding view of the countryside for a great distance, including the dramatic Copper Breaks on the horizon to the west and the wooded hills of Texas across the Red River nine miles to the south. As one first notices the Cross S Ranch Headquarters from a distance, the building, though not oversized or palatial in appearance, serves as an obvious landmark and geographic anchor point. Thus it has stood since it was originally constructed by men known only in the historical record as "two Swedes" who passed through the area and who perhaps also built several other structures in the vicinity. The building has not been occupied since the 1930s and the result has been some deterioration, especially in the roof and consequently also in the interior, and also there have been some modifications in the parts of the building added on and adjacent structures.

The building is a rectangular stone structure measuring about twenty feet on the north elevation and nearly twenty-two feet on the east. The stone for the building was quarried in the Copper Breaks four or five miles to the west. Placed in regular courses (23 on the east, 33 at maximum on the north), each cut stone is rusticated for smooth fit and thin mortar joints. A chimney made of the same stone projecting outward from the north elevation represents the only deviation to the rectangular plan of the building. The roof is gabled with the ridge on a north-south axis. Two lightning rods remain on the ridge and are consistent in placement with historic photographs of the building. Although the north and south elevations rise to the ridge of the gable, the east and west elevations allow space on the upper story only for short, horizontal windows beneath the eaves.

The east elevation is symmetrical with tall window openings (that in historic photos appear to have been both double-hung and triple hung at various times) on either side of the centered doorway on the ground level. Directly in line with these ground floor windows, shortened horizontal windows are located immediately below the eaves above. The height of the doorway is exaggerated by a transom (now missing). In a pattern that also obtains throughout the building, the window and door sills in this elevation are rusticated while the lintels are smooth-faced.

At some point in the period of historic significance, a sloping porch roof extended east from this elevation, but the only marks of that canopy now are the line of pitch or tar that sealed it against the elevation and two small rectangular notches in the stone at the outside end of the two main lintels where supporting beams protruded. Not an essential part of the structure, photographs of the

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Cross S Ranch Headquarters, Olustee, Jackson County, OK

building as late as 1900 do not show this canopy and its removal does not impact the integrity of the building.

The north elevation is dominated and centered by the chimney. With a broad base, the chimney narrows at the second floor through a series of three stair-stepped courses to a rectangular column and rises above the ridge. Two tall windows to the east of the chimney are in a vertical line, providing illumination for both levels. There is no fenestration west of the chimney.

The west elevation includes a pair of horizontal windows on the upper level identical to those on the east, and those windows are directly above a tall window on the ground level north and an entrance on the south. At one time in the period of historic significance a canopy extended west to cover the porch on this side of the building, and subsequently it was enclosed, at least partially, and used as a kitchen for the house. When it was enclosed, the north window was converted into space for shelving, for both the interior and exterior, and those shelves remain in that window.

The south elevation is asymmetrical on both levels. A single tall ground floor window is located on the east side of the elevation while the second floor holds both an entrance and a window, the entrance slightly off-center to the east and the window located to the west. In its original form, access to the second story was only through an outside stairway that led to a balcony projecting from this entrance. That stairway remained until an unknown date when an interior stairway was installed and the exterior stairs were removed and replaced with a balcony supported by posts. Remnants of that balcony are still present.

The interior of the building at one time contained two rooms on the ground floor and one above, but the interior wall has since been removed. No longer inhabited, the building's ground floor remains largely intact but most windows are missing and the ornate fireplace and mantel have also been removed leaving the interior generally an open cell on each level. The window and door openings have not been altered.

The major changes to the building occurred during the period of its historic significance. The sloping canopy on the east elevation came and went during that period. The canopy on the west elevation became a one-story kitchen addition when it was enclosed with plank siding, possibly in the 1910s or 1920s and photographs clearly show its existence in 1964. Since this was not part of the original structure, since it was made of materials and in a design different from that of the original structure, its absence does not compromise the integrity of the stone building. The other change came to the interior, and as a consequence, also to the exterior. At an unknown point an interior stairway was installed that permitted access to the second floor from the first; previously the only entrance to the second floor had via an outside stairway located on the south elevation that led to a stairhead / balcony at the doorway positioned there. While the interior alteration does not impact the building, the removal of the exterior stairway caused a slight alteration to the appearance of the building. The distinct likelihood, however, is that the change was made at a time when the building was occupied,

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Cross S Ranch Headquarters, Olustee, Jackson County, OK

reflecting the evolution of the building's use and role, and thus also prior to 1955; this therefore does not represent a change after the period of significance to compromise the integrity of the building.

The immediate location has changed too, as historic references to nearby buildings indicate. Today the building stands alone. At various times, however, other buildings used as dwellings and utility structures were also located nearby. In fact, photographs show two different frame houses located next to this building at its southwest corner within a ten-year period early in the twentieth century. At other times, wood frame utility structures were located at various positions and distances in the vicinity. As part of the evolution of the property in which the function and purpose of the ranch headquarters shifted from ranching to farming and to non-residential farming, these structures have all been moved or otherwise dismantled. At least one frame building was moved to Olustee in the 1920s. Because these buildings migrated substantially during the period of historic significance and because they were not essential to the use and importance of the stone house headquarters itself, their absence does not compromise the integrity of the remaining building.

A 1964 article in a local newspaper indicates that a "restoration" of the building had been undertaken the previous year.¹ The contours of that restoration are not clear, but evidently they were minor. A series of photographs in the files of the Museum of the Western Prairie document the building as it existed on February 26, 1964, and those photographs reveal that the building resembles the current condition with the exception of the removal of the kitchen addition. This suggests that the kitchen removal may constitute the main element of the "restoration" reported in the news account. In any event, it is clear from the photographs that any additional alteration to the building in that project was negligible and did not otherwise impact its integrity, and may in fact have represented a genuine restoration to its original appearance.

The Cross S Ranch Headquarters has evolved substantially in the 115 years since it was originally constructed, and that evolution has at each stage reflected the transformation of agriculture locally and more broadly too. The changes in the structure took place in the period of significance and are consistent with that evolution.

The building retains integrity of structure, materials, workmanship, location, appearance, feeling, and association.

¹ "Mrs. Nellie Sipes Restores Old Home; Revives Many Childhood Memories," *Olustee Chieftain*, December 24, 1964.

