

BILL ANALYSIS

H.C.R. 94
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Culture, Recreation, & Tourism
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Few states have so captured the popular imagination as Texas, and the roughly quarter of a century following the Civil War gave rise to one of the most defining images of the Lone Star State: that of the epic cattle drives, when rugged cowboys trailed vast herds of cattle across hundreds of miles of open range. Those legendary drives were inflected by a watershed event that marked the end of the Civil War in Texas: the issuance of an order on June 19, 1865, by General Gordon Granger, commander of the Department of Texas, announcing the abolition of slavery.

Juneteenth, as the state's emancipation day became known, delivered from bondage approximately 250,000 men, women, and children. In 1866, one of those former slaves, Bose Ikard, made history when he joined his employer, Oliver Loving, and his employer's partner, Charles Goodnight, in trailing a herd of cattle to New Mexico and Colorado; the route they followed subsequently gained renown as the Goodnight-Loving Trail. Mr. Ikard was far from being the only African American cowboy on the Texas range; in the last half of the 19th century, most cowboys working on the Coastal Plain, between the Sabine and Guadalupe Rivers, were black, and it is estimated that one-third of those participating in cattle drives were minorities-- African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans.

If the end of slavery transformed the social and political landscape of Texas, the rise of the cattle industry had a profound impact on its exhausted economy. When hostilities ceased in 1865, cattle were one resource the state had in abundance. By the close of the war, there were an estimated 8 to 10 head of cattle for each individual in the state. Because Texas had no rail connections with the north and east before 1873, and then because freight rates were so expensive, cattlemen relied on trail drives to get their herds to distant markets. Most of those drives were conducted by contract drovers, with crews of about 11 persons handling herds that might number as many as 3,000 head. In addition to the Goodnight-Loving Trail, the primary Texas cattle routes between 1867 and 1891 included the Chisholm Trail and the Western Trail, which led to the railheads at Abilene and Dodge City, Kansas, respectively. Those cattle not destined for rail shipment to the east and north were trailed to Indian reservations, military outposts, and mining camps. For much of the trail-driving period, Indian raids remained a potential danger. Countering that threat were units of the U.S. Army, many of them composed of African Americans known by the Indians as Buffalo Soldiers. These men forged a record of outstanding service. Before fenced ranges and quarantine laws brought the trail drives to a close, Texas cowboys had driven northward some 10 to 12 million cattle, whose sale realized a total of \$250 million.

Occurring at the same historical moment, the emancipation of Texas slaves and the commencement of the great cattle-drive era afforded new opportunities for a number of Texans, whose labors contributed immeasurably to the development of this state.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

This bill designates June 2007 as Juneteenth/Frontier Cowboy Month and commemorates the fortitude and achievements of Texas cowboys of every ethnic background.