

17

PIONEER DAYS  
"CATTLE TRAILS IN INYO-MONO"  
TEXT & PICS A. REED  
Dec 6, 199

2010.25.17

Correction to make  
of pic





Captions---Cow Trails of Inyo-Mono

1. Bart and John McGee , cowboys and Indian fighters in early days.

Ray McMurray collection

2. Stockman Tom Rickey wintered his herds near Big Pine and other areas in Owens River Valley.

Forbes Photo

Ernest Kinney collection

3. The Cashbaugh and Chance combined cattle drive in 1938.

Herds coming down the Rickey Trail, Sherwin Hill.

Curt Phillips collection

4. Chuck wagon grub along the trail in 1938. George Watterson, Jess Chance, Floyd Phillips, "Gus" Cashbaugh and Jim Nicoll.

Curt Phillips collection

5. "Gus" Cashbaugh, cowboy, cattleman, author and historian.

We salute friend "Gus", always happy to relate history.

Adele Reed photo.

6. Tom's Cabin, as it was called, at Tom's Place, Rock Creek.

Frank McMurry collection



No. 17 Cattle Trails Dec. 6 - '79

4 small pic inside

1 Large with text

A mistake.

No. 3 caption cows should be going  
down hill.

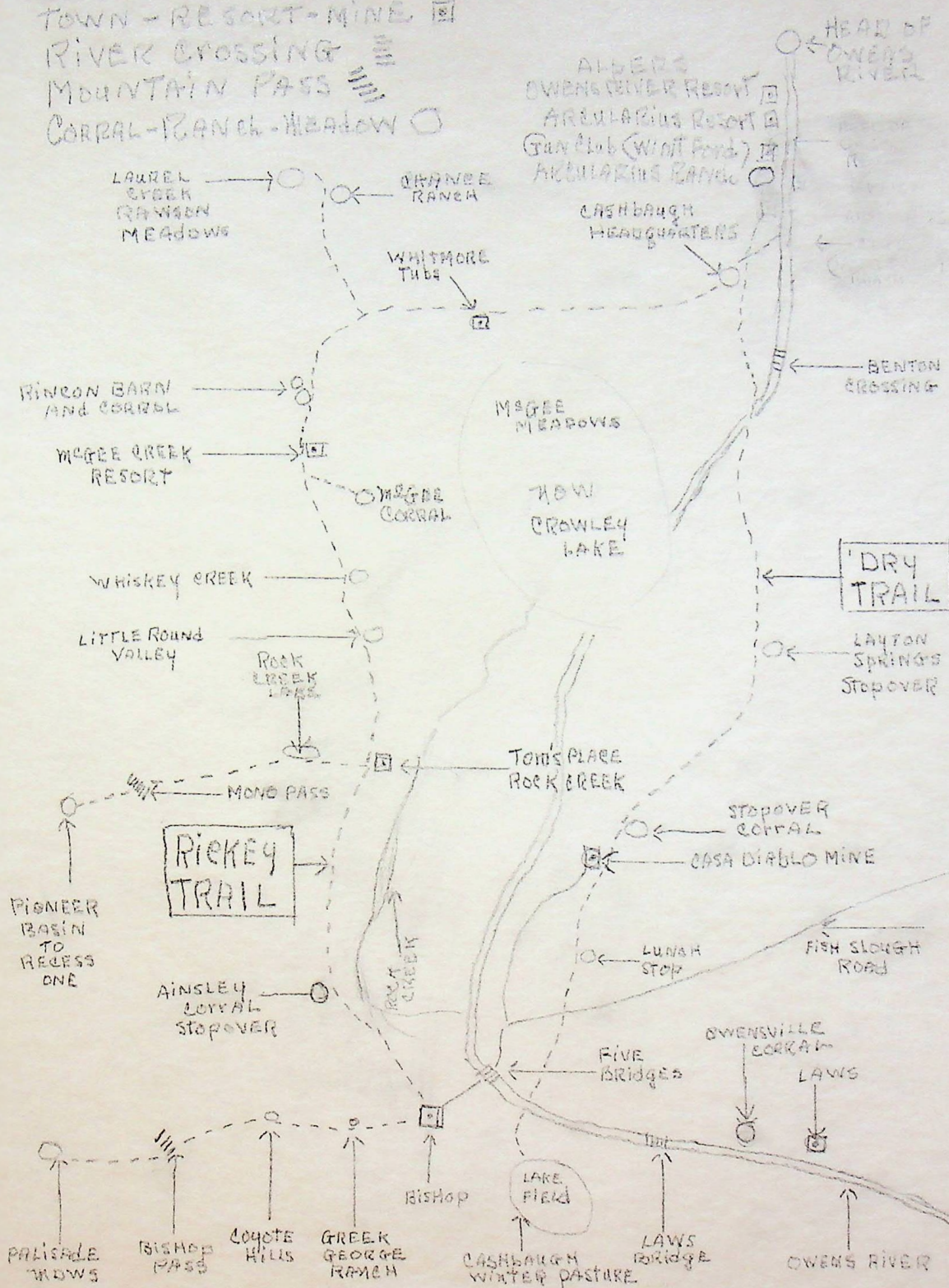
No. 4 chuck wagon should be turned around.



