

# The Chisholm Trail in Pictures and Words

From Jack Bailey's journal, Wednesday,  
August 5th, 1868:

*"Mile from Arbuckle in a spring. Prairie  
branch. No timber on it. Water very  
shallow but plenty for a herd of cattle.  
We can see the US Flag, the stars +  
stripes, once the proudest emblems of  
any nation under the canopy of heaven..."*

Henry Worrall, as photographed by J. Landy,  
between 1870 and 1880.  
*Kansas State Historical Society*

Music educator Brian Baggett  
notes that *"Worrall's popular  
guitar instrumentals played a key  
role in the development of the guitar  
styles of southern rural folk  
musicians and country and blues  
musical idioms."*



TO GET A SENSE OF WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE  
ON THE CHISHOLM TRAIL—THE DAILY  
TOIL, THE DANGER, THE DULLNESS—WE  
SHOULD TURN TO THE PEOPLE WHO  
LIVED THE STORY.

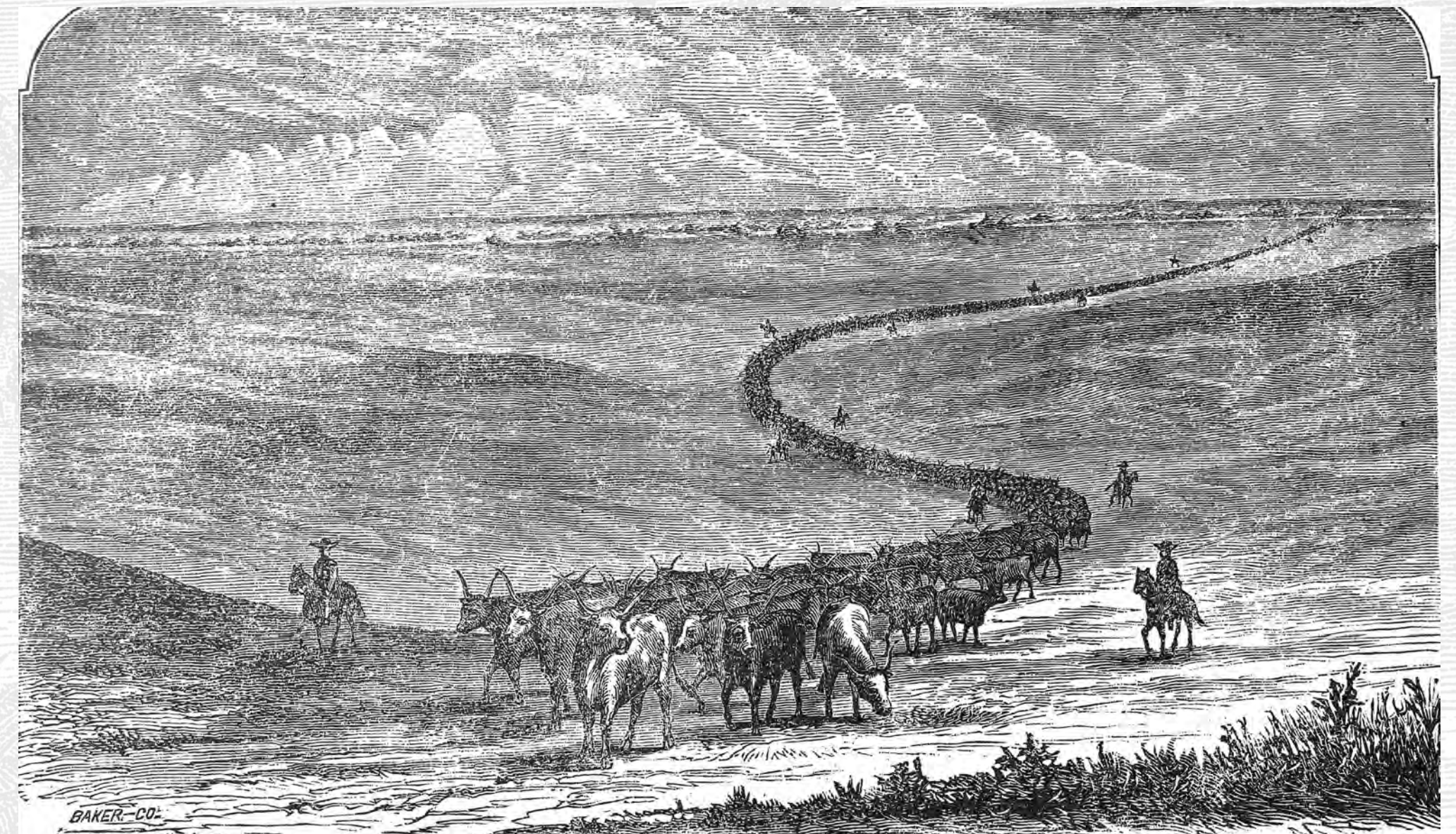
Jack Bailey's *A Texas Cowboy's Journal*  
chronicles his time driving cattle  
to Kansas. Bailey took to the trail  
in 1868 in spite of the protests of  
his family and friends, and kept a  
record of his experiences.

Joseph McCoy himself wrote  
about the Chisholm Trail, recalling  
his memories and experiences in  
*Historic Sketches of the Cattle*

*Trade of the West and  
Southwest* (1874).

McCoy's book was  
illustrated with  
engravings by Henry  
Worrall. Born in  
Liverpool, Worrall was  
a renaissance man: he worked in the  
newspaper industry, wrote music and  
taught guitar in Ohio, designed the  
landscaping for the institution now  
known as Washburn University in

Topeka, and contributed work to the Kansas  
exhibits at the Philadelphia Centennial and the  
1893 World's Fair in Chicago. Worrall's  
illustrations for McCoy's book are lively visions  
of life on the cattle drive, and *Historic Sketches* is  
now considered a foundational early work on the  
cattle industry in the Great Plains.



One of Henry Worrall's illustrations for Joseph G.  
McCoy's *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West  
and Southwest*, 1874.  
*Kansas State Historical Society*



# The Chisholm Trail on Screen

## ON THE BIG SCREEN:

*Red River* (1948), film  
United Artists/MGM Home Entertainment

*The Old Chisholm Trail* (1942), film  
Universal Pictures

AS A GENRE, THE WESTERN HAS DOMINATED MOVIE SCREENS SINCE MOTION PICTURES FIRST BECAME POPULAR.

*The Great Train Robbery* (1903), with its depiction of an untamed American West and famous climactic gunfight, was arguably the first narrative film. The American public proved hungry for more depictions of the frontier, and film studios readily obliged.

So it was only natural that the Chisholm Trail story would make its way to Hollywood. Many films depict the Chisholm Trail, including *The Texans* (1938) and *Abilene Town* (1946). The most famous and critically acclaimed depiction of the Chisholm Trail was *Red River* (1948), starring John Wayne as a trail boss bent on taking his herd to Missouri, and Montgomery Clift as his son, who

believes their fortunes lie in a Kansas rail town called Abilene. Critics suggest Wayne's depiction of antihero Thomas Dunston was one of his best, and hail Howard Hawks' masterful direction.

The Chisholm Trail played a less direct role on television. Shows like *Centennial* (1978) and *Bonanza* (1959-1973) bore the trail's influence, and the miniseries *Lonesome Dove* (1989), set on the Goodnight-Loving Trail that ran from Texas to Montana and based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Larry McMurtry, also bore the mark of *Red River* and other depictions of life on the Chisholm Trail.