



THE HANDBOOK OF TEXAS Online

- HOME
- ABOUT
- SEARCH
- BROWSE
- HELP
- CONTRIBUTE
- BOOKSTORE
- CREDITS

SPRINGER RANCH. The Springer **Ranch** was the first **ranch** in the Panhandle,^{qv} but because of its brief, checkered life, as opposed to the still-extant JA **Ranch**,^{qv} the latter also claims that honor. After the Red River War,^{qv} in the spring of 1875 A. G. (Jim) Springer^{qv} appropriated a spot of land in present Hemphill County on Boggy Creek just north of its junction with the Canadian River. Here he constructed a multiroom dugout^{qv} to serve as a general store, hotel, and saloon, as well as living quarters. In addition, he dug a tunnel from the all-purpose roadhouse to a nearby corral and stable that he built out of pickets. Since Springer's hostelry was on the military route from Fort Supply to Fort Elliott, it quickly became a supply depot and gathering place for transient buffalo hunters, soldiers, and cowboys. Black troops stationed at Fort Elliott, in particular, found it the only place in the Panhandle where they were welcome to play cards and enjoy good whiskey and tobacco. "Old Springer" soon won considerable notoriety as a shrewd poker player. His roadhouse later became a regular stagecoach stop, and in October 1878 a post office was established there under the name of Boggy Station. However, it was closed after only two months' operation, and mail was routed to Fort Supply.

Springer's role as a frontier **rancher** began by chance. In 1875 an outfit driving a herd of 2,000 cattle crossed the Canadian River near the roadhouse rather than at the usual crossing on the trail some distance to the east. These cowmen sold Springer 300 head and left a young trail hand, Tom Leadbetter, to help manage them. Springer, however, enlisted Leadbetter to wait on customers at the store and bar, while the cattle, which bore their new owner's hastily burned AGS brand, freely roamed the nearby range with little attention from anyone. In 1877 the two men began constructing a "real house" from carefully selected cottonwood pickets, with a thatch and dirt roof. One added feature was a blockhouse loopholed on all sides to accommodate gun barrels in case of an Indian attack. On November 17, 1878, Springer and Leadbetter were killed in a gunfight with disgruntled buffalo soldiers^{qv} over a poker game. They were buried at the **ranch**. A subsequent army investigation at Mobeetie resulted in the troopers' acquittal.

The **ranch** entered a new phase after Jim Springer's brother sold the business to men named Tuttle and Chapman from Dodge City. Before long Tuttle bought out Chapman's interest, married

in Mobeetie, and personally operated the Springer **Ranch** for the next two years. He adopted a CT brand, perhaps after his initials, and increased the herd to 1,800 head. Tuttle also blazed a more direct route than the Jones and Plummer Trail^{qv} north to Dodge City, where he periodically sold cattle and bought supplies. The Tuttle Trail was subsequently used by other area **ranchers**. During Tuttle's brief tenure, the post office was reestablished in September 1879 under the name Springer **Ranch**; it remained in operation until February 1885. In 1881 Tuttle sold out to a Denver horse **ranch** partnership, the Rhodes and Aldridge Company. Rhodes was the son of a wealthy manufacturer in Aston Mills, near Philadelphia, and Reginald Aldridge was English. They changed the brand to Quarter Circle U and operated the **ranch** as absentee owners, although Aldridge did spend his summers there. It was from his experiences here that he wrote a lively range-cattle guidebook, *Ranch Notes* (1884). Rhodes and Aldridge reorganized their Texas holdings as the Springer **Ranch** Company. As manager they hired Mose Wesley Hays, an experienced cowman who, with his brother-in-law Joseph Morgan,^{qv} had driven cattle to Hemphill County from Padre Island in 1878. His wife, Lou Turner Hays, became legendary among area cowboys for her hospitality. Around 1889 the Springer **Ranch** Company sold out all its holdings piecemeal. The former roadhouse was abandoned, and the **ranch** gradually ceased to exist. The Hays family settled on Commission Creek in Lipscomb County south of Higgins, where Lou Hays died in 1910. Bonnie Hays Lake, near their homesite, bears the name of their daughter. Mose Hays, who at one time ran a general merchandise store in Canadian, later remarried and moved to San Antonio, where he died in 1938. Since the 1940s part of the Springer roadhouse site has been covered by Lake Marvin.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Reginald Aldridge, *Life on a **Ranch**: **Ranch** Notes in Kansas, Colorado, the Indian Territory, and Northern Texas* (New York: Appleton, 1884; rpt., New York: Argonaut Press, 1966). Angie Debo, ed., *Cowman's Southwest: Being the Reminiscences of Oliver Nelson* (Glendale, California: Clark, 1953). Glyndon M. Riley, *The History of Hemphill County* (M.A. thesis, West Texas State College, 1939). Pauline D. and R. L. Robertson, *Cowman's Country: Fifty Frontier **Ranches** in the Texas Panhandle, 1876-1887* (Amarillo: Paramount, 1981). F. Stanley, *Rodeo Town (Canadian, Texas)* (Denver: World, 1953). Lonnie J. White, comp., "Dodge City *Times*, 1877-1885," *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review* 40 (1967).

H. Allen Anderson

[top of page](#) | [about](#) | [search](#) | [browse](#) | [help](#) | [home](#) - [contribute](#) - [bookstore](#) - [credits](#)

[how to cite this article](#) | [report an error or correction](#) | [suggest an article topic](#)

The *Handbook of Texas Online* is a joint project of [The General Libraries at the University of Texas at Austin](#) and the [Texas State Historical Association](#).

© The Texas State Historical Association, 1997,1998,1999.

Last Updated: February 15, 1999

Comments to: comments@www.tsha.utexas.edu