

SANTA MARGARITA RANCH

By E. B. STANLEY

Animal Husbandman at the University of Arizona

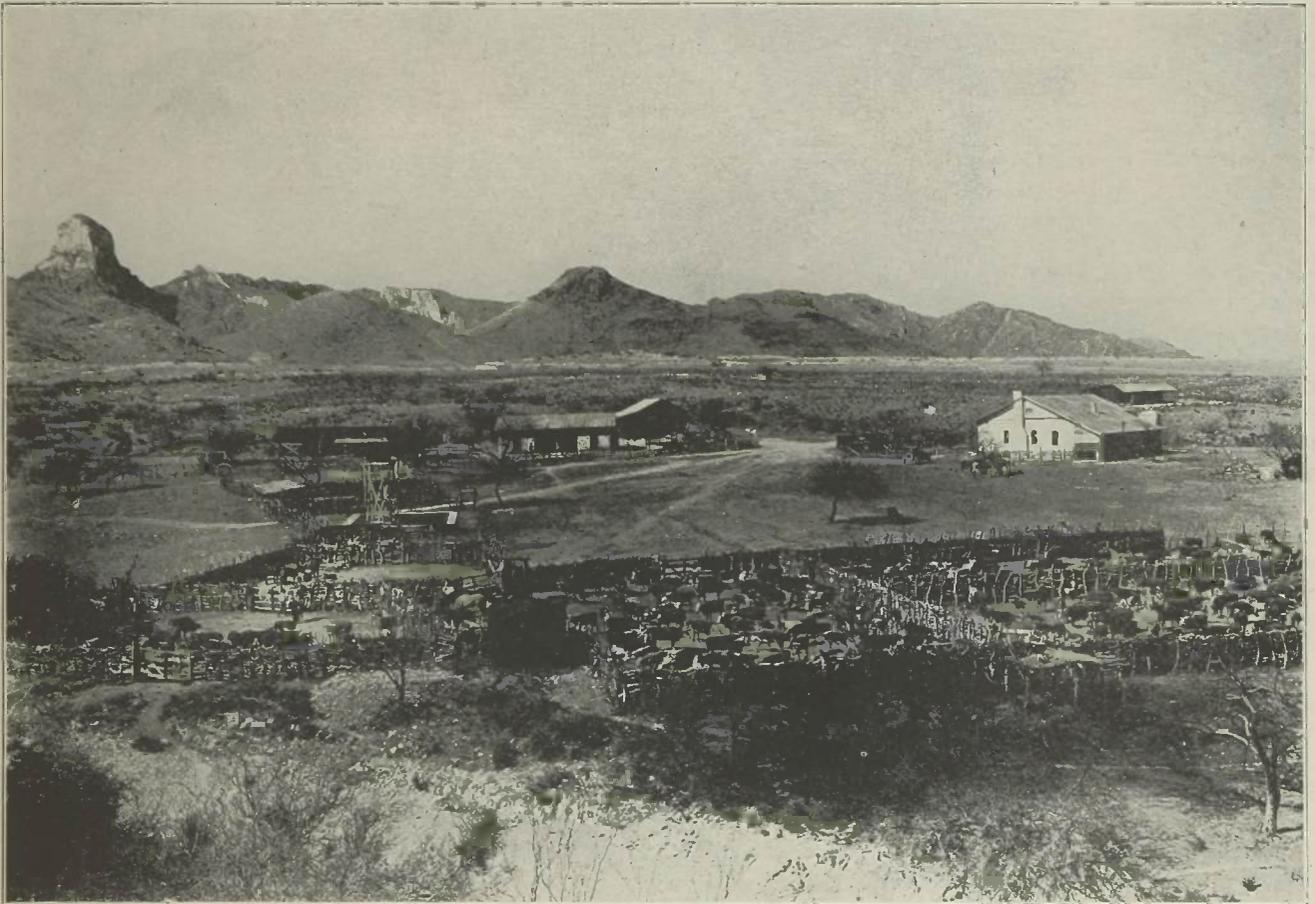
Strict Adherence to Fundamental Business Principles, a Thorough Understanding of Range Cattle Management, Together With Just Plain Cow Sense Has Made This Ranch One of the Finest of Its Kind in the Southwest.

The status of the range cattle industry today is not a pleasant subject to dwell upon. It is yet within the throes of depression and fate has not discontinued its ruthless elimination of certain stockmen from the cattle business. There is, however, a bright side to this unfortunate situation which cannot be overlooked and some cattlemen are holding on with bull

to fundamental business principles, a thorough understanding of range cattle management, together with just plain cow sense has demonstrated that the cattle business is a sound and permanent industry. Mr. Ronstadt takes an active and leading part in the affairs of the Arizona Cattle Grower's Association and has the responsible task of looking after its

simple and touches on the problems, common to every cattleman, that spell success or failure. A story of the development of the ranch by Mr. Ronstadt tells the tale.

The Santa Margarita Ranch lies 65 miles southwest of Tucson, its eastern boundary extending along the crest of the Baboquivari Mountains bordering the Papago Indian reserva-



A View of the Santa Margarita Ranch Owned and Operated by J. M. Ronstadt, of Tucson, Arizona. Baboquivari Peak in the Background.

dog tenacity for the better days that are sure to come.

An outstanding example of the outfits that are coming through and looking up, is the Santa Margarita ranch, owned and operated by J. M. Ronstadt of Tucson. This is one of the finest ranches in the southwest. All credit for its success is due Mr. Ronstadt who, by a strict adherence

financial affairs. He is a ready and willing cooperater, and students and faculty of the University of Arizona frequently visit his ranch to conduct judging, cattle grading, and dehorning demonstrations, and to observe the methods practiced in carrying on the ranch operations.

