

Fieldwork Recordings—Dictionary of American Regional English
UW–Madison Digital Collections Center

**Transcript of DARE Interview (1966): Roswell, New Mexico; Primary Informant
NM014 (Tape 1068-S1)**

The DARE fieldwork recordings and transcripts have been released to support research, scholarly work, and other non-commercial usage. This transcript was created for and approved by the Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE) under a grant by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation to DARE and the Wisconsin Englishes Project. To contribute to the DARE project, please consider transcribing additional recordings in the collection and submitting them to DARE@english.wisc.edu.

INTRODUCTION: The following was recorded from Dictionary of American Regional English, tape one zero six eight, side one.

FIELDWORKER: This is a recording of Steve [beep] made in Roswell, New Mexico on March ninth, nineteen sixty-six, by [beep]

5 INFORMANT: OK. A (farm xx), the year of nineteen five, to the year of nineteen twelve, I was working in the southeast portion of the state of New Mexico with the cattle ranchers. At nineteen twelve, we got statehood, and a few years after that, our country was all finished up. Before statehood, it was government domain, and the country was used entirely by the big cow ranches. Big cow ranches. They would work these cattle from a wagon, having no permanent
10 headquarters, probably one place that they would go to in the wintertime. And we were working with a wagon, and there would be from one to three wagons usually with they're, um, roundups. Each wagon would contain from fifteen to twenty men. And every man was mounted with about eight horses. And we called the horses the *remuda*. Yeah, no pens, we had no pens, we had no pens at night, we had no pens for anything. At night, we would stand guard around our cattle
15 about three men at a time on the shifts of about two hours and a half a shift. Likewise, the same with our horses with our remuda. On top of our wagon, or on the back of our wagon was the chuck box. That's where the cook made the, done the cooking and everything. And at night, always there was (a lamp lit) and put on top of that chuck box, so that the night riders could find the way in to the wagon. And rah having, uh, no corrals, no anything, our remuda, our horses,
20 had to be caught out on the open. We used what we call a rope corral. A corral means a pen. By handing one man and then a rope, and it was standing to another man, until we went around and had about an acre and a half. In this ruh, and, uh, in this, what we called the rope corral, there would be two or three men in there, roping the horses, to mount the boys that they rode for that day. And after all was caught and started, why then we started out on the drive. Our
25 drive usually lasted about from three to four hours. Usually about eleven or twelve o'clock we'd have the roundup, what we called the roundup made. And in that roundup, we'd have anywhere from three to five thousand cattle. And if we had three wagons, we'd divide those, or into three bunches. One, ah, one people that worked with a certain wagon would be working with this

bunch, the other people would be working with another bunch. And the wagon it represented
30 would be working the other bunch. When we got through a certain wagon then would change.
Everyone would come from this wagon over to this wagon and that wagon. They were getting
their own cattle, they wouldn't bother ours. And then when we got to the roundup, we'd get our
cattle, and then we'd change again, don't you see. So that every outfit worked every herd. And
what we got when we were, uh, cattle that were holding was put in what we called a day herd.
35 And that day herd was kept by, uh, different men, men appointed each day to go with the day
herd. And that was what we held at night. And then the same, we followed it the same through
time to time And it would generally take us about thirty to forty days to work the range, anywhere
from thirty to fifty days depending on the weather. Usually our first work was gathering steers.
We'd generally start out about first, uh, first of April, to gather steers. Then we would double
40 back, then we would double back rework and brand calves, then we would brand. We would be
about sixty days branding calves. After calf branding is over we'd probably lay up and let horses
rest men rest for fifteen or twenty days and so forth, take a vacation. From then, we would start
out, that would be a long interim, July or August. We would start for a second branding and, um,
gathering beef cattle, cattle would go on to roam, ship that fall, we would go to gathering cattle,
45 condemns and the undesirable stuff that we (didn't want to do). And when we had made that
work we would drive these cattle to pasture and leave them on pasture. Then we would make a
final work in the fall branding what calves that hadn't been branded during the summer and that
was born in the time after the first and second branding were made and then gathering all the
fall cattle. We would get all the condemns and cripples and various other things like that and
50 stuff that we wanted to ship. We would generally finish up from the first to the fifteenth of
November. When we'd finish up we'd drive these shipping stuff to the railroad, to the nearest
railroad. And we would ship from there. We would generally be about ten or twelve days going
to the railroad and shipping out. Then when we shipped out there'd be two or three of the
cowboys that went with the (xx) trainload the cattle, look after the cattle and so forth. And they
55 were generally gone about fifteen days. We'd generally go to Kansas City, Chicago, California and,
uh, to the various different shipping points, some to Fort Worth And that's the way we worked
the, um, this country was worked entirely up till we got statehood, and sometime after we got
statehood, until the state and the federal government had worked out the, um, land which each
one was to, um, take and then it was leased to big cattlemen. And, uh, by nineteen and fifteen,
60 all of the open range was practically divided and under fence. And that, rah, they still used the
wagon on the big ranches but, we didn't have near as much country to work because it is divided
in, oh, smaller lots and that's what done away with the open range.

