

# Angus, Whiteface and Saddlestring

*What's in a Name? A lot when Naming a Frontier Town.*

by *E.R. Sphar*

**S**tockmen showed pride in their livelihood through animal herd names they gave their towns. They honored every type of ranch and range stock including race horses and overburdened, overworked and over cussed burros.

Angus, New Mexico, was named by P. G. Peters, its first postmaster, in 1898, to publicize the V V Ranch that stocked Angus cattle. Whiteface, Texas, pays homage to the Herefords raised there, but Hereford, Arizona, honors B. J. Hereford, friend of the founder. At Hereford, Texas, one of the first barbed wire fences was erected to keep the cattle of the T Anchor Ranch from drifting southward. Hereford, Oregon, honors a renowned bull that ranged the extensive area around the hamlet.

Isolated frontier ranches usually had enough cowhands to populate a village so post offices were authorized on large ranches. Owners had the privilege of naming them, so usually named it after themselves as built-in advertising. These were called "vanity" towns.

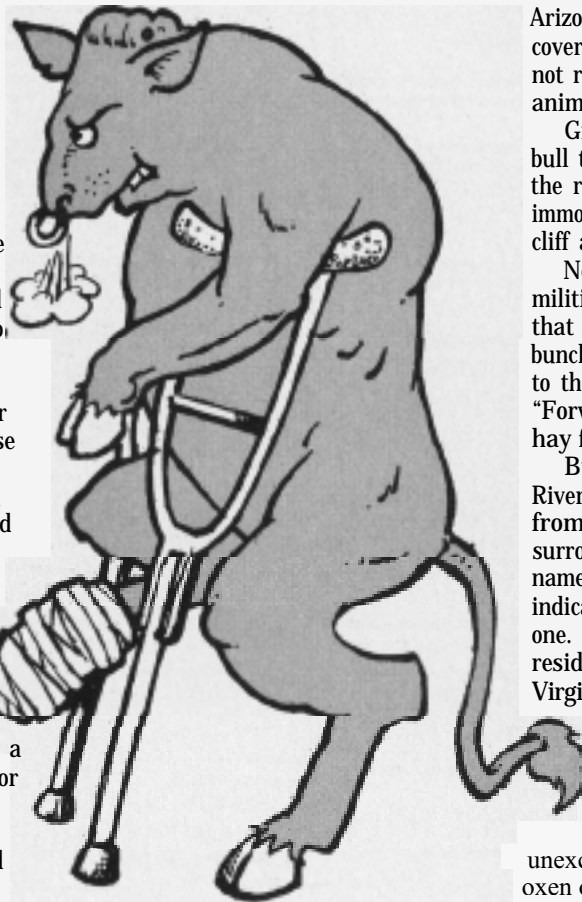
W. G. S. Hughes, Texas rancher and postmaster for 13 years, was modest and appreciative. He named his post office, Cowboy, for his ranch hands. Cowboy Springs, New Mexico, was a stop on the Butterfield Overland mail route.

Samuel Maverick is immortalized in the Texas town of Maverick because one of his cowhands neglected to brand a herd of cattle. Spur, Texas, was named for the famous Spur Ranch where popular Western writers like Emerson Hough, John Lomax and B. M. Bowers gathered authentic material for their novels.

When our earliest settlers used the word "cattle," they meant buffalo, so

Herd, Kentucky, probably honors buffalo. Buffalo herds tramped and stamped the ground around a Kentucky salt lick so Stamping Ground is a natural.

It took the bull strength of an entire government surveying party to force boats over shoals in the White River in Arkansas, hence the name Bull Shoals.



**Cripplecreek, WY**

Today a hill, a dam, a lake and a town commemorate their struggle.

Early gold seekers had trouble crossing the Colorado River in spring floods. By watching Indians the prospectors learned that the safest crossing to avoid quick sands was at a rock cliff shaped like a bull's head. When a dam was built, government officials named the new post office Bullhead City, Arizona. Water in back of the dam has covered the cliff, so travelers today may not realize the name honors a stock animal, not a fish.

Greybull, Wyoming, immortalizes a bull that, even in old age, ranged along the river defying hunters. Indians also immortalized him by a pictograph on a cliff above the river.

Near Bulltown, Pennsylvania, was a militia training ground. Legend claims that officers there forced rookies to tie bunches of hay to their left foot and straw to their right, then commanded, "Forward! March! Hay foot, straw foot; hay foot, straw foot."

Bull Run, Oregon, on the Bull Run River, was named for cattle that escaped from wagon trains and ran wild in the surrounding woods. Many towns were named for the domestic bull, some indicating where someone clashed with one. Some "Bull" towns referred to a resident's surname. Bulltown, West Virginia, honors Capt. Bull, a chief of the Delawares.

