

THE TRAIL BOSS



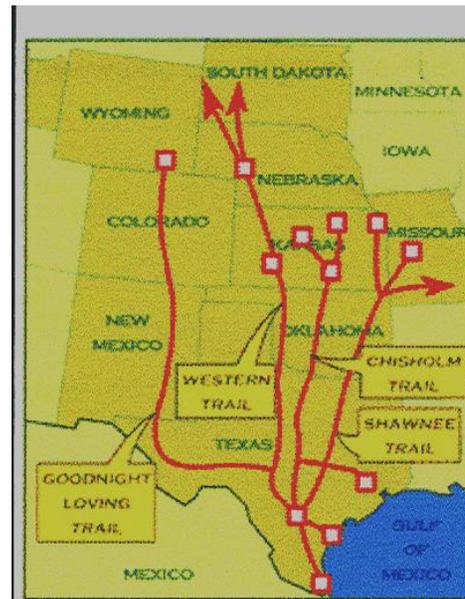
This horse and rider statue found on Boot Hill represents a Texas Trail cattle drover who appears to be looking over the graves and town—back over the trail—back to Texas. This bronze statue is a copy of an identical statue found in Dallas, Texas. The statue of the horse and rider was sculpted by Robert Summers. The TRAIL BOSS replaces an earlier concrete statue of a horse and rider sculpted by Dr. Gainsforth which now is located at the Ogallala Livestock Market sale barn west of town.



This marker found at the foot of the Boot Hill stairs represents another name for the cattle trail to Ogallala. In Texas it was called the Western trail and in Ogallala it was called the Texas trail. The Great Western Trail marker you see is a project of the Rotary International. They plan to mark the Western/Texas trail from Texas to Canada. This marker is one of the first Great Western Trail markers placed in Nebraska.

THE TEXAS TRAIL

Ogallala was about 10 years old when the Union Pacific Railroad company constructed loading pens just west of the main street of town. The Civil War had ended and there were abundant longhorn cattle roaming the open ranges in Texas. The market for cattle was in the north and soon herds of cattle were being driven up the Texas (Western) trail to Ogallala where they were sold and loaded on rail cars and shipped to markets in the east, sold to local cattlemen and fattened on the open range, or trailed on north to the Indian reservations. This trail started in various locations in Texas and for the most part, ended in Ogallala. It is estimated that over a million cattle came up the Texas (Western) trail between 1870 and 1885. A few of the trail drovers who visited Ogallala never made it back to the herds but ended being buried on Boot Hill.



OGALLALA'S BOOT HILL



In the stirring days of the 1800's, when the present city of Ogallala was an infant town on the Union Pacific Railroad, Boot Hill Cemetery was the final resting place for cowboys, drifters, and settlers, who helped make Ogallala a booming cow town on the Texas Trail. Numerous stories are told of those days when gun battles took their toll on human life. Many buried on Boot Hill ran afoul of the law and the streets of Ogallala echoed with gunfire as some slick gambler or horse thief met his Waterloo. One burial was that of "Rattlesnake Ed," who was shot down over a nine dollar bet in a Monte game in the "Cowboy's Rest Saloon." Most were buried with their boots on, thus the name Boot Hill. The bodies, placed in canvas sacks, were lowered into shallow graves and marked with a wooden headboard. Boot Hill is unique—buried in its sod are the many stories of the early days of Ogallala.