FIELDWORKER: And you said you made some kind of a drive during the wintertime?

INFORMANT: Yes, now, in the wintertime when in open range, when the blizzards would come
65 from the north being no fences to hold the cattle, to stop them, they would drift for a hundred
miles or two hundred miles. Then we would have to go out with the drift wagon. We would go
out with the drift wagon and go as far south as the cattle had come from the north, and then we
would be fifteen or twenty days working what we called the drift back onto their range where

70 they come from, and water was scarce and cattle would get pretty dry down there. And it was a, that was quite a task. Working the drift back onto the range. Because we would have anywhere from fifteen to thirty-five thousand cattle to try and work back onto the range.

FIELDWORKER: And the drift wagon was just a regular wagon?

75 INFORMANT: A drift wagon was just a regular wagon composed of about half the amount of cowboys that usually worked with the, uh, summer wagons. Because it was only after these severe spells that the drift wagon would go out. But it stayed in operation at all times pretty close to the south end of all the ranges. Where we could go south and reach the south end of the drift and work them back. Yeah, we'd be ten or fifteen days working those back, and in the meantime, big calves that we had missed and hadn't branded, during the summertime and so forth, we'd brand those calves up. And the way we branded the calves at that time, we had to get the calf
80 with its mother. And know what the mother was branded, and then when the calf was roped and drug up to be branded. The man who was doing the roping would call the brand of its mother. By that means, we knew what company it belonged to. You would always call the brand that his mother wore. That way, why, we could know what to brand the calf, and who it belonged to.

FIELDWORKER: Did every company send out a man with these drift wagons?

85 INFORMANT: Yeah, yeah, if rah, if they didn't now, there'd generally be a man from each wagon working with our wagon, and we would generally have a man working with each other wagon. That's what we would call representing, don't you see. And that way we had representation with each wagon. And each wagon had representation with us. So, when we had a representative, and they didn't have a wagon out, why, we worked their cattle with their representative, the same as
90 if they did have a wagon out. And that way, why, rah, it eliminated or, uh, some wagon had to be out, or smaller outfits that didn't put out a wagon their men would work with our wagon. And we'd represent them and their stock, just the same as if they had their own wagon.

FIELDWORKER: And when you're driving cattle, do they have names for the different positions that men, uh, oh ride on to—

95 INFORMANT: Yes, yes, we have what we call *leaders*—in the driving herd we have the leaders, and we have in the swing, and then we have, um, drag drivers, and the drag drivers are the ones in the back. And the drag driver is the most important man in the business, because for any weak, poor, or crippled, they always fell to the back and that was then the drag driver, that was the drag of the herd. And, uh, we had to be very careful not to (chouse), nor, uh, abuse, the drag
100 cattle because it would knock them out. If we're moving cattle or moving a herd, in the spring of the year, or the summertime, we had to have calf wagons. Calves that are born overnight, we would have to put them in the calf wagon when they wasn't able to walk, when they'd probably go for a mile or two, then the calf wagon would pick them up. Then, we would go on till that evening, and we would have to camp early take the calves out of the calf wagon, and get them
105 with their mothers before night come. And if a young calf was born, wasn't dry, we had to put a gunny sack over him, a toe sack. If he were mixed up and were not dry, the scent from his, uh,

110 birth would get onto the other calves and the mother wouldn't know which was her calf. Uh, they recognize their calf by smell. And, uh, our drag driver and the man that, ah, run the calf wagon, or looked after that, was two of the most important men we had because the man, when he picked up a calf, was supposed to remember its mother. Then he would go through the herd that evening before night and bring these cows that hadn't come and claimed their calves back to that calf.