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Cross S Ranch Headquarters, Olustee, Jackson County, OK

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Cross S Ranch Headquarters is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of significance Exploration / Settlement and also in the area of significance Agriculture. The Eddleman brothers began their Cross S cattle ranch on open range over a large area of what was at the time Greer County, Texas, and this building was associated with the early white settlement in the area when ranching predominated. The ranching itself was an offshoot of the cattle drives through the area that gave way to open range ranching. This building served as the headquarters of the prominent Cross S Ranch that then transformed, so that it became a much smaller operation on homesteaded land, focusing on quality horse-breeding instead of cattle, and subsequently became a predominantly crop-oriented farming operation. At each stage of this evolution, the Cross S Ranch both reflected and helped shape the fundamental contours of agriculture in the area. To understand the history of the Cross S is to gain a deeper understanding of the history of Oklahoma agriculture at a formative period in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries.²

Historical Background Prior to 1891

Although the Cross S Ranch derives its significance from the events and activities that took place at this location and from the larger historical patterns with which it is associated, it is important to note that the ranch headquarters also opens to view the pattern of events leading up to its construction in 1891. For its construction represented not just a beginning of one phase of the ranch's history, but, just as importantly, it represented the culmination of an earlier phase of that history.

The far southwestern corner of Oklahoma is bounded by the Red River on the south, the North Fork of the Red River on the north and east, and the 100th Meridian on the west. This substantial region is coincidentally an area with a history partially separate from that of the rest of the state. The origin of the distinction can be traced to a series of critical ambiguities in treaties and major flaws in official surveys. The boundary of the Louisiana Territory purchased from France in 1803 was easily settled by the Adams Onís Treaty of 1819, in this area, as the Red River, but the surveys of the region mistook the course of that river, taking the North Fork to be the main fork and thus implicitly placed the area south and west of that branch outside the United States. When Texas was admitted to the Union, that area became by default a part of that state and not a part of the emerging Indian Territory otherwise north of the Red River. Further complicating the matter, an official subsequent survey drew the line for the 100th Meridian far from its actual location, so for the bulk of the nineteenth

² Any serious understanding of the Eddleman family and the Cross S Ranch, which that family founded and operated, must begin with a close examination of the documents gathered by the Museum of the Western Prairie in Altus, Oklahoma. The current research focusing on this ranch has drawn heavily on those materials, and the preparer of this nomination gratefully acknowledges the cooperation and assistance of the Museum of the Western Prairie and especially of Ms. Jennie Buchanan, of the Jackson County Historical Society.

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Cross S Ranch Headquarters, Olustee, Jackson County, OK

century that substantial piece of land, sometimes known as the "Empire of Greer," effectively formed a part of Texas and was officially claimed by that state. The United States government opposed those claims but the issue languished, unresolved. In the void, Texas exercised jurisdiction there and Texans began to inhabit the area. The first incursions of white people into that area on a systematic basis were associated with the cattle trails after the Civil War. In a progression in time that also represented a steady geographic progression westward, vast herds of cattle were trailed from Texas northward to points along the railroad in Kansas where they could then be shipped to market, and in the process the cattle drives crossed the Red River and Indian Territory. One of the trails used by the drovers, and by some reckonings the last of them, crossed the main fork of the Red River (as it is recognized today) at a point known as Doan's Crossing which had become a small settlement by the end of the 1870s. Although the Western Trail had a short life, and was largely replaced by the 1885 construction of the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad, it also proved to be a gateway for more settlement of the area north of the river.

Some of those cattle ranchers came to stay. In 1880 L. Z. Eddleman and his two brothers, Ira and Lee (Bud), brought a herd of cattle across the river at Doan's Crossing and set them to graze in the disputed area between the two forks of the Red River. The Eddleman brothers had come from Pilot Point, Texas, a place north of Dallas about twenty-five miles from the Red River and that had been settled by their father, Dr. R. W. Eddleman in the 1850s, and the three brothers had in fact been among the first children born in the new town beginning in 1856. Pilot Point had developed as a ranching center in the subsequent years and the brothers saw cattle ranching as the calling of the future. Even though their own records are largely mute on this point it is clear that the Eddlemans actually trailed their cattle to Kansas over the Western Trail. An undated obituary for Ed Miller, who served as foreman on the Cross S—and also a "masterful horseman and bronc rider, and a skilful roper," notes that he "made several drives up to Kansas, with the Eddleman brothers."³ Their cousin E. G. Walcott, also of Pilot Point, joined with the Eddlemans and took his own small herd of cattle into Kansas through this area, and one account notes the presence of a bill of sale for a herd



Lee (Bud) Eddleman, Ira Eddleman, and L. Z. Eddleman, about 1890. Photo: Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma.

³ Undated obituary for Ed Miller, "Fall Fatle [sic] to Greer County Cowboy," August 8 [year unknown], typescript in Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection, Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma (subsequently cited as Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection).

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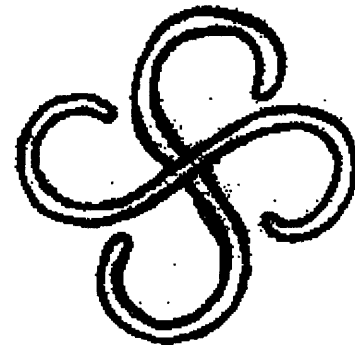
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Cross S Ranch Headquarters, Olustee, Jackson County, OK

of cattle he took to the railroad at New Kiowa, Kansas (not far from Dodge City) in 1887.⁴ While the Chisholm Trail, the Goodnight Trail, and others have become embedded in popular culture, a brief glimpse at other, lesser-known trails, reveals the significance of the corridors as forces of historical change.

The trails became paths for aspiring ranchers to move into and settle the land north of the Red River. The state of Texas encouraged people to take up land in the disputed area by granting substantial patents to ranchers, such as 144,000 acres to the Day Land and Cattle Company and another patent to the Franklin Land and Cattle Company, and they also encouraged people to take up homesteads there. One account notes that "By 1885 there were in the county some ten families and 60,000 cattle belonging to seven or eight firms that employed 100 men."⁵

One of those ranches operating in the area was the one started by the Eddleman brothers, a ranch that was called the Cross S, so termed because the brand used by the ranch was made by the perpendicular intersection of two S letters at their midpoint, the result being either a clockwise pinwheel configuration or a symbol distinguished from a swastika by its curved arches instead of arms at right angles. In its more stylized renditions, the brand could even resemble a quatrefoil, with the four petals of the flower arranged symmetrically around the center point. Eddleman appears not to have purchased or officially homesteaded land when he did this, choosing, as did some others, simply to find a place to settle and use it as the ranch headquarters. The location of this initial dwelling was near the confluence of Turkey Creek and the Salt Fork of the Red River, a location near and west or southwest of the future town of Olustee.⁶ How long they remained at that location is not known, but some accounts indicate that they soon moved to the site that would become their permanent headquarters at the location of the property now being nominated. The attraction to this location



Cross S Brand as stylized by Cecil R. Chesser in *The Historic Eddleman Brothers' Cross S Ranch Olustee* (n.p., n.d.).

