

# Long, Tough Trail to Glory

BY FERGIE J. DEERING

The Chisholm Trail was a rugged road to travel, mean to men, hard on horses and tough on steers being walked to railroads for shipment to beef-hungry easterners. It was a way to market for stockmen and it was a challenge to adventure for the cowboys.

Now, a century later, the Chisholm Trail stands as one of the most glamorized temporary roads in history. Tales of heroic and villainous deeds done along the 1,000 mile route—both real and imaginary—have inspired countless books, magazine articles, newspaper stories, motion picture scripts and television programs.

In his book "The Chisholm Trail," published by the University of Oklahoma Press in 1954, Wayne Gard refers to the bovine highway as "the Texas cowhand's road to high adventure." For a dozen tempestuous years, beginning in 1867, Gard wrote, "It held the excitement of sudden stampedes, hazardous river crossings and brushes with Indian marauders" and at the end it promised "hilarious celebration in the saloons, gambling parlors and dance halls of frontier Kansas towns."

The trail might well have been called the McCoy Trail, because it was Joseph G. McCoy who was  
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## The Old Chisholm Trail

or

### The Cowboy's Path to Paradise

BY JOHN LIVINGSTON

Old Cowboy

The poem on these pages was sent in by Mrs. L. A. Rizhaupt Jr., who lives at Guthrie.

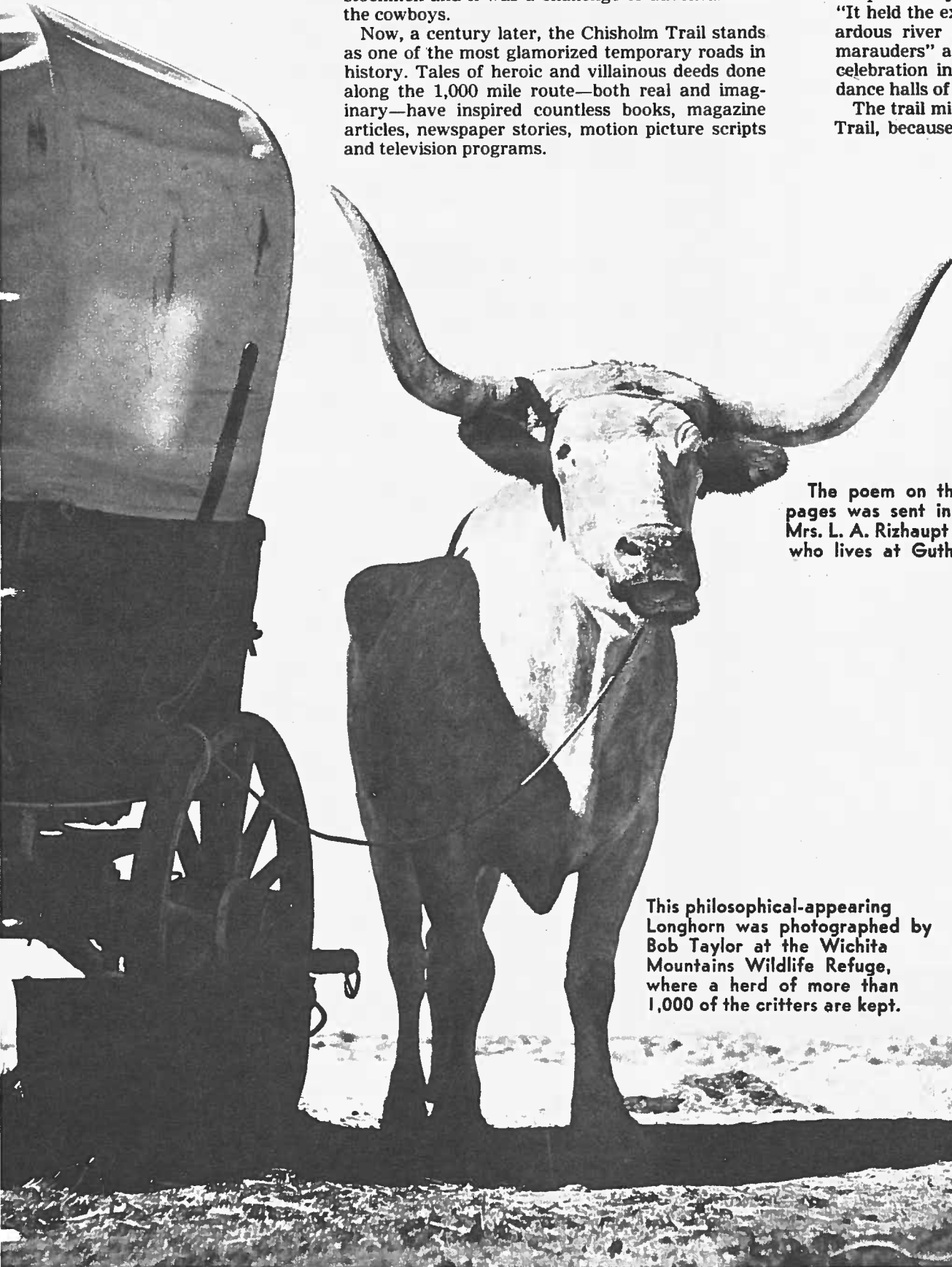
*It was just about the seventies,  
McCoy I'd never seen,  
But he'd built and owned the stockyards,  
In the town of Abilene;  
And he hired Jesse Chisholm,  
When the thought to him occurred,  
Of a cattle trail to Texas  
That would bring the 'long-horned' herd.*