FIELDWORKER: About how many men did you have, uh, as leaders on a herd?

115 INFORMANT: Uh, we wouldn't have very many, we ne- hardly had over a, we never had over six rate men with the herd at one time. About, uh, about seven men. That is, without the calfer, without the, um, calf wagon. We'd have two in the lead, we'd have two in the, ruh, swing, and then we'd have maybe have two in the flank, what we called the flank was next to the drag drivers to keep them in in line, don't you see, and then the drag driver was the one that tapped these on the back and kept them going.

120 FIELDWORKER: Now, the leaders were up in front in the swing, was just a little—

INFORMANT: That's right, the swing's right back behind the leaders, and then you, the flankers were behind the swing men, and just in front of the drag driver to keep the cattle all in line and going in one direction. Cattle would walk, we would generally drive the cattle there, generally walk for four or five miles. They'd come off the bed ground, what we'd call the bed ground, where 125 they was held that night, and they would generally walk anywhere from three to five miles till the sun begin to get up or in, up in the day awhile, and then we would let them spread out, we'd just let them spread out and graze then but keep everything headed in the right direction. But not in a driving form, in a grazing form. Then along about, uh, ten or eleven o'clock, we'd throw them back into driving form and then generally walk for a couple of miles, depending upon water. 130 When cattle are dry they won't lay down and rest or very little of the time, they're up and milling all the time. But we tried to water the herd when it was convenient or we could every day, but we would sometimes have to go as much as three days without watering the herd. And when you go that long, why, cattle are never still, they're restless, going all the time, they won't lay down and, and stay still over an hour or an hour and a half, until you get up and begin to walk.

135 FIELDWORKER: Even at night?

INFORMANT: Yeah, night, they won't rest in the night, yeah. And, uh, it's quite a sight, after you have been out for oh, fifty hours, you might stay with the herd, and them not, uh, and them without water, why they get awful restless, awful restless and we have to be very, very careful in keeping our herd pretty close together. Because if they smell water anywhere, you can't hold 140 them— it doesn't make any difference which way you are going or anything— and they can smell water six or eight miles. Big steers will smell water a long way. And uh, if it, uh, if it's, uh, we're driving along and they can smell water off our trail why, you've got to hold your cattle pretty close together and use more men, or else you can't hold them. And then after you've been off of water for quite a while and heading in anywhere from thirty-six to sixty hours, why, your lead

