

Texas Longhorn Cattle

In 1690 a herd of cattle was driven north from Mexico to a mission along the Sabine River, and this event would change American cattle history forever. Though not native to the Texas landscape, the Longhorn breed of cattle was well equipped to survive the harsh landscape and today these sturdy animals are icons of Texas and the cattle industry.

The first Longhorn Cattle were brought to Mexico by Spanish explorers around 1493 but they didn't make it to Texas until nearly 200 years later. The legendary Texas Longhorn Cattle that we see today are descendents of the early Spanish cattle that were crossed with European breeds around the late 1600s or early 1700s. These rugged cattle thrived in the Texas landscape. Their long horns, lanky bodies and hard hooves allowed them to travel incredible distances with very little food or water and survive in many places where even humans could not easily exist. When the Civil War began the Texas Longhorns had been here for several hundred years, and millions roamed between the Sabine and Rio Bravo. Once the war was over men returned home to find their ranches in ruin, but it did not take long for these ranchers to take notice of the Texas Longhorns.

These cattle were quickly realized as a large source of income for Texas ranchers. Over the next 25 years, longhorns were driven north on now-famous cattle trails to graze on Midwestern grasses and then put on trains to be sold for beef. These cattle drives created the romantic legend of the cowboy.

Though this breed of cattle had roamed the Texas landscape for hundreds of years, and were equipped for the harsh Texas landscape, they were reduced almost to extinction at the turn of the century. In less than 40 years the great demand for the Texas Longhorns had driven them closer to extinction than the buffalo. In 1927 the Federal government stepped in to help preserve these animals that had become a part of American heritage. A herd of Texas Longhorns was taken to the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma in the first of many efforts to preserve the breed and its history.

As time passed, Texas Longhorn cattle have become prized by breeders, and can sell today for up to \$40,000 per head. Because of the importance of the breed in American history, groups such as the Cattlemen's Texas Longhorn Registry, Texas Longhorn Breeders Association of America, and the International Texas Longhorn Association are dedicated to preserving the iconic breed and ensuring that the bloodlines are pure for future generations of cattle. Today the Texas Longhorn is the mascot of the University of Texas and the official symbol of Fort Worth.

Though not originally part of the Texas landscape, the Texas Longhorn cattle provided a way of life for struggling ranchers, and today is an icon of Texas and the American cattle industry. As you continue your way through Texas, take a moment to look out the window to view the rolling Texas landscape. If you're lucky, you might even see a famous Texas Longhorn.

Source(s):

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Author(s):

Written by Andria N. Godfrey (Graduate Student) and Lance Benes (Undergraduate Student) in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University, as part of a National Park Service Trails and Rails project funded by Amtrak, 2011.