The Douglas Lake Cattle Company Ltd.

One of the principal builders of the Cattle and Horse industry in the interior of British Columbia.

L. P. GUICHON, QUILCHENA, B.C.

WITHIN the past two years the ownership of the Douglas Lake Cattle Company has passed from the hands of the descendants of one of the original founders. Much has been written about the largest ranch in Canada, about its former owners and about its new owners.

In all these accounts, I feel, that mention of a very important accomplishment of the big Company and its operators has been overlooked and passed up — that is the very great and important part that the Company played in building up the cattle and horse industry of the Province and the Nicola Valley in particular. I had hoped that an abler pen would have undertaken the task of writing about this. We, the older residents of the Valley, know of this only too well. However, it is my opinion, for the information of this and the future generations, something should be written of the work accomplished by the old Company.

Looking at the picture today — at the prices paid for the canner cow and the bologna bull — one can hardly properly visualize the cattle industry as it appeared to the cattlemen of the '80's. During the years of construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, there was a ready market for meat. But when the railway was finished and the trains were running, the large crews of meat-eaters were gone and that market was gone. More ranches had started and more cattle raised but the population had decreased. It has always struck me that the men who 'stuck it out', knowing the going would be tough, deserve a passing thought. They carried on, cleaning the land by hand, building up the ranches of today. Naturally many sold and moved out. The going was too tough especially for the women and growing children, conditions looking brighter in a thicker population for social well being.

In January, 1882, during the railway construction years, a syndicate had been formed to more or less control the sale of beef cattle. This syndicate was composed of six men, P. O'Reilly, J. S. Pemberton, B. Van Volkenburg, C. W. R. Thomas, J. B. Greaves and W. C. Ward. J. B. Greaves was the operating cattle and ranch manager. Under these men the syndicate appears to have operated until the Fall of 1883. By that time, Greaves and C. M. Beak in partnership had acquired a considerable acreage of land as well as cattle and horses. Then three of the original syndicate members dropped out and a new partnership formed, including Greaves, Beak, Thomson and Ward. This new partnership carried on for about three years. In 1886, a month after the C.P.R. had been officially opened to Port Moody — then the Pacific terminal of the line — the four men incorporated under the name of the Douglas Lake Cattle Company Limited. In 1892, C. M. Beak sold his interest to the other three. They carried on until 1910, when Mr. W. C. Ward and his family bought out Messrs. Thomson and Greaves.

One must visualize the outlook of these men on the future of the cattle business at that date, 1886. They were real optimists. The late Judge Cornwall, commenting in his diary of that year of 1886 on the overstocked and over - grazed ranges aggravated by an extremely dry season, said that the country should be given back to the Indians. The four men must have realized all this, conditions getting worse year by year, and that the markets could not consume the tonnage of beef produced. They did not foresee the historical and memorable Winter of 1886-87 that took care of the overstocked ranges. All over North-West America stock losses were terrible. I have no idea just what the Company lost. Conditions were so that it must have suffered along with the rest of the cattlemen. Starving cattle got to river and creek bottoms where they would die with a full stomach of brush, the only thing available to eat. In the Spring of 1887 thousands of carcasses decorated the bottoms and hill sides. Such was the first Winter of the Company.

When I first came in contact with the range cattle of the upper Nicola, in 1896, the bulls used by the Company were about equally divided among three breeds, namely, Shorthorn, Hereford and Aberdeen-Angus. Hybrids of the first two, mostly huge roan animals, were also used. At that time most of the bulls purchased for new blood came from Ontario. In 1888, the first Hereford cattle to come to the Nicola were brought in by the Douglas Lake Cattle Co., Ltd.

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Sire: Aldie Recorder (Imp.).
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ROTHNEY DESPOT
Sire: Aldie Recorder (Imp.).
Dam: Aberfoyle Broadhooks.

ROTHNEY DAUNTLESS
Sire: Aldie Recorder (Imp.).
Dam: Gwendoline.

For Sale — EDMONTON BULL SALE

A7 PERFECTION 13E
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Dam: A7 Messenger's Mysie 15B.

ROTHNEY DEFENDER
Sire: Rothney Admiral (Grand Champion Lacombe, 1950).
Dam: Aberfeldy Broadhooks.

ROTHNEY FARM

Midnapore, Alberta

A. R. CROSS
Owner

W. CAMERON
Herdsman

DOUGLAS LAKE
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These were from the Quebec herd of the late Senator Cochrane and were chaperoned West by Mr. Wm. Harrison, now living at Pritchard, B.C. The Company also had a pure bred herd of Aberdeen Angus cattle.