W. 28.

# CATTLE TRAILS

TOWN - RESORT - MINE  
RIVER CROSSING  
MOUNTAIN PASS  
CORRAL - RANCH - MEADOW

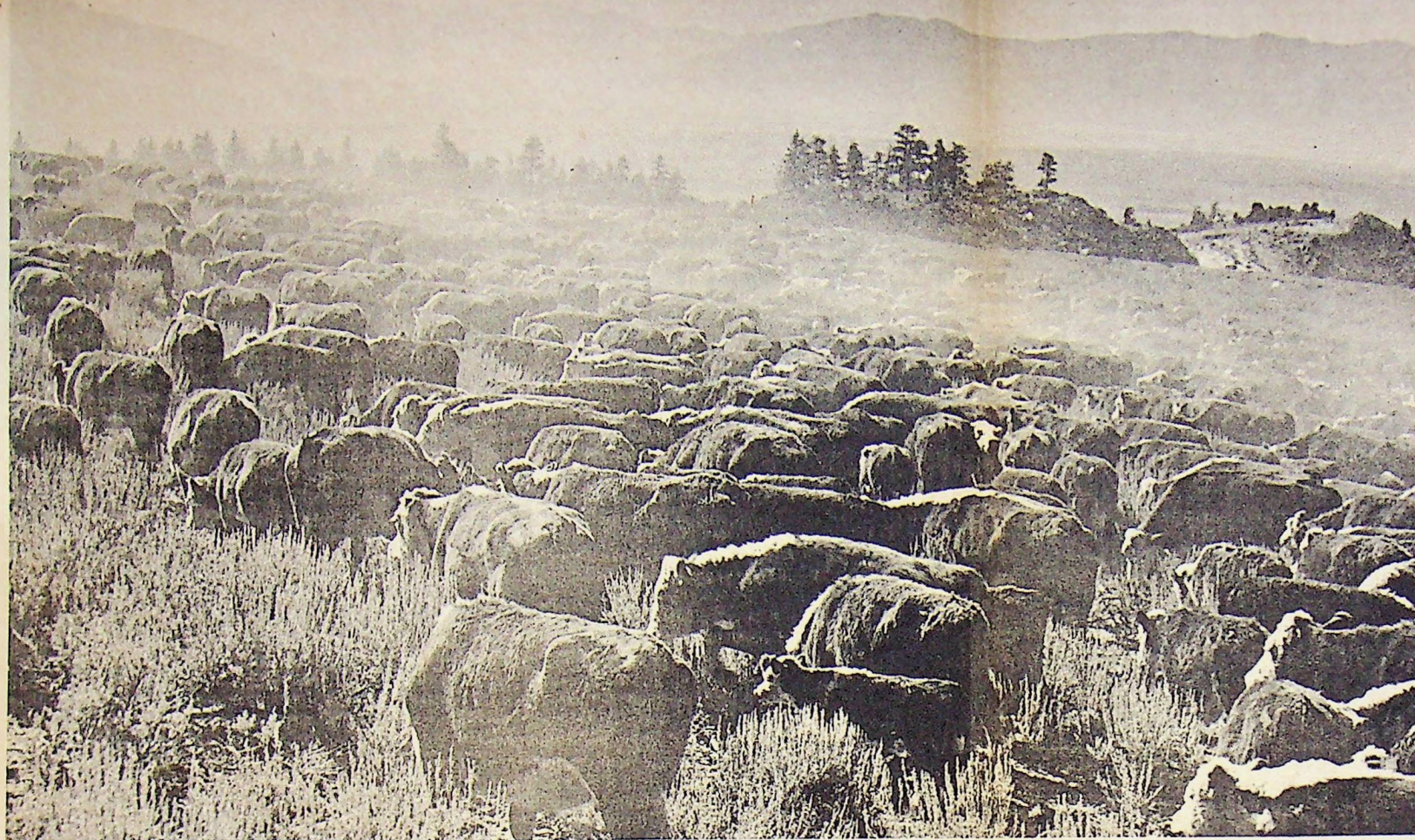


S.E.



## PIONEER DAYS

# CATTLE TRAILS OF INYO-MONO



HERD 'EM UP—The Cashbaugh and Chance combined cattle drive in 1938 finds herds coming down the Rickey Trail on Sherwin Hill.

Curt Phillips Collection

BY ADELE REED

In Inyo County, by 1862, according to the Homestead Act, 160 acres were available to settlers and under the Desert Act of 1877, 320 additional acres could be filed on. The early settlers cleared and tilled their land, raised crops and built their first homes. The town of Bishop Creek became the supply center for a great acreage. Unbelievable today is the fact that over 100,000 acres up and down the Owens River Valley were in production in 1912.

Livestock of all kinds was a fast growing industry. Great herds of cattle and flocks of sheep were moved each spring to summer feed on the lush growth of mountain meadows. The main trails...from Northern Inyo into Mono...have become historic ways, as told by cattleman Gus Cashbaugh, native son. We also use "The McGee Family History" by Eva Yaney.

One of the first large cattle herds to reach Inyo in the spring of 1861 was that of Alney T. McGee. He and his family had left Texas a few years before, trailing a herd of longhorns and they eventually settled in Tulare Valley in California. News of the Owens River Valley over the Sierra and the beginning of mining inspired Alney to gather a big herd and begin the long trip.