*Then Jesse with a patience,  
Most remarkable to tell,  
Plowed a furrow, or blazed timber,  
Until he reached Caldwell;  
Then thru that Indian country,  
Almost directly south,  
He hit Red River Station,  
Just east of Cache Creek's mouth.*

*From Caldwell up to Abilene,  
We never got to go,  
But write this scrap of history,  
So my readers all will know;  
But going south from Caldwell,  
Thru that Indian Territory,  
Was where we old-time cowboys,  
Had a paradise of glory.*

*We had two Texas cattle trails,  
You may have heard before:  
One left Red River Station,  
The west one from Doane's store;  
Those trails were cattle highways,  
(That term may sound absurd),  
But since those trail herds vanished,  
The following has occurred.*

This philosophical-appearing Longhorn was photographed by Bob Taylor at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, where a herd of more than 1,000 of the critters are kept.





Early this summer, some Texans trailed and hauled 100 Longhorns from San Antonio, Texas, to Dodge City, Kan. Photo shows them at Doane's Crossing, south of Altus. They went up the Western Trail, about 50 miles west of the Chisholm Trail and established several years later.

The diagram at right shows the generally accepted route of the Chisholm Trail. Originally, some men called it the Abilene Cattle Trail, but it became the Chisholm Trail when it started following along the wagon route that was blazed by Jesse Chisholm.



*Of late there's been contention,  
Where that Chisholm Trail did go,  
But men who brought stock over it,  
Are the ones that really know;  
And I'm trying in these verses,  
To help the truth prevail,  
And stop all future arguments,  
About the Chisholm Trail.*

*Our local legislature said:  
"We ought to mark those trails;  
So that any false conception,  
Of the routes would not prevail;"  
And they made appropriation,  
Of exactly five-hundred plunks,  
To mark those two old cattle trails,  
With stakes, or posts, or chunks.*

*Those fellows on the Western trails,  
Got busy right away;  
And marked that old Dodge City trail,  
And expects the State to pay;  
But when we Chisholm Trail hands,  
Came down with our demand,  
The only thing available,  
Was cowtracks in the sand!*

*I feel it is my duty,  
When my fellow men dispute,  
And I know all about it,  
I the errors should refute;  
And as I've lived along that trail,  
Since eighteen eighty-one,  
I'll tell the world in poetry,  
Just where and how it run.*

*Now Buff Creek south of Caldwell,  
Was a nice rock-bottomed branch,  
And all who crossed the Salt Fork,  
Knew of Miller's L. K. ranch;  
Where Joe and Zack and little George,  
Were cowboys in their day,  
And Zack today is president,  
Of our C.S.C.P.A.*

*From there to Skeleton Stage ranch,  
The trail he did prepare,  
Then it crossed the Enid town-site,  
Thru her present public square;  
From there it went to Bison,  
Then known as Buffalo Springs,  
And then what is Hennessey,  
That Chisholm Trail us brings.*

