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Monument Springs Ranch is nestled in a rustic valley full of soapberry, hackberry, and Siberian Elms. Monument Spring was an important hiding place and camp for the last Apaches and Comanches of the region.

Colonel Shafter led the first U.S. Army troops in the region in 1871 during a loop from Fort Davis, Texas up to the western edge of the Llano Estacado and back, but he missed the spring. In 1875 he returned, looking for the last of the Indians that refused to go to the reservations, and found the spring.

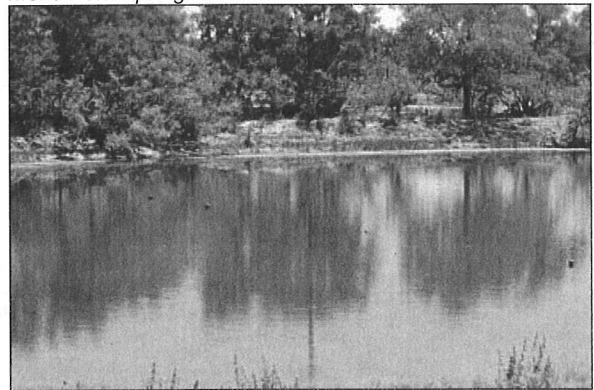
Monument Spring is named for the monument that Shafter had built of caliche rock about three miles west of the spring. He reported it was a very large spring of excellent water, enough for thousands of horses. The site had the finest quality grasses in the region, with plenty of wood for fuel, and rock for construction.

In the 1880's Monument Spring was choice property. Two buffalo hunters claimed the spring in 1884. They built a rock house and rock corrals on a rise above the spring. The buffalo hunters dug a hand-dug well and hit water at 19 feet deep. They built a windmill for drinking water.

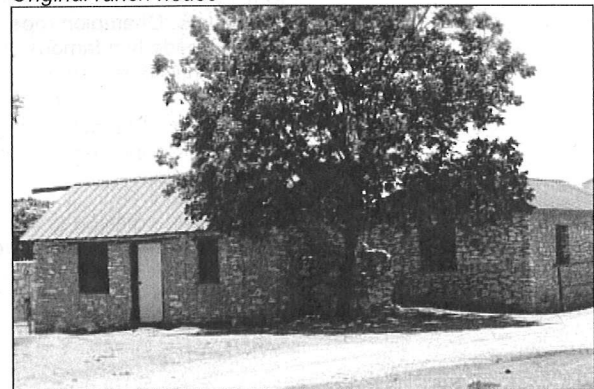
The Earl of Aylesford came to Big Spring, Texas to become a big time rancher like other members of the titled gentry of England. In 1885, he sent his chief assistant, R.F. Kennedy, to Monument Spring. Kennedy paid the buffalo hunters \$5,500 of his own money for the water rights, and immediately drove a thousand head of cattle to the ranch. The Earl, who had arranged to pay Kennedy for the ranch, drank himself to death, but Kennedy held on to the land for six years, before selling out to the McKenzie brothers.

The McKenzie brothers began piecing together a large ranch, including the Monument Springs Ranch, but they overextended themselves. In 1894, Winfield Scott, the son of the Mexican War general, and his partner, Andrew B. (Sug) Robertson took over 684 sections (square miles) in the region.

*Monument Springs*



*Original ranch house*

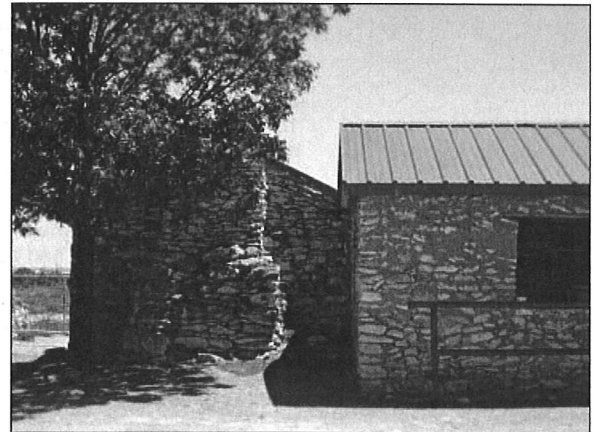
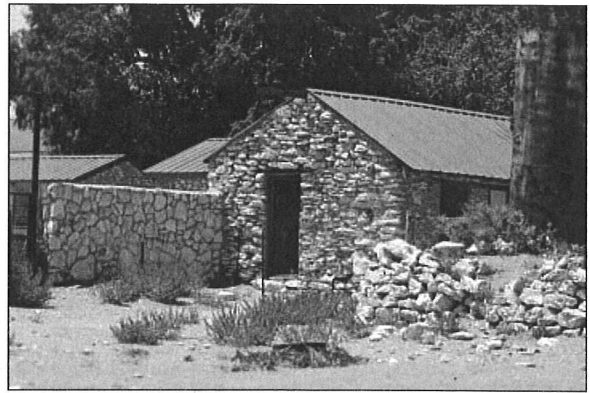


One of the herds he bought to stock the ranch was branded with the "hat" brand, by which the ranch became known.



By 1896, more than 50,000 head of cattle were branded with the Hat Brand on a range area of 100 square miles. The Hat Ranch extended from about six miles east of the site of present Seminole in Gaines County, Texas, to the vicinity of Carlsbad in Eddy County, New Mexico.

Since there was no surface water in the entire area, Scott and Robertson spent \$50,000 watering the range. An average of forty men per year was required to operate this immense estate, which at its peak covered nearly a million acres of bought or leased land. As many as 500 saddle horses were used on the ranch. The main ranch headquarters was located at Monument Springs, New Mexico.



In 1904 The Homestead Act of New Mexico became law, thus enabling small homesteaders to break the strangle hold the large ranches had in southeast New Mexico. In 1905 the Hat Ranch was broken up. Scott and Robertson sold the ranch and moved the herd of cattle to Montana.

From 1906 to 1938 Bill Weir owned the land around the spring, and his sons Bert and George became U.S. Champion ropers. Will Rodgers worked on the ranch at age 18, learning the rope tricks that later made him famous. In the 1950's the Weir family sold out to Charlie Fristoe. Charlie Fristoe ranched until his retirement in April, 1967.

W.B. and Ruby Baum bought the Hat Ranch at this time and talked their daughter, Betty and son-in-law Jimmie Cooper into running the ranch for them.

Jim and Betty continue to live at Monument Springs headquarters and run the ranch with help from son, Jimmie B. Cooper, daughter-in-law, Sheryl and daughter, Adana Green and son-in-law Pat Green.

Today, Monument Springs is an Angus Cattle operation, with Hat Ranch Quarter Horses located up the road 50 miles to the north in Tatum, New Mexico.



Pat Green from Hat Ranch Quarter Horses says: "We do quite a bit of play stuff with our horses. Good for their minds and it gets peoples attention and helps us make new friends. I used to ring steward our local 4H shows on this little mare. The judges would say,

'I won't be able to see because your horse will be in the way.' Then when a class would start I would just ride over by him and lay her down from her back and walk over and help him until he was finished judging. Then I'd walk over to her and ride her up and head for the announcer's stand. This was before we had two-way communication. Some of the judges loved it; others not so much. But the crowd loved it!"



"We lay all of our colts down as babies and then a few times as yearlings. Makes them a lot easier to doctor in emergencies. Then if we decide to teach them some fun things as older riders, its no problem. Another advantage is that we don't have a single older mare or stallion with an old wire scar and I attribute it to teaching them to 'Give' at such an early age."

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