⁴ Gordon Cole, "When Old Greer Was New," undated news clipping, *Times-Democrat*, Eddleman / Cross S Ranch Collection.

⁵ "Greer County," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, World Wide Web document, <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/GG/hcg81.html>, accessed September 15, 2005.

⁶ Argus Dickerson, "The History of Olustee," October 10, 1937, unidentified newspaper clipping, Eddleman / Cross S Ranch Collection. Paul Long, "House Marks Site of Former Giant Ranch," *Wichita Falls Times Features Magazine*, July 19, 1964.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Cross S Ranch Headquarters, Olustee, Jackson County, OK

came from the presence of what was termed a "softwater" well, a description that makes abundant sense when one considers the prevailing water content in the area reflected in names like Gypsum Creek immediately to the west and Bitter Creek also not far away; the well had been evidently dug by an earlier settler only to be abandoned. At the new location the Eddlemans built a picket house, i.e., a dwelling without foundation in which vertical pickets were implanted, usually in a trench, to become the walls of the house. (Neither the well nor the remains of the picket house survive.) From there they built up the ranch and the Cross S Ranch became widely known; as late as 1937 one local chronicler recalled the ranch as "the most famous" of the ranches to emerge in the Olustee area.⁷

The Cross S Ranch in its early years operated on the model of the free range cattle ranches of frontier history that also gave rise to a national mythology. The history is that these ranches actually functioned as vast enterprises with minimal investment in land or labor. In the case of the Cross S, its range has been widely understood to have extended over an amount of land equal to twenty-one sections—more than three entire townships—between the Red River and Altus.⁸ The critical point in this is that the land was neither purchased nor homesteaded, although some parts may have been leased. It was land that was, as various accounts report, "controlled," "grazed," or just "used." This gave a special, and technical, meaning to the term "free range." Because of the informal nature of the use of that range, the exact boundaries are not known and were probably never precisely articulated. Of the general size and extent of the ranch operations, however, there can be no doubt.⁹ For that vast domain, however, the investment was limited to the initial cows and bulls, the day-to-day expenses, a modest dwelling, and the wages of a small force of cowboys to tend the herd, especially at roundup and market seasons. It was not necessary to cultivate or harvest the forage for the livestock, for the native grasses in this rich soil were abundant and self regenerating, and it was not even necessary to pay taxes, given the unorganized political status of the area.

The vulnerability of such a ranching empire, however, was obvious. The open land that attracted the ranchers also attracted others, and growing numbers of people who aspired to become small farmers on their own land rather than cattle ranchers on the public domain moved into the same area in the 1880s. By 1886 enough settlers had moved in and staked out their homestead claims that they gathered and petitioned the state of Texas for recognition of Greer County in this area between the two forks of the Red River. The new county seat would be at Mangum. Post offices were emerging to serve the communities springing up, and one post office was located at Frazier, which would become Altus in the twentieth century, and one was located at Willow Vale (or Willowvale), on Boggy

⁷ Dickerson, "The History of Olustee."

⁸ Dickerson, "The History of Olustee."

⁹ The details of the ranching system of which the Cross S formed a part have been developed in a number of historical studies. Lewis Atherton, *The Cattle Kings* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), in particular makes a careful inquiry into the economics and culture of the large ranches and draws upon James S. Brisbin's promotional book, *The Beef Bonanza*, published in 1881, at precisely the moment that the Eddlemans were launching their enterprise.

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Cross S Ranch Headquarters, Olustee, Jackson County, OK

(Gypsum) Creek near the Cross S; E. G. Walcott, after he left the Eddlemans, established that Willow Vale post office and a store in a dugout. The institutions of civil government and education were starting to emerge throughout the new county. Even if the post offices were in dugouts, even if the county seat was miles away in Mangum, and even if the Cross S was a well-established and huge cattle ranch, the implications of this development were clear and powerful. Fundamentally, the free, open range, was becoming neither free nor open as homesteaders selected optimal sites for their own 160 acre holdings.

The next step of the ranchers was neither self-evident nor predetermined, although some accounts reduce the range of choices open to ranchers to simply one: a reflexive hostility against the homesteaders. The actual circumstances were much more fluid, if less dramatic. Some ranchers, like Captain Richard King in Texas, began to purchase all the land they could so that they would not be hemmed in by the homesteaders. In other areas, like the Powder River Basin of Wyoming, to take an extreme case, ranchers literally went to war against the homesteaders to fight off the intrusion into what they considered their private domain even though it consisted of public land. The choice of the Eddlemans was between these poles. They went west. Nellie Eddleman Sipes, daughter of L. Z. Eddleman, recalled that "In 1886 my father and [his] two brothers, Ira and Bud, drove four thousand head of cattle to Albuquerque, New Mexico where they had leased a ranch for five years."¹⁰ This was not all of the ranch cattle and subsequently some of the remaining cattle were taken north into Oklahoma Territory near Woodward where Ira Eddleman established a separate ranch. But it did represent a hiatus in the history of the Cross S and also the beginning of a new stage in the transformation of this ranch and the agricultural system of the area. The New Mexico enterprise turned out badly for the Eddlemans. Surviving correspondence hints at opportunities for further investment that may have gone sour and there is some possibility that relations among the brothers were strained. Some secondary accounts suggest that while in New Mexico the operation was a financial loss and that "over the five years, they lost most of the cattle herd to drought conditions and rustlers."¹¹ It is also clear that L. Z. Eddleman spent at least a portion of that time back in Pilot Point where some correspondence reached him and where he married Ella Douglass from that town in 1889.¹²

It also appears that while occupied with ranching in New Mexico the brothers retained the ranch in Greer County, Texas, for L. Z. Eddleman returned there after the completion of the five-year lease on the New Mexico land. And after this, the Eddleman brothers' Cross S Ranch turned its attention to

¹⁰ Nellie Eddleman Sipes, "Recollections of a Pioneer Ranch Girl in Greer County," *Olustee Chieftain*, June 16, 1983.

¹¹ Joseph K Anderson and Susan E. Bearden, *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Sheep: An Archaeological Study of Early Ranching Complexes in Southwestern Oklahoma* (Lawton, Oklahoma: Museum of the Great Plains, 1994), 83; Cecil R. Chesser, *A History of Jackson County* (Altus: Altus Printing Co., 1971), 20-21.