Accompanied by his wife, Margaret Lee, and sons Alney Lee, Barton and John and a cousin, Taylor McGee, they came by way of the Kern River, Kernville and over Walker Pass into the Mojave Desert. It was a sandy trail and water holes very scarce. History doesn't record the hardship of long dreary travel when eight to ten miles was par for cattle each day. The herd was held over in lower Inyo and in late fall Alney and Bart brought in a second herd. In spring their cattle were pushed up the trail by way of Fish Slough, Benton Hot Springs and into Adobe Valley in Mono. After fattening on the meadows the stock was trailed to the bustling mining camp of Aurora, then thought to be in California.

Cow-camp headquarters for the McGee outfit was established on meadows a few miles southwest of Adobe on McGee Creek in pinon-covered hills and was in use for years. In fact, the trail followed by them and others to Aurora became a wagon and stage road of importance.

The Alney Lee and John McGee families eventually settled on acreage in Pleasant Valley, a few miles west of Bishop Creek town. The McGee family had almost all of Long Valley in Mono where they summered their cattle. They owned land from the old Benton Crossing

The so-called Dry Trail to and from Mono County was especially useful after heavy snow winters as it was open earlier. It was a picturesque trail through pinon country. Beginning at the Five Bridges area north of Bishop the herds were trailed toward Fish Slough, then northerly across country to a corral near the Casa Diablo Mine, the first night camp. From there one other camp was made at Layton Springs where there was grass. The third day's drive was to the various Long Valley holdings, after fording the Owens River. There was a bridge but cattle do not take kindly to crossing a man-made span.