*But when it got to Red Fork,  
At Cimarron's big bend,  
It went southwest toward Fort Sill,  
Where the freight-trail there did end;  
But divided back at Red Fork,  
And the North Canadian sands,  
We crossed a little down the stream,  
From where El Reno stands.*

*Then Union City hove in sight,  
And the South Canadian River;  
Whose width and mushy quicksand,  
Made the bravest cowboy quiver;  
For there's many Texas cattle  
If you know the full detail,  
That never reached the northern bank,  
And came on up the trail.*

*Then a little east of Chickasha,  
The Chisholm Trail us brings,  
And then meandering on south,  
To what we called Rush Springs;  
From there it went to Marlow,  
Then a little east of south,  
We forded big Red River,  
Just east of Cache Creek's mouth.*

*The Texas Old Trail Drivers,  
Some seventeen hundred strong,  
Endorse my marking of this trail,  
Which they all have been along;  
No matter what about these trails,  
You may have heard before,  
One left Red River Station,  
The west one from Doane's store.*

*When Jesse Chisholm in his grave,  
Out west of Geary went,  
He never dreamed about his trail,  
There'd be an argument;  
And in his molding casket,  
Where he has been so long,  
He'd turn if he had knowledge,  
Some Yap had marked it wrong.*

*Should anyone dispute me,  
In this trail that I locate,  
Ask Zack, or John L. Miller—  
Frank Eaton, or Mon Tate;  
Like me, they're old-time cowboys,  
And they'll tell you every one,  
That this puncher knows his onions,  
And his name's — John Livingston.*

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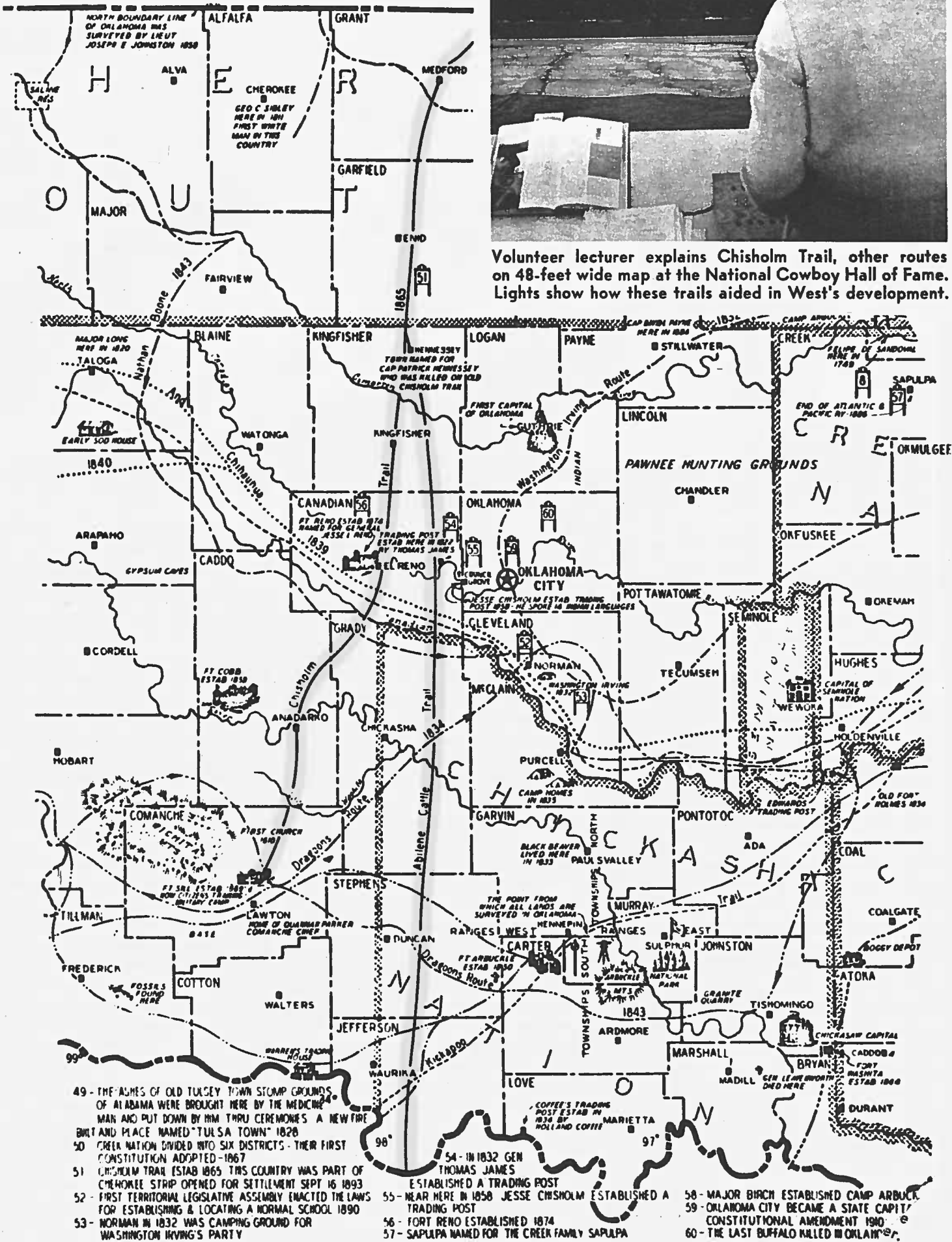
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# Long, Tough Trail to Glory