¹² See, for example, the letter from H. F. Bennett in Albuquerque, to L. Z. Eddleman in Pilot Point, September 21, 1888, copy located in Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection.

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Cross S Ranch Headquarters, Olustee, Jackson County, OK

the raising of horses rather than cattle. Soon they would join the throng of others and file their own homestead claims for land. The cattle empire of the Cross S Ranch was now in the past, reflecting the prevailing pattern of a short-lived but dramatic period in which vast cattle ranches used the open range as their own.

The Rise of a New Ranch

Eighteen ninety-one marks the first year of the new operation of the ranch at Willowvale and events of that year showed some of the opportunities and challenges of the future, circumstances that the Cross S was not alone in facing, and circumstances that would deepen its historical significance. At some point early in the year the ranch planted a crop of wheat, and in doing so was one of the earliest efforts in the area to grow that cereal. While one report credits neighbor H. F. Crutchfield with introducing wheat to the Boggy Creek drainage, a letter from Ira Eddleman at Willowvale to his father in Pilot Point in September 1891 describes the wheat harvest on their own ranch, while also noting that the threshing crew "is to be at Mr. Crutchfiel[d]'s today and that will about finish up our neighborhood."¹³ Whether Crutchfield introduced wheat or not is less significant than the fact that the Eddlemans quickly became wheat growers, for it indicates that, far from taking a hostile approach to the homesteaders in the vicinity, the Cross S Ranch even adapted to the farming trend and did so with an innovative elan, starting to raise wheat alongside some of the others. Wheat-growing remained for a good while a small portion of the total agricultural production of the county, but this early effort indicates the beginning of a subtle but major shift in agricultural practices in the area.

The second development, however, almost undid the first. In June 1891 the Red River and Boggy Creek flooded, sending their waters far into the surrounding area they drained. For the Cross S this was nearly devastating since Boggy Creek's waters rose in the night and only awakened two of the hired men who were sleeping in the picket house when their beds began to float in the water.¹⁴ The flood drowned a number of the horses on the ranch and washed away some of the ranch equipment, including a new buggy. Nellie Eddleman Sipes would recall later that her own mother "said during the entire day following the flood that horses could be seen swimming in the bottom which lay between the ranch house and Boggy Creek."¹⁵ Plus, the flood destroyed about half the wheat that had been planted. In September, the Eddlemans reported 1100 bushels of "badly damaged wheat," and hoped to be able to market about half of that amount.¹⁶ The impact on the ranch's cattle,

¹³ Gordon Cole, "When Old Greer was New," Ira Eddleman at Willowvale to Dr. R. W. Eddleman at Pilot Point, September 10, 1891, copy of letter in Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection.

¹⁴ Nellie Eddleman Sipes, "Ranch Girl in Greer County."

¹⁵ Nellie Eddleman Sipes, "Ranch Girl in Greer County."

¹⁶ Ira Eddleman at Willowvale to Dr. R. W. Eddleman at Pilot Point, September 10, 1891, copy of letter in Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection. The farm was possibly cultivating a form of wheat other than the winter wheat which was only

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whatever number remained from the previous ventures, is unclear. They still had some cattle and Ira Eddleman in September was planning on going to the roundups soon and already had one man there working the cattle, the point being that he was preparing to ship some to market. Despite the flood, then, it appears that the Cross S Ranch, now somewhat more diversified than it had been previously, was moving forward with its ranch at its headquarters on Boggy Creek.

And, because of the damage done by the flood to the property, the Eddlemans, especially L. Z. Eddleman, determined to build a bigger headquarters on higher, dryer, ground. At some point not long after the flood, men identified in several accounts simply as "two Swedes" were traveling through the area and Eddleman contracted them to build him a home out of limestone. Actually, there is some disagreement as to when this took place. Most accounts place the construction date as the following year, 1892, and this has been repeated in virtually every other subsequent history of the ranch. The alternative of 1891, however, is persuasive because of its source. Nellie Eddleman Sipes, daughter of L. Z. and Ella Eddleman, wrote, "I was born in the fall of 1891 on the Cross S Ranch, located on Boggy Creek . . ." A newspaper account written about her life and based on an interview the reporter conducted with Ms. Sipes is more specific: "She was born November 8, 1891, in the Old Rock House on Boggy Creek."¹⁷

Once the house was completed, it became not only the headquarters for the ranch, but something of a landmark and center of gravity for local development. E. G. Walcott's post office on the banks of Boggy Creek had also flooded and Walcott re-established the post office and a store "which he opened down the road from the Eddleman Ranch Stonehouse Headquarters."¹⁸ The Eddlemans promptly furnished the house with every refinement possible. They brought the first piano to the region and installed it in this house, although the accompanying musicians doubtless produced an innovative blend of musical flavors: "Papa bought a piano in 1892 and with the cowboys' guitars, fiddles and banjos[,] every evening was spent listening to 'After the Ball,' 'Over the Waves,' and 'Black Hawk Waltz.'"¹⁹ The stone house also became the home of the first set of encyclopedias introduced into the area, a cultural development of perhaps even greater symbolic importance than the arrival of the first piano.

The ranch itself, the damage of the flood notwithstanding, forged on with its agricultural operations. In fact, only in the 1890s did the brothers move to address an aspect of ranching that their farmer

then being introduced broadly on the Great Plains and which would later predominate and would be harvested in the spring; the 1891 crop was harvested in early autumn.

¹⁷ Nellie Eddleman Sipes, "Ranch Girl in Greer County," "Mrs. Nellie Sipes Restores Old Home; Revives Many Childhood Memories," Olustee *Chieftain*, December 24, 1964.

¹⁸ Cole, "When Old Greer was New."

¹⁹ Sipes, "Recollections of a Pioneer Ranch Girl in Greer County."

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neighbors had already accomplished. After a considerable time of living and working on the ranch, after building an imposing edifice for their home and headquarters, almost as an afterthought the brothers filed homestead claims to the land. One advantage they held was their numbers; the three brothers could file separate, but adjoining, homestead claims. In that way, they individually met the requirements of the homestead law. L. Z. Eddleman received the patent to his land in 1899 and his piece included the land where the stone house had been built. His brother Ira and his brother Bud appear to have received patents to their adjoining lands about the same time. Even the brothers' father received a patent on a quarter section of land in 1901 before his death three years later. With a combined total of about a full square mile the Cross S Ranch became one of the largest operations in this area, even if it was but a fraction of the wide range that it once dominated.²⁰

Whether the Eddlemans planted any more wheat soon after the bitter harvest of 1891 is not known, but the ranch still ran cattle and in 1892 Ira Eddleman would write L. Z., who was away at the time, that he was preparing for cattle work in the spring and that he was soon going to a livestock meeting in Quanah, Texas.²¹ The cattle ranching, however, clearly paled in comparison to the ascendancy of horse ranching on the Cross S. By 1902, in fact, it appears that L. Z. Eddleman had all but gotten out of the cattle business and devoted virtually all the ranch's attention to horses.