From early times on through the years, the main trail from Inyo to the high meadows of Mono was the historic Rickey Trail. Its use in later years has been disrupted by new highways. In the 1940's and 1950's the trucking of the big flocks of sheep and herds of cattle began. This method brought to an end—except for a few herds—that most fascinating and picturesque custom, the trail drive, tradition for all time. The romantic and legendary word "cowboy" related to the old west.

Sometimes friends hired on for a drive, saddled their favorite cowpony, brought slicker and bedroll and joined in the activity. The beauty of the mountains and the outdoor life were always enjoyed. True, they inhaled trail dust, rode long, hard hours in heat or in cold winds or storm, but were always ready to go again, and this included women as well as men.

The Rickey Trail ran northerly from the Owens River Valley through Round Valley and to Ainsley Meadow at the base of Sherwin Hill. The Meadows was the first night camp. The trail angled up by Sherwin Meadows, (now Swall Meadows), through the hills to Rock Creek, and to another night camp in Little Round Valley. From there the route was by way of Whiskey Creek, the Hilton area, McGee Creek and to the various owners' headquarters, or points north.

Names of cattlemen who used the old trail were the Rickey Land and Cattle Company, the Eaton Land and Cattle Company, C.B. Rawson, Charles and John Summers, Frank Butler, the Green Cattle Company, George Turner, Wint Ford, Wm. Symon, Sr., Frank Arcularius, the Cashbaugh family and the Fred Alpers family. Although this list may not be complete, it does bring a realistic picture of the many thousands of hoofs that plodded over the passage way.

"THE OL' COW POKE"  
by Gus Cashbaugh

there was only a narrow trail through big boulders. One after one the cows were moved. Below Dusey Meadows the slick granite was a problem. The beautiful Kings River meadow area as far as Palisade Creek was used by the Cashbaugh family for two years. Another of their summer grazing grounds was reached by the Rickey Trail to Rock Creek, then up by the Rock Creek Lakes and over Mono Pass to Mono Creek and Pioneer Basin. Their headquarters, a log cabin, was at Recess One. On these drives pack horses carried all the supplies and bedrolls.

In about 1919 the family bought 1700 acres of land near Hot Creek in Long Valley from Wm. Symons, Sr. There they built permanent headquarters known as The Little Hot Creek Ranch. In spring 1920 their first drive to their holdings was made and this time a cook and a chuckwagon and team were included.

Upon asking Gus if they'd ever had a stampede, he replied, "Oh, yes, we had a bad one, had the cows in a sturdy corral at the old Ainsley place for the night camp. A bad storm came on, heavy thunder and lightning. That did it! Those cows headed right through the fence, broke off heavy posts and all. Next day we hunted cattle all up Rock Creek Canyon."

In 1938, Gus and brother James and George Waterson, their Indian helper of many years, planned a combined fall drive with Jess Chance. Jess had two helpers, Floyd Phillips and Jim Nicoll. They gathered herds and both met on the flats below Whitmore Tubs. The Chance herd was gathered from the Rawson Meadows and their headquarters was the old John Summers' place.

Little Round Valley was the first night camp. By this date a truck was in use as a chuckwagon, no more team and wagon. Mark Mitchell was the driver and camp cook. It was late fall and very cold in the meadow and the men all rolled up in extra covers that night. The cook had breakfast ready by lantern light and routed out the crew long before daylight. As he poured the last cup of coffee, out came a dead mouse! Gus recalls, "It made us a bit sick but the coffee was down by then and

GUS CASHBAUGH, cowboy, cattleman, author and historian. We salute friend Gus, always happy to relate history.

