

## Cattle Straying Originated Rodeo

In the early days of the cattle industry, before the advent of the barbed wire fence, cattle of one rancher would stray across the imaginary boundary which was supposed to separate the ranches, and mingle with the cattle of another rancher.

It was from the arguments and wagers made among the cowboys of the different ranches of a section while on roundup together that it became a custom to hold an impromptu riding and roping contest at the close of many roundups to settle the question as to which ranch was the home of the fastest roper or best bronc rider.

These contests, while visited principally only by the contestants and the few ranchers in a section, were the stepping stones to our great rodeos of today, for in order to settle an argument as to best ropers and riders of a much larger section there was held at Pecos, Tex., July 4, 1883, the first riding and roping contest where cash prizes were awarded to the winners.

This was a big public rodeo, but spectators were not charged an admission fee. The contest was held in the open flat near the courthouse and the prizes were \$25 first and \$15 second.

Morgan Livingston, top hand of the NA ranch, won the steer roping, and Trav Windham, boss of the Lazy Y, was second.

There was no fenced-in arena, and only 2 events, steer roping and bronc riding.

At a Fourth of July celebration at Prescott, Ariz., in 1888, the first rodeo or cowboy contest in which cash prizes were awarded to the winners and an admission charged the spectator, was held. It was called a tournament, and in addition to races there were only 2 events, steer roping and bronc riding, both won by Juan Levias.

North Platte lays claim to staging a rodeo as a Fourth of July celebration in 1883, with Col. William F. Cody as chairman, but all records that we have been able to dig up seem to point out that this affair was just a tryout of cowboys for the Buffalo Bill Wildwest Show, and we cannot find any records of any prizes having been awarded, and until other records are brought to refute it Prescott, Ariz., will have the distinction of staging the first American (box office) rodeo.

In 1896, a big well advertised rodeo was staged in Denver, Colo., but was not a financial success, in fact there was so much work and expense to getting up a 3- or 4-day contest that there were few of the early ones that were financially successful.

In 1897, Wyoming's great annual rodeo "Cheyenne Frontier Days," was organized and while it had financial difficulties in its first few years it endured and is today the oldest rodeo in America, its slogan, "The Daddy of Them All" is correct.

Up until about 25 years ago, rodeos were staged only in open arenas and practically all of them in summer, the contestants usually worked on ranches between rodeos. Now the rodeo season extends throughout the

year more than 150 well advertised rodeos during a season and admissions running into the millions.