145 cattle, your big strong cattle that are in front. They'll just get up and out walking they'll trot or
run or anything, you've got to hold them back, you've got to hold them back, try and hold them.
And then when you get within five or six miles of water, you can turn the lead cattle loose. And
just stay with them just to keep them from loping or anything like that, they'll get in a good fast
150 go off and the cattle will be strung clear from the drags to leader, they'll be strung for five or six
miles. And, ruh, it will be anywhere from one to three hours after the lead cattle get in the water
before your drag cattle get in the water. And sometimes it'll be as long as four or five hours if the
drag cattle are weak. And can't travel very fast. On occasion, where you've got a long ways to go
without water sometimes, you have to, it takes quite a ruh, it takes quite a lot of water and
155 preparation to water a big herd, you'll be driving anywhere from fifteen hundred to twenty-five
hundred cattle, around fifteen to two thousand cattle. And you can't water a big herd on a small
place, but, if you're too long out on water, sometimes you have to cut off three or four hundred
of your drags, your weak cattle, and take them out of the way, out of line, and get to water for
them. You can water four or five hundred cattle on a small place, your weak cattle and your drags,
160 and then that will be another herd that has to drive off and pick up water, that way. Then they
will go and the lead will hold up for a day or two until the drags all get in, you know. Then they're
back together again. And cattle get pretty feverish, when they're out, er, when they're out of
water. They get kind of feverish and they will drink a lot of water and if it's quite necessary, if you
can to stay on water for a couple, three days till that fever, temperature leaves them and they
165 get back to normal again. And, uh, you'll drift out maybe two, three, four miles from water and
then come back into water next day, water every day regularly, you know. But if you're going to
make a long drive without water, you'll water well long about anywhere from one to three
o'clock, see that you water, cattle are all watered well graze them easy and don't crowd them or
anything at all, and the next day along about two or three or four o'clock the cattle begin to get
170 pretty dry again, not too dry, they'll go that, that depends upon your weather. If your weather's
dry and hot, you'll get awful dry, but, if you have dampness and the, uh, lot of humidity in the air,
they don't get near as dry and depending upon the weather, but they would, [cough] with a herd
or with a herd of big steer you can drive anywhere from forty-five to sixty miles without water,
yeah, because they'll make that in a couple of days, a big herd of strong cattle. Where there're
175 cows and calves you won't make over eight or ten or twelve miles a day at all. Little calves can't
travel that way. [cough] And most usually when we have to move a herd, especially weak cattle
or cows with little calves, we won't start out until the rainy season come in. That way we have
water in the lakes and warrens, so forth, and there's always a man that goes ahead and looks out
about three or four days drive ahead of him before the herd comes on, and he comes back every
180 day and reports to where the water is and how it is, and how the grass is and what drive we've
got to make and we know exactly then what to expect and what we're going to get into, and it's
always looked ahead at least four days drive for big cattle, strong cattle or anything else.

FIELDWORKER: Now you said they had a driving form and a grazing form for, uh,

INFORMANT: Yeah, that's right.

185 FIELDWORKER: Did they have any other forms?

INFORMANT: No, no, not necessarily, only at night, and of course we'd have some stampedes at night, you know, our cattle would break and so forth, no just the driving and grazing form, that was about all.

FIELDWORKER: And roughly how did they spread out when they were grazing?

190 INFORMANT: Oh, they would spread out around to five or six times the size they were in driving. In driving, why, they would string out, what we'd call string out. A herd of fifteen hundred cattle would be strung out for a mile and a half. And in grazing form they'd wouldn't be, they'd just spread out wide and they would be over, uh, a quarter of a mile in length, quarter or half a mile. But, we'd keep them all headed that way, and as they grazed we would gain a little ground on
195 them because we would gain in front of them, gain in front of them all the time and, ruh, then usually about, ruh, they would walk, after they had grazed, they would walk for a couple of miles or such amount of, and then they would lay down and rest. We would let the herd rest. But wouldn't let them rest and lay down too long, because if you let cattle lay down too long in the daytime, and don't keep them pretty well on their feet, they're a lot more trouble to hold at night
200 because if you have kept them on their feet all day, pretty much then they'll rest pretty much during the night. They won't give near so much trouble. They won't get up and want to walk and stir around, they are tired and they'll rest, they like to mail then. So, consequently, we'd never let our day herd rest over one hour, yeah, and didn't care whether they rested that much or not. But, it's better not to take a tired, real tired herd on to a bed ground because, uh, they're more
205 apt to run. They restless if they're tired and so forth, they lay down go sound asleep and just some little something startle and everything, they shouldn't be too tired and [cough] when you come to a bed ground before you bed your cattle they should be turned loose for at least a half or three quarters of an hour before you bed them. And they would spread out maybe over, uh, twenty-five or thirty acres of ground, maybe a hundred acres of ground, and then it'd begin to
210 get dark, why, you'd push them a little closer, and a little closer, till when you bedded your cattle you wouldn't be, oh, four or five acres, in the bed, on the bed ground.

FIELDWORKER: And how did they drive the cattle, what did they use, uh—

INFORMANT: Nothing, cattle will naturally walk. Cattle will naturally go, and all you had to do was just head them the way you want them to go. And they'll do it. If you hold them together
215 and don't let them, uh, don't let them graze, why, they'll walk, and you can make them walk.