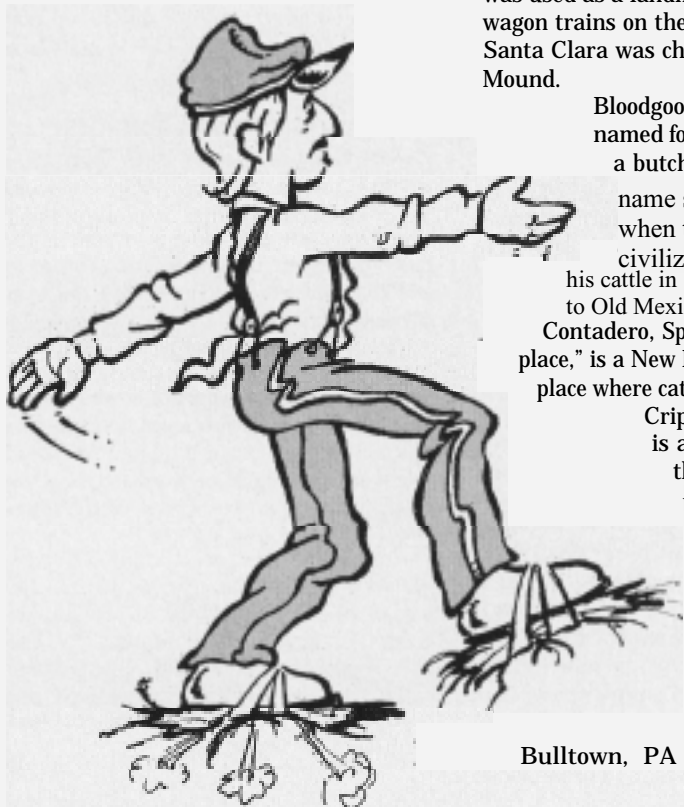
The ox, that dependable work animal, has few places named for it, partly because "ox" is so short, partly because the animal is so unexciting. Bim and Bill were two prized oxen owned by Rebecca and Will Payne who honored them by naming a Kentucky post office Bimble.



## Greybull, WY

Bueyeros, Spanish for ox team drivers, indicates oxen were used in that area. Oxbow, New York, is so named as the Oswegatchie River makes a complete loop forming a bow-shaped lake. Ox Bow, Nebraska, was changed to Angus in 1866 to honor J. B. Angus, a railroad official. Oxbow, Maine, was named for the Oxbow Plantation where Jack Dempsey trained for his bout with Gene Tunney in 1926.

There is an Ox Bow in Oregon and



Oxford in Idaho where oxen tracks were found. Numerous Oxfords are named after the university town in England where oxen crossed streams.

Cowpens, South Carolina, was named for the pens of Tory cattleman Hanna. They were maintained for the convenience of herdsmen driving stock to Low Country markets. For a reasonable fee, they penned their cattle there so they could get a night's sleep.

There can be only one post office per name in a state, but frequently several small hamlets will have the same name. It is not surprising that New Mexico has had at least five towns named Corral.

Lariat, Texas; Saddlestring, Wyoming; Roundup, Texas; and Roundup, Montana, are obvious. But the town Saddle River, New Jersey had nothing to do with roundups. Scottish land speculators named it for the nearby, stream which reminded them of Saddle Burn in Scotland.

Stockmen founded Santa Clara, New Mexico in 1850 because there was excellent pasturage there. A nearby rock formation looked like a covered wagon. It was used as a landmark by Kansas wagon trains on their way to Santa Fe, so Santa Clara was changed to Wagon Mound.

Bloodgoods, New Mexico was named for a rancher who had a butcher shop. Perhaps the name sounded too gory when the West became civilized. The rancher his cattle in 1857 and moved to Old Mexico. Logically Contadero, Spanish for "counting place," is a New Mexico town marking a place where cattle were counted.

Cripple Creek, Colorado is a "signal" name. Cattle that roamed there were often crippled when they stepped into bogs along the river bank; hence, the name warned other cattle owners to seek safer range for their animals.

You would assume

Bulltown, PA that Stockbridge,

Wisconsin indicated a place where cattle used a bridge, but the name commemorates the Stockbridge Indians who moved from New York to Wisconsin. The Massachusetts Stockbridge was named for a town in England where cattle probably crossed a bridge. Most "Stocktons" and Stockdales" came from personal names, but Stockton, Kansas



## Spur, TX

and Stockville, Nevada began as centers of stock raising.

A muleshoe was the cattle brand of the Muleshoe Ranch in Texas, hence, the town Muleshoe. Cut and Shoot, Texas sounds like a ranching term. In fact, it signifies a serious community dispute over the design of a church steeple.

Cowford, Florida, established in 1790, is now a part of Jacksonville. Cows often crossed a shallow place in the St. John's River there. Indians called it Wacca Pilatka, meaning "cows crossing over." The Spanish named it Ferry of St. Nicholas as they built Fort St. Nicholas on the south shore to guard the crossing. The practical English called it what it was, Cowford. A name that persisted for many years.

Besides the town names in which cattlemen can take pride, there are thousands of stock and herd names given to creeks, mountains, mesas, valleys and gulches. And in Minnesota there is a town named Good Thunder. The kind that doesn't stampede cattle?

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