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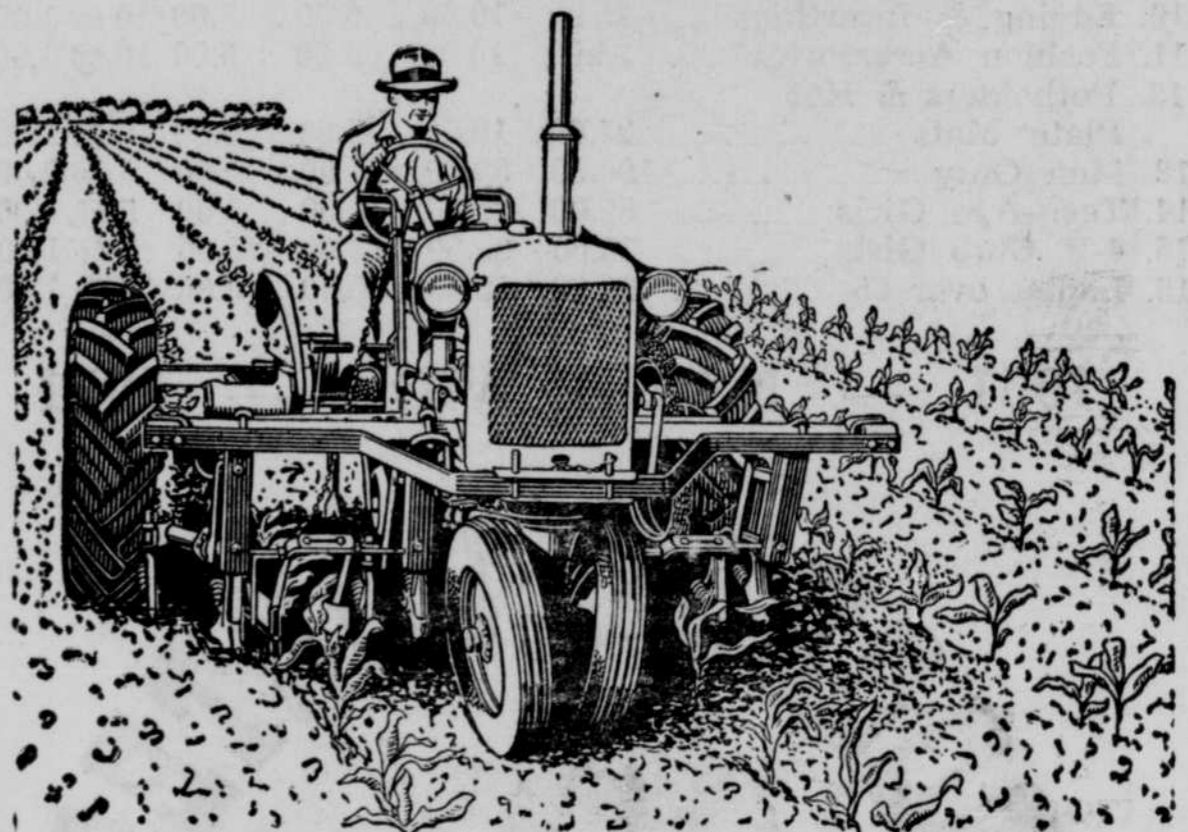
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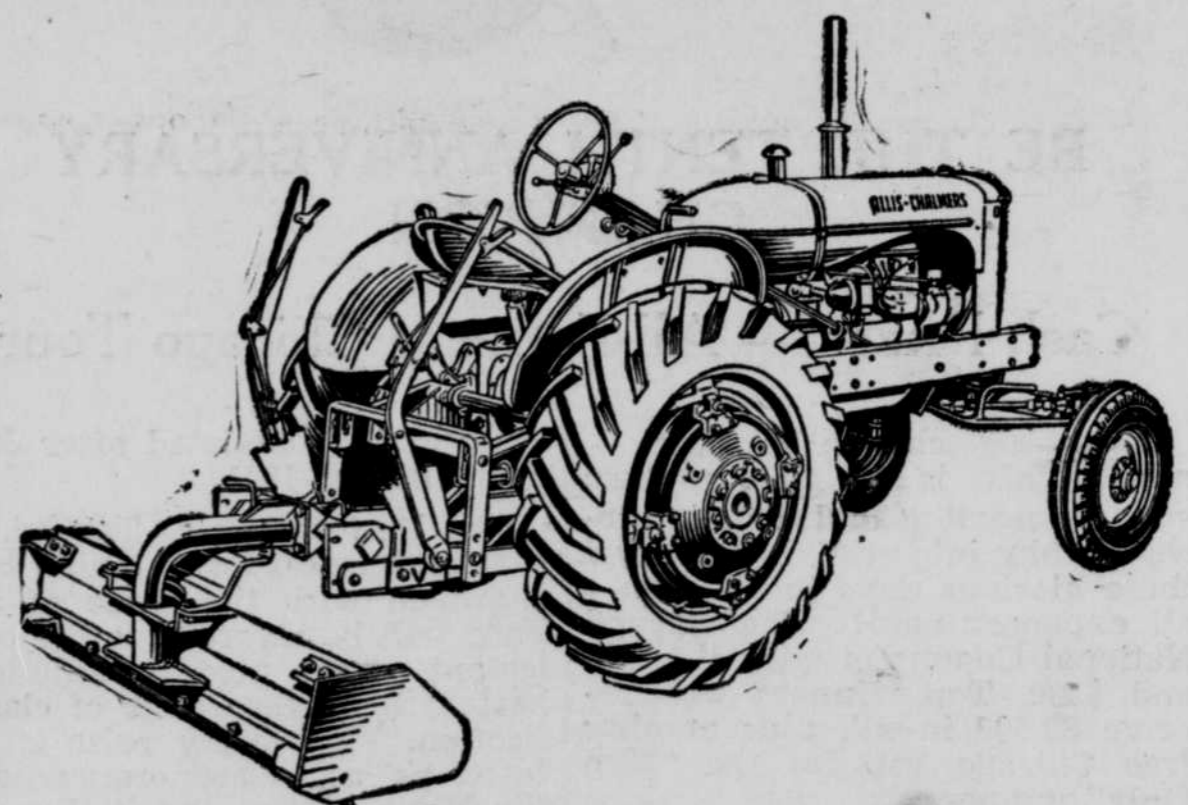
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