The horse business was not new to the Cross S and, in fact, it can be seen early on as a contributing and complementary element of the cattle business. When the Eddleman brothers trailed four thousand cattle to New Mexico, they took their very substantial remuda of a hundred fifty saddle horses with them.²² When the brothers returned from New Mexico, L. Z. Eddleman's daughter recalled, "From that time on, we had a horse ranch." Horses were clearly a passion for L. Z. Eddleman. Nellie Eddleman Sipes captured the degree of that passion when she noted that "Since my father was such a lover of horses, I have always suspicioned that I was named for a little mustang, that was brought to Old Greer from Mexico. I was told that Nellie was a beautiful horse with a silky mane and a long tail. She was only one of many horses drowned in the '91 flood."²³

The horse business was—and remains—different from the cattle business, in some ways even at opposite ends of the ranching spectrum. The components of the horse ranch are different from those of a cattle ranch where the livestock represent a commodity to be marketed for slaughter and the income is generated by the pound. In the horse ranch, by contrast, the horses are traded,

²⁰ Land Patents Book located in Office of the Jackson County Clerk, Altus, Oklahoma. Also see the copies of the land patents for L. Z. Eddleman and R. W. Eddleman reproduced in Cecil R. Chesser, *The Historic Eddleman Brothers' Cross S Ranch Olustee, Oklahoma* (n.p., n.d.).

²¹ Ira Eddleman to L. Z. Eddleman, March 26, 1892, Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection.

²² Sipes, "Recollections of a Pioneer Ranch Girl in Greer County."

²³ Sipes, "Recollections of a Pioneer Ranch Girl in Greer County."

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broken, and bred individually. As a consequence of this inherent structure, the Eddleman horses tended to be managed with attention to the particular qualities of each head rather than collectively as a herd. Ranchers and cowboys yesterday and today are famous for their ability to identify and tend to their many cattle, sometimes knowing each of them by look and disposition even when their herds include many head and range widely, but the horse ranch requires a different measure of individual attention. As one peers into the horse ranch of a century ago, when horses and mules were utilitarian creatures rather than pets or fancy adornments, this individual focus of the rancher takes on a special significance. The quality of the individual horse was found partly in its size and form, but especially in its strength and eagerness to undertake the task at hand and in its responsiveness to the rider or driver. With the cattle, there was no effort to tame and train them; with the horses, that was what it was all about. As for the ranchers themselves, the skills and acumen of the horse trader became not only distinct as a subculture of the ranching industry but those abilities even came to be applied in the larger culture to describe negotiating of any kind. Raising horses was a world apart from raising cattle, although the two worlds often overlapped. In a culture where horses and mules literally provided the horsepower for most transportation aside from the railroad and where they powered farm equipment in an overwhelmingly agricultural and rural society, this was not a realm defined by hobbyists or recreational interests. Cattle may have provided an important food and clothing element but horses were fundamental to the way the world worked.

One part of the business was devoted to acquiring fresh stock. In this regard, it appears that the Eddleman brothers did as other horse ranchers did, and this is made explicit in one account of the ranch: "Buying the horses in Mexico, he [L. Z. Eddleman] had them brought to the Cross S where they were broken and then resold."²⁴ The Mexico activities seem to have been the special responsibility of Bud Eddleman, a man who later was listed as living in Estacion Madero. (Ira Eddleman seems to have been the brother most inclined, at least after 1892, to cattle ranching and by 1902 he and Bud Eddleman were ranching on Clear Creek near Woodward.²⁵) The breaking of the horses was a challenge but there seemed to be a ready market for quality horses and the rewards of bronco busting proved to be both psychological and material. And the Eddlemans were eager and competent horse traders, although some of that skill was as hard won as the breaking of a horse. In 1892 Ira Eddleman ruefully described one trade that cost him fifty dollars to cancel once he discovered that the terms to which he had earlier agreed were unfavorable: "Well," he wrote, "our horse trade is off. I never found out the true value of that property until I got back to town. . . . I only blame myself for being fool enough to trade for anything without thoroughly investigating its value, and for pricing stock right down to their cash value in such a trade."²⁶ Thus were the lessons

²⁴ Long, "House Marks Site of Former Giant Ranch."

²⁵ John W. White interview, September 2, 1937, Linnaeus B. Ranck, interviewer, interview 8420-A, Oklahoma Archives, copy located in Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection.

²⁶ Ira Eddleman to L. Z. Eddleman, March 26, 1892, in Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection.

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of the trade learned. The family's horse-trading skill improved, though. The following year two local farmers purchased two gray horses from the Eddlemans, (with the Cross S brand, it was noted, "on left jaw and thigh"), mortgaging their entire wheat crop to the Eddlemans as security until the full price was paid.²⁷

The Eddleman brothers developed a wide reputation for their horses and horse buyers and breeders came to the ranch for the Eddleman stock and sometimes those horses were taken elsewhere to tap a wider market. From at least 1891 to 1897 "Eddleman's Ranch near Willowvale" circulated cards advertising the service of the Eddleman stallions. There were a number of these valued horses, and some, like Pelig and Bero, achieved distinction, but probably none was as famous as Reno's Baby, a horse that L. Z. Eddleman had bred from Reno Defiance and Lucy Q in 1887. After training on the Eddleman ranch, Reno's Baby set records at pacing and trotting that held for years after that and, as a consequence, was in high demand as a stud both at the Cross S and at Pilot Point where he was also advertised.²⁸ In 1893, after one prospective buyer visited the ranch to see another Eddleman horse called Hans, Ira Eddleman wrote his brother that the visitor "is stuck on Baby, said he liked him better than any horse he ever saw" and was sending his mare forthwith.²⁹ When Reno's Baby died in 1919, the horse's passing was marked as far away at least as the Denton, Texas, newspapers.

There was more to horse ranching, of course, than breeding, breaking, and trading, and this further marked changes in the shift from cattle ranching to horse ranching. Those changes included other dimensions. In the first place, depending on the size of the herd, the ranch required less land than did the cattle ranch, an aspect that took advantage of their new circumstance after the decline of the open range and the appearance of farms all around the Cross S. The Eddlemans also put more of their land into growing the forage for the horses, thereby putting into cultivation parcels of land that had previously produced only the native grasses. The Cross S produced its own alfalfa, Johnson grass, and sorghum for forage—crops that were directly related to their horse business.