FIELDWORKER: What was that again now?

INFORMANT: It's quite a sight of a morning when you're fixing to start out on a drive, because, [cough] among our remuda there're lots unbroke horses, lot of wild horses, that have only been ridden a few time, and it's quite interesting to see the boys mount their horses, because they'll
220 pitch, and run, and do everything, and some of them get loose with their saddle on. It'll be a day

or two before we pick them up again, you know, we pick them up on the drive some, and then that boy has to ride the wagon until we get his horse and saddle back.

FIELDWORKER: What do you call a horse like that?

INFORMANT: Huh?

225 FIELDWORKER: What do you call a horse like that?

INFORMANT: Why, we call them, uh, sport horses, mean horses, or outlaws, and we'd generally have one or two men that were, uh, exceptionally good riders and know how to handle these horses and they get most of the, ruh, worst horses but they'll all pitch some.

FIELDWORKER: What do they call those men who can handle them well?

230 INFORMANT: Well, they call them bronc stompers, mm-hmm.

FIELDWORKER: And what do they call the fellow who takes care of the, uh, horses?

INFORMANT: Oh, horse wrangler, yeah, the horse wrangler, and he's with the horses all the time and right with the wagon. And whenever the wagon camps, there's always a man that goes with the wagon and shows the cook and the horse wrangler where to camp. And when they camp the, ruh, wagon, why, then the wrangler has to get up and help the, ruh, cook or unhitch the mules for the cook. Of a morning when they get ready to start the wagon and everybody after breakfast, the horses are hitched up, the foremen holler, "Baggage!" When they do that everybody's supposed to have his bedroll rolled up and brought up to the wagon and ready to pitch their over on, baggage.

240 FIELDWORKER: Now, what was that?

INFORMANT: If the weather's bad, the boys beds all get wet, they're extremely heavy, and when they're put on the wagon it's almost overloaded, we lots of times have to put on another span of horses to haul the beds because they're two or three times as heavy as they are when they're dry, and that may continue for days at a time. But you'll put on twenty or twenty-five rolls of bedding, and each one of them will weigh anywhere from thirty to fifty pounds when it's dry, and it'll weigh from fifty to a hundred when it's wet. Yeah,

245

FIELDWORKER: What are some of the other supplies that a cowboy brought with him?

INFORMANT: Well, he had his leggings, all he had was his saddle and his rope and his leggings.

FIELDWORKER: And what's his leggings?

250 INFORMANT: His leggings are the leather breeches.

FIELDWORKER: Do they cover all the leg, or just part?

INFORMANT: Yeah, yeah, they cover all the leg, but they have no seat in them. Now then he sits back on the wagon and they just come up here, they come up and then there's buttons around there and then they go right down here, you see, and then down there and then around.

255 FIELDWORKER: What do they use them for?

INFORMANT: Uh, oh, that's for, uh, cold and rain and anything else you might want, and then a slicker, we have to carry a slickers if the weather's bad we carry a slicker to use when it's raining, you know that slicker's an old yellow slicker, and it's waterproof, and it's just like a big, loose overcoat. And you put it on, and a lots of time when you put on a slicker and a horse is not used to it, it's quite a challenge to stay on there, because he just he gets birded to the slicker and then it's, it's quite a, it's quite a wrangle. I'll tell you what we eat, the main thing we eat out in the wagon, sourdough biscuits, frijole beans, and beef, generally kill a beef about every third day. In the summer time when it's hot we hang the, ruh, we stick one foot of each quarter in a wagon wheel and let it drip and drain that night, the blood out of it. Then that is taken up in the morning before daylight, put in the bottom wagon, wrapped up in tarpaulins, where they'll stay cool, and is covered. The cook has cut off what he wants to use that day for dinner. That way, we can keep the beef from souring or spoiling for at least three days, but we'll eat up, we generally kill er, um, a beef that weighs about anywhere from three to four, five hundred pounds, about a three hundred and fifty pound and then we'll eat it up and cook it up in three days.

270 FIELDWORKER: Is that one of the drag cattle?

INFORMANT: No, we get the best we can get.