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# Jesse Chisholm

## No Wild Cowboy

The number of cattle driven up the Chisholm Trail and parallel trails in the 1860's and 1870's is said to have been the greatest overland movement of livestock in history. The number might be multiplied many times over if statistics included fictional herds portrayed in movies, literature and television shows.

Jesse Chisholm, the man for whom the Chisholm Trail was named, might be astonished at both the facts and the fiction. He wasn't a cattle herder. He was a settled trader with a permanent post from which he went out on expeditions carrying his goods in wagons for sale or trade. He was said to have known 14 Indian languages and was often called upon to serve as an interpreter.

Contrasting with adventuresome cowboys on the trails, Chisholm has been described as a man of quiet, kindly disposition and absolute honesty. He reportedly ransomed nine children held captive by Plains Indians and brought them up in his own household.

Long after the use of the trail for moving cattle had ceased, disputes arose as to its precise routes. As cattle herds ranged somewhat according to weather and forage available, it wasn't easy to define.

The arguments inspired an old cowboy named John Livingston to write a lengthy poem detailing his views on the route followed. One stanza read:

*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.*