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Above is portion of an Oklahoma historical map published in 1931 by Oklahoma Natural Gas Co., showing many early-day trails. It shows Chisholm's Trail from Fort Sill to

Enid or Medford with an 1865 date. Abilene crosses Red River near Waurika and joins near Hennessey. ONG put out a revised





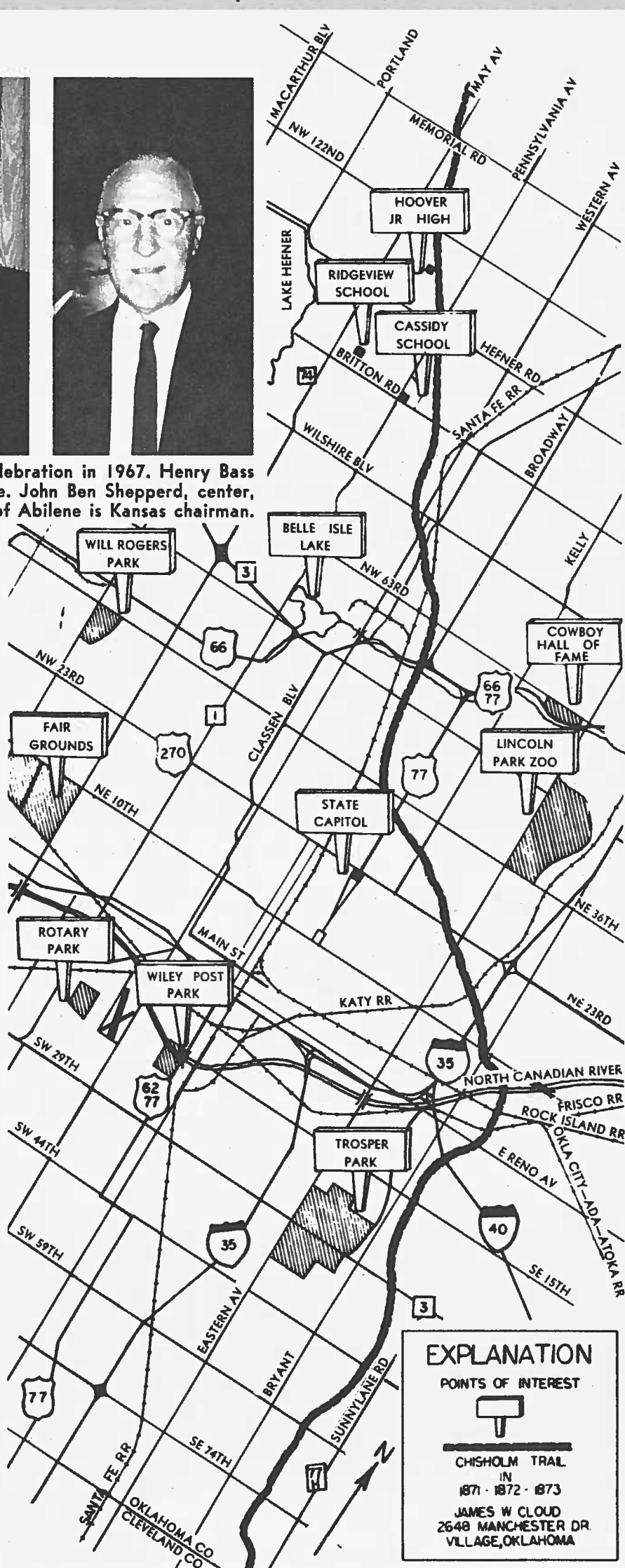
These men will lead Chisholm Trail centennial celebration in 1967. Henry Bass of Enid, left, is chairman of Oklahoma committee. John Ben Shepperd, center, of Odessa heads the Texas group. Ronald Laing of Abilene is Kansas chairman.

