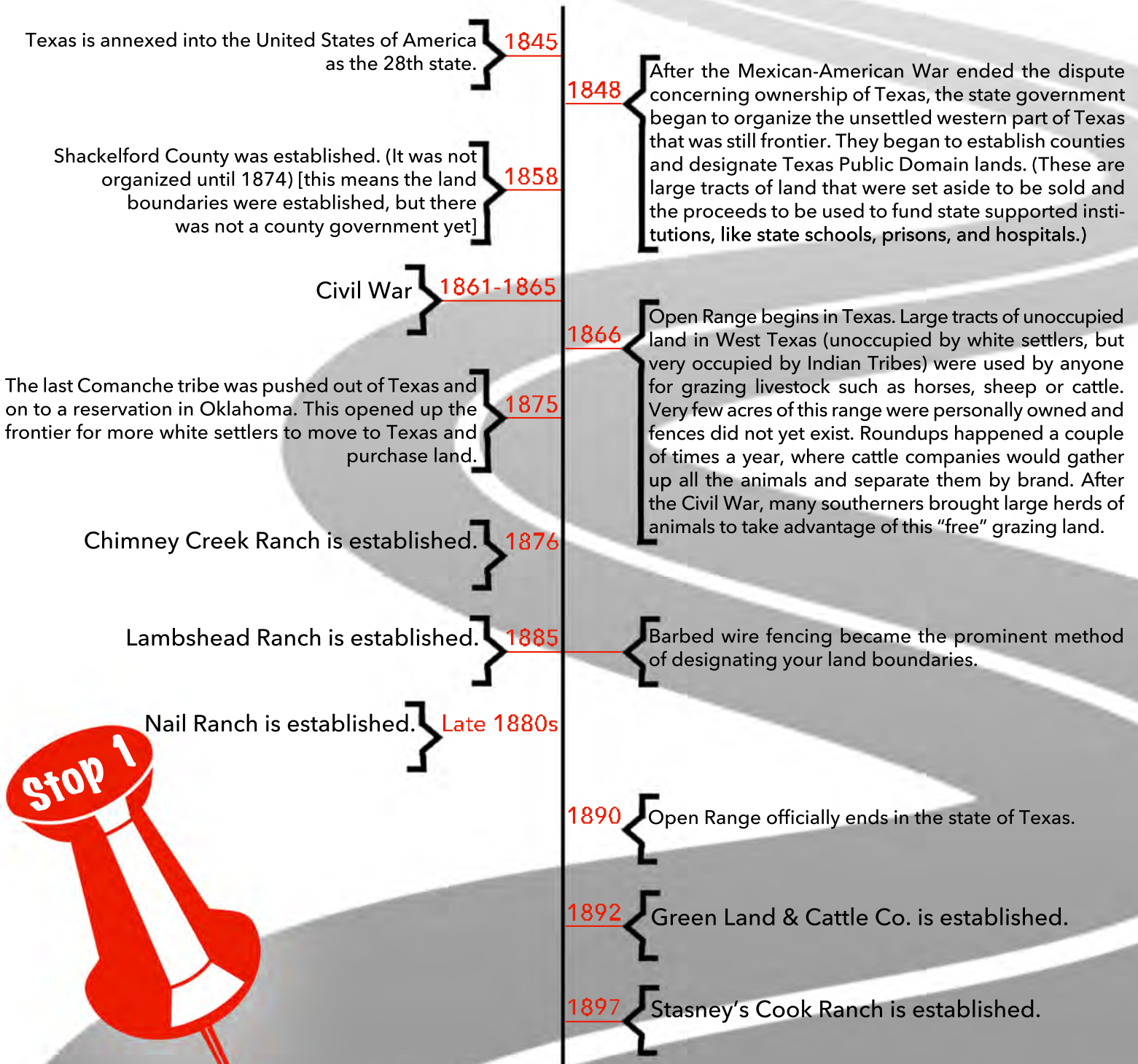




Ranching History in West Texas!

Before you begin, it is important to understand that ranching in Texas has a long and complicated history. Ranching in 1850 looked a lot different than it did just fifty years later in 1900. Take a look at the timeline to get an idea of important events that effected ranch ownership during this time period.



Chimney Creek Ranch
County Road 220, off HWY 351
12 miles west of Albany, TX



The Stage Runs Through it!

Smith Station, the name of the stop for the Butterfield Stage Line, was opened on September 16, 1858 on land that is now part of the Chimney Creek Ranch.

The first owners of Chimney Creek were George and John Horsful who purchased the land in 1876. The name of the ranch probably derived from the creek that ran through it called Chimney Creek. The land changed hands many times in the next twelve years, until Frank Eben Conrad, a merchant from Albany, purchased the ranch. Frank's wife was Ella Matthews, whose family were of the first settlers to establish ranches in Shackelford County.



Tragedy struck in 1892, when Frank committed suicide without leaving any explanation. His young widow Ella (and five children under the age of 10) were left to continue life and business without him.

Raised by hardworking pioneers, Ella did not shrink from responsibility and continued running the family ranch, as well as purchasing additional property to add to the total acreage. She also established a railroad stop including cattle pens and a loading chute along the Texas Central Railroad line west of Albany. This gave area ranches a closer point to load cattle onto the train without having to herd them the additional twelve miles to Albany. Ella named the stop the "Bud Matthew Switch" in honor of her brother.

In 1920, G.R. Davis purchased the ranch from Ella's children, and successfully operated the ranch for 35 years. His daughter later inherited the ranch, but did not want the burden of running it herself. Therefore on July 1, 1957, she struck a deal with the Waller Cattle Company to lease the ranch. To this day, the Waller family has been leasing and running the ranch.

Did you know?

- When the train would stop at the Bud Matthews Switch to pick up a load of cattle, it was the Railroad's policy to blow a whistle to mark its arrival. This did not go over well with cowboys who had spent days gathering and driving their cows to the switch and them get frightened by the whistle and stampede in every direction! The cowboys and engineers had many disagreements over this policy.

Look it up!

- In train terminology, what was a "switch"? How did it differ from a regular train stop?