Ranching in a Modernizing World

Even as this ranch changed in the early twentieth century, the world around the ranch was also changing, and changing in ways that would ultimately affect the Cross S. Those changes included the rise of a society where populations were increasingly concentrated rather than dispersed, where communications and transportation both increasingly undermined local communities and linked

²⁷ Chattel Mortgage and bill of sale documents filed in Greer County, Texas, Joseph Hellrig and George Rowden purchasers, at Willowvale, March 24, 1893, copy in Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection.

²⁸ See advertising cards and news clippings on Reno's Baby in Eddleman / Cross S Ranch papers in Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection

²⁹ Ira Eddleman to L. Z. Eddleman, March 26, 1892, in Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection.

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people to distant markets, where economic activity was increasingly specialized, and where relationships were increasingly impersonal and distant. These trends would ultimately undermine the basis of a local ranch like the Cross S.

The first decade of the life of the Cross S Ranch Headquarters, from about 1891 to 1902, doubtless constituted the golden years of the ranch, and more good years would follow, but by the 1900s and 1910s the ranch was changing. Some general parameters of the evolution of the Cross S, and the environment in which it operated, are evident. First of all, a set of political changes generated new and different development locally. In 1896, following years of litigation and tension between Texas and the United States, the U.S. Supreme Court determined that the branch of the Red River known as the Prairie Dog Fork—the branch that formed the southern edge of Greer County, Texas—actually was the main fork of the Red River and therefore also the boundary between Texas and Oklahoma. The Cross S Ranch, as of 1896, was officially in Oklahoma Territory and after 1907 in the state of Oklahoma. Moreover, in 1903 the Frisco Railroad reached the village of Olustee, five and a half miles north of the Cross S. This was the last section of the line and completed the railroad route as it stretched from the town that would soon be known as Altus, Oklahoma to Quanah, Texas.³⁰ Olustee itself was starting to grow. A cotton gin was located nearby in 1898 and in 1902 E. G. Walcott moved his store from Willowvale to Olustee. The town had only two dozen people in it at the turn of the century but after the railroad came through the town boomed. It was incorporated in 1904, held 1500 people at the time of statehood in 1907, and made an unsuccessful bid the following year for the county seat of the new Jackson County.³¹ The Cross S was no longer the social center of the area.

In addition, the Eddleman ranch itself changed. Shortly after the turn of the century, L. Z. Eddleman was the only brother left at the ranch. In 1902 Ira wrote L. Z. that their brother Bud was proving difficult in matters of finance and property settlement and “is just going to be as unreasonable and hard to deal with as if he had never been our brother, I fear.”³² Although it appears that the two (Ira and Bud) had established a separate cattle ranch in Harper County, at the west end of the Cherokee Outlet, by 1903 one report indicated that Ira Eddleman had left that ranch and moved to Woodward, Oklahoma and that Bud Eddleman had moved to California.³³ In the several years after the 1904 death of the brothers’ father, R. W. Eddleman, L. Z. consolidated the holdings, buying or otherwise acquiring their parcels. In 1904 Lee Eddleman gave L. Z. a quitclaim deed for some of his property and other transactions in the land records show that L. Z. brought the contiguous land into his own hands. Even so, brother Ira sold some of his property to an outside party (L. H. Patton) and Bud

³⁰ Chesser, *A History of Jackson County*, 25.

³¹ Dickerson, “The History of Olustee;” Chesser, *A History of Jackson County*, 24-25.

³² Ira Eddleman to L. Z. Eddleman, February 6, 1902, in Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection.

³³ John W. White, interview, September 2, 1937.

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probably did the same, so that the total acreage after the consolidation was reduced yet again from what it had been.

At the same time, L. Z. Eddleman and his family spent at least a portion of the time back in Pilot Point, Texas. Although some of the Eddleman children are listed in the rolls of the Willowvale school census at different points in time, it was not unusual for the family to spend the school year in Pilot Point and return to the ranch in the summer, often bringing their guests.³⁴ Of course, the foreman and the ranch hands continued to work and live at the ranch year round.

These factors converged to give the ranch house a different set of occupants from time to time. At least some times the house appears to have provided quarters for ranch employees, although how often is not clear because additional buildings emerged on the property to house the complement of workers and the references to living in particular buildings are indistinct. (Some of those employees, in the early period, also filed homestead claims on nearby properties.) The buildings that emerged on the ranch were wood frame structures, and one was so close it was considered to have been attached on the southwest corner of the stone house, although the attachment, if it actually was attached, was limited at most to the rail of the stairway on the main building.

In 1902 one family lived at the stone house that did not even work on the ranch. More than sixty years later, Sarah McHan Bradley, a daughter in that family, wrote Nellie Eddleman Sipes that "I too have wonderful memories about that dear old Rock House (6 miles south of Olustee, O.K.) as I lived there in 1902. I was fourteen at that time." Arriving in the area in December with no place to stay, her family had been allowed by L. Z. Eddleman to live there for about a year, although it is also apparent that Eddleman himself was using the upstairs of the stone building at the time for his own quarters.³⁵



The Cross S Ranch Headquarters, with a frame house attached (?) at its southwest corner about 1900. Photo: Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma.

³⁴ Chesser, *A History of Jackson County*, 45; Sipes, "Recollections of a Pioneer Ranch Girl in Greer County," "Mrs. Nellie Sipes Restores old Home; Revives many childhood Memories."

³⁵ Sarah McHan Bradley to Nellie Eddleman Sipes, February 29, 1964, in Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection.

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The Cross S Ranch had been born both literally and figuratively in the nineteenth century and quickly found itself navigating new tides that eroded both the solid rock of the world that produced it and also the ranch itself. The open range was gone. The ranch was smaller. The ranch now was located in Oklahoma, not Texas, despite the fact that the rock house had not budged an inch. The railroad passed nearby in a town that had been hardly a village previously. The hamlet of Willowvale, that had once provided the mailing address for the ranch, no longer existed. The Eddleman family was now separate, the brothers far from each other, and the L. Z. Eddleman family itself divided its time between two residences, the Cross S and Pilot Point. Sometimes there were even strangers living at the ranch headquarters. The revealing point in all this is that these developments were reflections of the contours of the new society emerging in the nation.