Naturally the question is asked, "How did he do it?" The answer is

tion. It reaches westward over the gradual reclining mountains and terminates in a broad expanse of mesa land, embodying in all an extensive tract of 75,000 acres. Fifty miles of fence enclose the entire ranch and its 4,000 head of white faced cattle, while old Baboquivari Peak guards over all with its commanding, inspiring, and

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impressing beauty. The writer ventures the thought that this old mountain has been a source of inspiration to Mr. Ronstadt in the development of this ranch.

In 1910 Mr. Ronstadt cast his lot in the cattle game. Homesteading on what is now his headquarters ranch, he acquired a small herd of good Mexican cows that had been crossed with purebred Hereford bulls from the Cananea Cattle Company. Purebred Hereford bulls have been used exclusively by Mr. Ronstadt. In 1912, a carload of bulls were purchased from Mr. Scarborough of Midland, Texas, followed by a later shipment from Luke Bright, also of Midland. Succeeding shipments have included some Repeater bulls from Mr. Butterworth of Moline, Illinois; Anxiety stock from Columbus, Mo.; and a fine lot of Disturber bulls purchased from Mr. Haun of Parkersville, Kansas, this year.

Included in the bull herd was a half brother of Beau Donald 69th, who proved to be a fine getter of calves that added materially to the upbuilding of Mr. Ronstadt's breeding herd. In fact the continued use of good purebred bulls, together with a persistent practice of culling out the undesirable females, has resulted in the establishment of a very high class and creditable herd. It is an excellent demonstration of the value of purebred bulls in grading up an originally common herd of cows. Without exaggeration, the Santa Margarita herd is a living monument by the purebred Hereford bull in Arizona.

Not content with the use of purebred bulls, Mr. Ronstadt has secured a small herd of purebred Hereford cows and heifers from the original Butterworth herd of Moline, Illinois. This will afford an opportunity to raise a part of the herd bulls on the ranch. In 1922, the main herd was materially increased by the purchase of a large number of the 7X cattle owned by Mr. Harrison of Nogales, Arizona. The cattle were high grade Hereford cows that would be a credit to any range herd in the west.

Fencing Pays

A factor that has contributed largely to the success of the Santa Margarita Ranch is the systematic use of fences. The entire holdings are enclosed in a five strand barbed wire

fence, posts a rod apart and cross fenced into five holding pastures. A fence divides the summer and winter ranges making it possible to allow the recuperation of each range following the grazing season. Before fencing, Mr. Ronstadt states that his calf crop did not exceed 50% while over a five year period following the use of fences the calf crop has averaged 80 per cent, or an increase of 30 calves to every hundred cows. "It was a costly venture," Mr. Ronstadt said, "but I have been amply repaid by the increased number of calves I have had to market, not to mention the advantages in handling the stock, using better bulls, weaning the calves, and gathering for market. Fencing has served to gentle my cattle, less labor is required to handle them, and I can keep a better record of the stock. It has also made possible a better use of the range by avoidance of overgrazing and conservation of feed. In fact, the fences have made the ranch possible."

Water Development

A good many pounds of flesh have been saved by minimizing the distance to water. No animal is obliged to travel over three miles for a drink. The water is supplied in six dirt tanks and one cement tank from flood water and are centrally located along the division line of the summer and winter ranges. Pump water is always available as a provision for flood water shortage. Water conservation is vitally essential on the Arizona ranch.

It is by no means an easy task to provide water for a large herd of cattle where running water is not available. Dirt levies are built across sections of flood areas or arroyos in places that will hold the torrential flood water in large natural basins. The levies are watched closely by the cowboys to guard against leaks or breaks. A loss of water during the torrid heat of summer invites disaster. Three of the large tanks on the Santa Margarita range have never been dry and pumps run by windmills or gas engines insure against shortage in the others. So it is that the cowman must be familiar not only with bovine intricacies, but must possess enough engineering ingenuity to construct levies or dams in the most strategic locations that will conserve water through the dry seasons.

Feed

None of the marks common to overgrazing are visible on this ranch. A prodigious growth of gramma grasses, Indian wheat, and alfilaria has always been provided against a feed shortage. An abundance of mesquite, catsclaw, memosa, and bear grass add to the supply and variety. The carrying capacity of the ranch averages around 15 to 20 acres per cow which is exceptionally good for range grazing.

Eighty acres of the ranch are devoted to dry land farming. Sweet sorghum is raised for horse hay and the surplus stored for emergency feed during drought. Enough beans are grown to supply the ranch larder.

Labor

Two Mexican vaqueros are kept in the steady employ of the ranch. Both have families and the older children lend a hand in the roundup. Extra help is needed only on special occasions.

Marketing

"I have no trouble selling my cattle each year," said Mr. Ronstadt, "but I cannot grow enough of them." The Santa Margarita cattle possess the quality and type that attract buyers and bring good prices. Every head is a whiteface that carries with it the substance and constitution that makes for better beef. It is only through the steady use of good purebred Hereford bulls and the elimination of the inferior individuals from year to year that it has been possible to produce a high grade marketable beef animal.

Mr. Ronstadt has been in the practice of marketing calves but has decided to at least experiment with yearlings. The change is being contemplated due to the 40 mile drive to the shipping point. It was necessary to drive the cows with the calves when a shipment of the latter was made and the round trip made it hard for the cows.

Realizing that quality bore a value commensurate with the cost, Mr. Ronstadt sought to establish a breeding herd from which he could market a product that was in demand, and for which a premium was paid. As a result of his efforts through the use of good bulls, a system of management that has increased his calf crop and minimized the overhead expenses, his ambition has met with success,