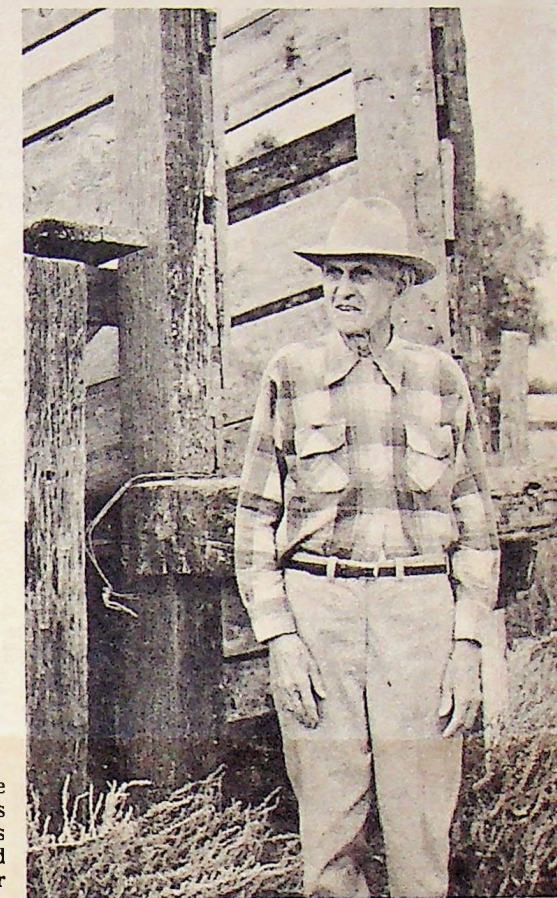
Photo by Adele Reed

we all lived through it, never did know how the mouse got into the coffee pot!"

The rest of the trip was uneventful. Both herds were put through the "Old Gate" on Highway 6 near the turn-off for the Five Bridges Road. The stock was turned into the "Lake Field" which included land from Laws to Warm Springs Road. Most of the land had formerly belonged to the Shaw Land and Cattle Company. The old gate mentioned had near 100 years of use by cattlemen and cowboys putting herds into what was called a holding field.

One by one, Father Andy and sons John and James had passed on, leaving Gus, his son Robert and Bud Cashbaugh, son of James, to carry out the dreams of Augustus Anthony who began the spread in 1875. In the early morning hours in October 1975, Andy's two grandsons began their 100 year centennial cattle drive. The chuckwagon truck pulled out of the summer camp loaded with supplied, beds and two 40-gallon cans of water. Robert and a friend, Dick Hardy, were the driver and camp tender. Following behind were a long line of cattle herded by cowboys Bud Cashbaugh, Jess Perez, Kenneth and Wilfred Partridge, Lester Cline and Orville Houghton, all experienced drovers.

The historic drive was by way of the Dry Trail with two night camps and on the third day the herd headed into the Lake Field. It was an uneventful drive but, as Gus says, "who knows, from now on it may well be our last cross country drive due to conflicting issues."





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The Alney Lee and John McGee families eventually settled on acreage in Pleasant Valley, a few miles west of Bishop Creek town. The McGee family had almost all of Long Valley in Mono where they summered their cattle. They owned land from the old Benton Crossing south to the Hilton Creek property. There was no Crowley Lake then. Alney and his wife Elizabeth (Gunter) spent the summers in a cabin near McGee Creek in charge of the herds. The extensive meadow were first named "The Swamp" because of the deep bog-holes, then it became McGee Meadows as did the creek, a tall mountain and a pass westerly.

Later on the Rickey Land and Cattle Company bought McGee Meadows, total of 18,000 acres, and it became known as Long Valley. Rickey wintered his huge cattle and horse herds in the Blackrock area near Aberdeen and also near Big Pine and the Owens River Valley. Allie McGee was his foreman and Charles Summers, Ben McMurry and a Schabbell boy were helpers. In Mono there was a large corral and barn named Rincon that were used by stockmen. It was a long-time landmark below the highway station near the Harold Eaton Ranch. A hard wind finally scattered the old barn all over the area. The Harold Eaton home still stands nearby; it was once headquarters for the Eaton Land and Cattle Company.



PIONEERS Bart and John McGee, cowboys and Indian fighters in the early days of Inyo and Mono Counties.

Ray McMurray Collection

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#### "THE OL' COW POKE" by Gus Cashbaugh

Up with a hot breakfast under their belts,  
With horses all saddled and a great shout,  
Along comes daybreak, and cattle move out.  
The cowboy's day begins.

For seventy-five years he followed cows,  
Coyote Valley, then Kings River road.  
Then Rock Creek and Mono, follow the cows.  
The cowboy's life moves on.