From Ranching to Farming

The stone house served as the Cross S Ranch Headquarters in the first half of the twentieth century, a period that encompassed a significant change for the ranch—and for agriculture in general. While less dramatic and not so laden with popular imagery as the early days of open range ranching, that portion of its period of historical significance remains equally important for it represents another stage in its history. The L. Z. Eddleman family continued to operate the ranch, using this building in particular, and it became their main residence. Although L. Z. Eddleman himself died in 1925, his wife Ella Douglass Eddleman lived until 1958. But well before the death of either, the ranch had already passed to the next generation. It was in that stone house where Nellie Eddleman had been born in 1891, and where she was married in 1911 to Orley Sipes, and it was there that one, and perhaps two, of their three children were born. When the Sipes family moved out of the house, at a point between the birth of their oldest daughter, Helen, in the stone house in 1917 and the birth of the youngest daughter, Mary Nell, in 1924, they moved not to Pilot Point but to Olustee.³⁶

In these years there are no indications that the horse operation continued with the energy and expertise that L. Z. Eddleman had once brought to it. The ranch continued running some cattle, and perhaps some horses too, but the truth was that the ranching industry was changing and was diminishing in the nation and in Jackson County too. What was happening was that ranches were turning into farms. Oklahoma University history professor Edward Everett Dale, nationally recognized historian of the ranching industry, addressed this process in his own research and writing, noting the decline of the ranches thus: "Pasturage grew more and more restricted. Every portion of the range area suitable for crop growing—and much which it now seems was not suitable—was occupied. The cattle disappeared from the plains as if by magic and farmers armed with the tools of their craft sprang up on all sides as though some unseen hand had planted dragons' teeth on every hill and in every valley."³⁷ Aside from his obvious credentials as an expert in the field, Dale's view is especially

³⁶ Interview with Paul Mock, husband of Mary Nell Mock and son-in-law of Nellie Eddleman Sipes, September 27, 2005.

³⁷ Edward Everett Dale, *Cow Country* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942, 1965), 234.

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pertinent to the present discussion because of his early background. Born in the Cross Timbers of north Texas, Edward Everett Dale's family moved to Greer County, Texas in 1892, where Dale helped his father on the family ranch and rode as a cowboy for neighboring ranchers.³⁸ Although he and his brother started up their own ranch in Jackson County, they went broke in 1900 and had to sell their remaining cattle, horses, and other possessions just to settle their debts. Edward Everett Dale then turned to teaching near Navajoe, east of Altus, and at Duke, about ten miles northwest of Olustee.³⁹ Part of the education of this future history professor from Harvard took place on the same prairies and in the same circumstances that produced the history of the Cross S Ranch.

Like other ranches, the Cross S Ranch was turning away from livestock and toward the production of crops. The Eddlemans had begun cultivating different crops for the market as early as 1891 and they probably continued to do so even while raising horses. Indeed, it would be surprising if they did otherwise since they had a ready supply of the horse and mule power that provided the energy for plowing, cultivating, and harvesting and since the production of forage for their horses equipped them to produce other crops. In this, it once again represented the larger pattern of agriculture. The agricultural statistics gathered by the U.S. Census for 1890 and 1900 are missing or incomplete for Jackson County, but subsequent years clearly show the trend. Cattle production was up by about ten percent in the decade between 1910 and 1920, reflecting the boom generated by the war. The decade of the 1920s, however, produced an agricultural depression in Oklahoma and in the nation that preceded and contributed to the Depression of the 1930s. During the 1920s Jackson County cattle production dropped by twenty-nine percent. The number of horses and mules likewise dropped, falling from 10,937 in 1920 to 5984 in 1935, a reflection also of the growing importance of tractors and trucks on the farms of America.⁴⁰

The decline of livestock ranching, however, is only part of the story. The same years saw the expansion of crop production. Between 1920 and 1935 the production of wheat in Jackson county increased literally by tenfold, from just over 64,000 bushels in 1910 to more than 644,000 bushels in 1935. Cotton cultivation in the county more than doubled between 1910 and 1930, going from 94,463 acres to 244,598 acres.⁴¹ Ranching was fading, farming was increasing, but, in fact, both were in serious trouble as commodity prices fell after 1923 and costs for equipment and supplies

³⁸ Arrell M. Gibson, Ed., *Frontier Historian: The Life and Work of Edward Everett Dale* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 9-10.

³⁹ Gibson, Ed., *Frontier Historian: The Life and Work of Edward Everett Dale*, 16-17.

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Commerce, *United States Census of Agriculture, 1935. Reports for States with Statistics for Counties and a Summary for the United States, vol. I* (Washington: U.S.G.P. O., 1936), 729; *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Volume VI, Part 2, Agriculture* (Washington, U.S.G.P.O., 1922), 638-639.

⁴¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Volume VII, Agriculture 1909 and 1910 Reports by States, with Statistics for Counties* (Washington: G. P. O., 1913), 367, 382-383; *United States Census of Agriculture, 1925, Part II* (Washington: U.S.G.P.O., 1927), 1074-1075.

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remained high. Not surprisingly, in the agricultural depression of the 1920s there was also a shift in the population from the countryside and villages to the cities that remains legendary in the memory of the rural communities of the nation. These people were being forced off the farms and ranches, not because of their own individual failings or lack of thrift but because of a system of agriculture that was changing, because of their own successes in increasing production and thereby also flooding markets, because of persistent drought conditions (Jackson County lying on the periphery of the Dust Bowl), and because of the collapse of banks in the 1920s that held the mortgages and loans for their farm properties causing the loans to be called in. The farms of Jackson County suffered the same as farms across the nation's bread basket with one after another being abandoned, being foreclosed, given up at tax auctions, the land left idle, and the proud farmers themselves forced onto the road searching for employment elsewhere. That this was the case in Jackson County, that this was the case in the Olustee vicinity, can be seen in an ominous photograph made by noted Farm Security Administration photographer Dorothea Lange in June 1938 of a property near the Cross S. The homes left to decay were not just the humble dwellings of the croppers and tenants; they also included the substantial homes of the owners who had built up the farms and ranches over decades and who had witnessed their success with their crops in the summer sun as brutal forces reshaped the nation's agricultural sector.

It is in that context that one Cross S Ranch document may take on a deeper and broader meaning in the transformation of agriculture. On November 15, 1929, Nellie Eddleman Sipes and O. T. Sipes purchased the Cross S Ranch property, including the parcel with this building, at public auction for a total of \$45.05, that being the amount due to the county for delinquent taxes for 1928.⁴² The specific origins of this document are lost in the mists of time, but the general conclusion remains sharp: The Cross S Ranch was not exempt from the powerful forces reshaping the countryside of the nation and in times of hardship as well as times of abundance, it reflected the pattern of change. Unlike many others, however, the Sipes family was able to hold onto its farm, the legendary Cross S Ranch.