Having a pure bred herd of each of the three breeds from which to draw breeding stock, the Company sold sires to cattlemen in the valley and in other parts of the interior as well. Among the pure bred females were many huge animals. The Company did not confine themselves to bring in new sires only. They brought in, from time to time, good females from established herds. They were able to produce a very suitable type of range bull. These bulls, grown under normal range conditions, certainly did untold good to their users. This is reflected in the outstanding quality of the Nicola Valley cattle of the past as well as of today.

Besides the cattle industry, the Company also participated in the horse breeding industry, in a very big way. Having bought up the different small cattle ranches and stock, it naturally followed that they also acquired good horses of several breeds, both light and heavy.

Realizing the importance of that angle of their business, and shortly after their re-organization in 1886, they imported an outstanding Clydesdale stallion, "Boss", from Scotland, one of the best of that breed that ever came to B.C., and perhaps Canada. Later among the stallions were "Top", "Prince", "Acclamation", a silver maned sorrel, all Clydesdales. At least one Shire was also used with the commercial mares. At the beginning of the century, the Company imported another very good Clydesdale from Scotland in "Torpedo".

Apart from the large commercial stud, the largest registered Clydesdale stud in B.C. was owned by the Douglas Lake Cattle Company. From those good mares bred to the above good sires, stallions of quality were disposed of to breeders throughout the country over many years. After supplying the requirments of their huge ranch with necessary work horses, the surplus was disposed of to different operations throughout the West.

In the lighter stud were some of Hambletonian strain, thoroughbred and mixtures of many breeds. Bred to sires like "Vancouver" a thoroughbred, and "Billy" a Standard Bred, saddlers and heavy drivers filled a need of the times. As the need required in time more horses, many other sires were used, enough animals were raised to furnish the number required for their riders, the surplus, naturally, were sold as remounts, saddlers, polo ponies, etc.

Before the days of banks in this part of the Interior, the Douglas Lake Cattle Co., together with the late Robert Charters, General Merchant of Quilchena, did a service of inestimable value to the ranchers. Section 88 of the Bank Act, as well as a lot of other things about banking were not generally known. But money was needed to pay taxes, due July 1st, and for haying operations in progress and wages had to be paid. So it will not be out of the way to write of the general procedure to get funds during the period of twenty-five odd years before a bank came to Nicola.

It was the general custom for a rancher, in need of funds, to ride or drive to the Douglas Lake ranch and accept the generous hospitality of the genial manager and host, Mr. Greaves. Before the guest left in the morning, a bargain had been made. The rancher's steers and dry cows had been pledged for Fall delivery and a cheque on account was issued by Mr. Greaves — a very accommodating service to the rancher. The cheque was of no value unless turned into cash. Large cheques were not easily cashed as few had the necessary funds. But it so happened that the 'Bob' Charters, mentioned above, was financially well fixed and with enough cash in his safe was generally able to convert the paper into ready money. As exchange was unknown, this was done in the spirit of a good deed — or for good 'spirits' across the way!

In conclusion, looking over the period of nearly seventy years, the welfare of the Interior and the stock industry has been interwoven with the success of the Douglas Lake Cattle Co. It is a great credit to the high aim set by the original founders and faithfully carried out by the managing members of the Ward family, and particularily to Frank B. Ward, Manager for over thirty years.

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Proposed Improvements for Alberta Ranges

By WILLIAM A. HUBBARD
Manyberries, Alberta

AT the last annual meeting of the Western Stock Growers' Association it was suggested that some range improvements be made to all lease land held by the Alberta Government. The money needed for these improvements was to be realized from the increase in taxes and rental, from one-tenth to one-eighth, which equals the share of the total forage value retained by the government.

The Department of Lands and Forests of the Government of Alberta has approximately 2,700,000 acres under grazing lease. The rental in the past has been based on the following formula:

$$\frac{1/10 \times 250 \times P}{G.C.} = \text{Rental and Taxes per acre.}$$

1/10 = Share of total forage value retained by government on taxes and rental.

250 = Annual gain in pounds of beef on grass.

P. = Average price of all grades of cattle except fed calves sold on the Calgary stock market from July to December inclusive, for the previous year.

G.C. = Grazing capacity is the number of acres required to graze one native beef animal on a twelve-month basis.

Under the amendment to the Public Lands Act, the fraction one-tenth has been changed to one-eighth. This is in keeping with the timber and other leases.

I realize that the improvements are to follow the lines of regrassing or water development if assistance is to be given, however, I believe road crossing should be considered. In all the cattle country there are many fences crossing roads