Now it's Long Valley Ranch for fifty years,  
Cattle grow heavy, then down from the hills.  
He's just an old "cowpoke" it's sunset now.  
The cowboy's day will end

Gus Cashbaugh, a spry gentleman of over 90 years, is a retired cattleman as well as author and historian. His writings cover many facets of life in Inyo-Mono country. His father, A.A. "Andy" Cashbaugh, came from Ohio in 1870 and settled on land near north Bishop Creek east of town. There he began his cattle ranch. Ann Connolly from Massachusetts became his bride and to this union seven children were born. Gus is now the only survivor.

He was initiated into his first cattle drive when ten years of age. He rode with a pad and surcingle and the route was over the Coyote Hills and Bishop Pass to the Kings River. They ran into slow going at the pass as

helpers, Floyd Phillips and Jim Nicoll. They gathered herds and both met on the flats below Whitmore Tubs. The Chance herd was gathered from the Rawson Meadows and their headquarters was the old John Summers' place.

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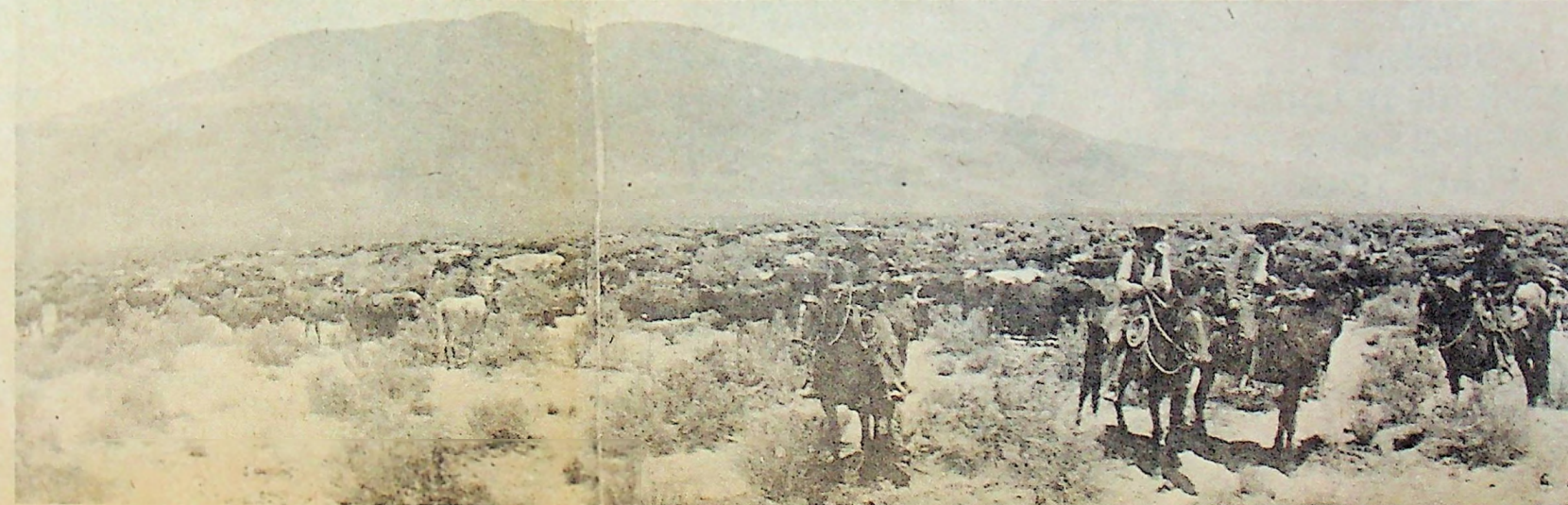
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CHUCK WAGON GRUB along the trail in 1938. George Watterson, Jess Chance, Floyd Phillips, Gus Cashbaugh and Jim Nicoll.

Curt Phillips Collection



WINTERING HERDS—Stockman Tom Rickey wintered his cattle near Big Pine and other areas in the Owens River Valley.

Forbes Photo  
Ernest Kinney Collection