Dorothea Lange photo: "Vacant farmhouse in area of mechanization and drought near Olustee," 1938. Photograph: Farm Security Administration / Office of War Information Photo Collection, Library of Congress.

Exactly when the stone house was no longer occupied remains uncertain, but the consensus is generally that no one lived there on a full time basis after the 1930s and the middle of that decade is

⁴² A copy of this document is located in the Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection.

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used here to close the period of significance for the building. Without suggesting that this point represented an end to the process of historical change, it is clear that by the end of the decade, and probably a few years earlier, the building no longer served as headquarters for the Cross S Ranch, and that the ranch was by then largely a farming operation. By that time, moreover, the contours of the agricultural transformation were clear: a brief period of the bonanza of cattle ranches on the open range had been replaced by smaller ranches on properties with defined boundaries, and the cattle ranching in this case gave way to a horse ranch, and then ranching yielded to farming. Moreover, even the farming changed as farms were no longer characterized by an owner-family that lived on the premises.

The Cross S beyond the Period of Significance

Since the end of the 1930s the Cross S Headquarters, once the hub of ranch and farm activity, has stood as a quiet remnant of the past and the farm itself as a representative of the continuing transformation of agriculture, the building unoccupied and the surrounding land planted in wheat. That vacancy notwithstanding, the ranch headquarters—the stone house—continued to be used even after the owners moved into town. The Sipes family continued to grow crops on the property and also to raise some livestock and in 1942 the Jackson County Commissioners listed the local cattle brands and O. T. Sipes was listed with the Cross S “on left side of hip, crop on left ear.”⁴³ (The state of Oklahoma did not institute a statewide brand registration system until 1950.) The stone building may have served as an operation center for the farm when seasonal crop-related activities were underway, but maintenance was evidently less systematic and thorough than if the building had been occupied. The stone house was maintained sufficiently, however, that it remained a center for the family. During the summers before and after World War II, and well into the 1950s at least, family members would gather at the property to reunite and to introduce the budding generations to the ranch and its lore.⁴⁴ By the 1950s Orley and Nellie Sipes were growing wheat on all the tillable land and using the remainder as pasture. At mid-century the remaining stands of prickly pear cactus and mesquite trees had been removed to allow more acreage to be planted with wheat, with the result that the stone house, while just as visible, and just as commanding and prominent as ever, also presented a more isolated and forlorn appearance than ever.

By the middle of the 1950s that wheat intensive agriculture reflected the broader trend in the county. Just two decades after withered crops and economic devastation marked the harvest, Jackson County devoted twice as many acres to wheat production as in 1935 and harvested nearly two and a

⁴³ Summary of Jackson County commissioner meeting for May 1, 1942, in unidentified news clipping, Eddleman Family / Cross S Ranch Collection.

⁴⁴ Interview with Paul Mock, September 27, 2005.

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half times as many bushels of the grain.⁴⁵ In this, clearly, the Cross S Ranch continued to make its contribution. Jackson County continued to produce good numbers of cattle, although very few came from the Cross S. As for the famous equine livestock that once dominated this ranch, the state Department of Agriculture no longer even kept track of horses and mules in a land of tractors.

There is one other trend that is evident, one that carries a direct connection to the agricultural commodities produced, but that is even more important. The prevailing trend in agriculture, one that those in the cities also noticed, had to do with the farm population. By mid-century there were fewer and fewer farms in the county, in the state, and in the nation. Four decades earlier, when the United States entered World War I, Jackson County had a total of 2,765 farms. By 1954 that number had declined to 1,572.⁴⁶ The Cross S was still one of them, but the tide was going against the independent farms—and the independent farmers. Most of those who remained on the farms, against the weight of the same forces that brought the Cross S to its current state, did so by supplementing their income with outside sources. That proved true of the Cross S as well. And these trends would continue. In the mid 1970s the property was sold by the family and was absorbed into a larger farming business and the Cross S finally ceased to exist except as acres of wheat land with an imposing building standing high on a rise like an island castle surrounded by a sea of grain, a silent stone sentinel of the past, rock solid in a world of change.

Summary

The significance of the Cross S Ranch as a part of the early settlement of southwest Oklahoma is clear from the circumstances of its origin. Located near one of the major cattle trails by which Texas ranchers drove their herds of livestock to Kansas for shipment to the nation's markets, the Cross S became one of the ranches that began to utilize the public domain of the disputed area between the two forks of the Red River and L. Z. Eddleman only secured a patent to the ranch land even on which the headquarters was located eight years after he built this ranch house. One of that hallmarks of that early settlement was the dwindling of the open range as homesteaders staked out land for themselves that had previously been used by the large ranches, and the Cross S responded by changing its operation from cattle ranching to horse ranching and by working a smaller area which the Eddleman brothers homesteaded. Thus in ways that are both direct and indirect, the Cross S Ranch qualifies for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places in the area of significance Exploration / Settlement.

⁴⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce, *United States Census of Agriculture, 1935. Reports for States with Statistics for Counties and a Summary for the United States, vol. I* (Washington: U.S.G.P. O., 1936), 734; Oklahoma State Board of Agriculture, *Oklahoma Agriculture: Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture 1955* (Oklahoma City, 1955), 85.

⁴⁶ Oklahoma State Board of Agriculture, *Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture 1917* (Oklahoma City, 1918), 103; Oklahoma State Board of Agriculture, *Oklahoma Agriculture: Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture 1955*, 81.

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In addition, the agricultural transformation in which this building was a participant and witness was at once subtle and profound, obvious and elusive. On one level the transformation demonstrated the changes in agriculture in this area, a shift from open range cattle ranching to homesteading, to horse-raising, and to crop production as a family farm, and finally to intensive crop raising even when the family that owned and operated it no longer lived there. On another level, however, the transformation was more than one represented by different stages as if they were somehow inevitable stages of history. Rather, the agricultural transformation evident with the Cross S Ranch was even more fundamental; that transformation was one of changed purpose and meaning in the use of the land and of changed values associated with rural life and the priority organized society attaches to that life. The Cross S Ranch Headquarters is important above all for providing a human measure of changes that are too often simply calculated on ledgers and statistical tables, and it thereby serves as a reminder of the revolution in which a society based on agriculture became instead a society in which agriculture was but one of a multitude of specialized parts of the economy. For that reason, the Cross S Ranch Headquarters is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in the area of significance, Agriculture.

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

This property includes the building and adjacent property 100 feet in each direction, located in the northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of the southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 7, Range 21 West, Township 1 South.

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes the property historically associated with the Cross S Ranch Headquarters.