responsible for establishing the stock pens on the railroad at Abilene, Kan. This opened the way for trailing cattle, and soon other Kansas towns that had rejected McCoy's earlier offers were glad to accept the rough and ready cowboys and take their money. Jesse Chisholm, for whom the trail was named, was a freight hauler whose wagon tracks were picked up by the cowboys in Indian Territory and followed into Kansas. The trail went farther than Chisholm did either to the north or the south, and he probably never knew that he had contributed his name to it.

The exact time when this big trail became known as the Chisholm Trail isn't known. Probably it was just adopted by common usage. Its exact route has stirred many an argument, too, as trail bosses often deviated to find grass or water, to avoid Indians, or just to suit their convenience. The late T. C. Richardson, for years Texas editor of The Farmer-Stockman magazine, interviewed many old trail drivers and cowboys. He concluded that a cattle trail originated wherever a herd was "shaped up" and ended at the market place. He once wrote: "A thousand minor trails fed the main routes, and many an old-timer who as a boy saw a herd of stately Longhorns, piloted by bandannaed, booted and spurred men, lived with the firm conviction that the Dodge or Chisholm cattle Trail passed right over yonder."

Authorities trace cattle trails to the Rio Grande where herds bought or stolen in Mexico swam the river. Immediately after the Civil War, many followed the Shawnee Trail from San Antonio north and east to St. Louis, Mo. When Missouri farmers objected—with guns—other routes were sought. When the Kansas Pacific Railroad crossed Kansas, cattle trails headed in that direction. Because of many feeder trails and later trails to Ellsworth and Dodge City, there has been some confusion. In any event, it has been estimated that more than 10 million cattle were walked to market over the trails and probably more than half of them went up the old Chisholm Trail.

Next year, Oklahoma will join with Kansas and Texas to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Chisholm Trail. The governor of each state has appointed a committee to co-ordinate activities, and many cities along the route (which generally follows U.S. Highway 81) also have named committees. Leaders of the three state commissions have met together, but haven't announced plans yet. Chances are, though, that if you want to ride the Old Chisholm Trail, you will be able to join up with a caravan. Even in an air-conditioned car on a paved highway, it will take a few days, including stops for local events. That's when you'll be glad you didn't try it with a herd of several hundred mean, bawling Longhorn cattle.



Tilt diagram to left to get true north. According to James Cloud, government surveys show cattle crossed the Canadian River to north of Purcell and Lexington and followed the route indicated on this map before rejoining the main cattle trail in the vicinity of Dover.

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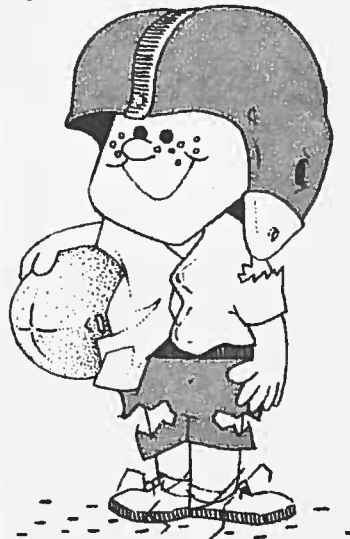
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