

# Viewpoints

## Babbitt Ranches showing the way

We have to admit to more than a little skepticism when we first heard of the grazing experiments taking place at the Babbitt Ranches north of Flagstaff. Western ranchers already are under fire for allowing cattle to overgraze the rangeland, and when we learned that Babbitt Ranches was packing 500 cattle onto five acres for 20 hours, it did not look encouraging.

But in this case, we and a lot of other skeptics might be wrong. Under a concept known as holistic resource management, range managers at Babbitt Ranches are attempting to replicate grassland conditions before the arrival of domestic cattle, an era that saw large herds of elk, antelope and buffalo trample the ground and eat everything in their path.

As it turns out, those mobile herds were good for the range, aerating the turf, fertilizing the soil and eating dead grass to make way for new shoots. Babbitt managers know this because they have found that range that is heavily grazed by cattle for short periods comes back healthier the next year than land that has been grazed by fewer cattle but for a longer time.

Does this mean a return to the cattle drives of yesteryear, with cowboys on horseback keeping herds on the move from one day to the next? Probably not, at least not until more questions are answered about the effect of intensive grazing on soil erosion and long-term grassland health.

But the initiative shown by Babbitt Ranches on the environmental front is an encouraging sign. For too long ranchers and environmentalists have seen grazing as exclusively good or bad rather than exploring common goals such as enhancing the rangeland. Babbitt Ranches managers should be commended for opening not only their gates to outsiders but their minds to new ideas.

Other experiments at Babbitt Ranches include natural burnoffs of grazed lands, mulching grazed lands with juniper and pinyon cuttings and encouraging public access through the 700,000-acre ranch via biking and hiking trails. Ranchers on public lands have a higher burden of public service to meet than private ranchers, and it is heartening to know that Babbitt Ranches takes that burden seriously.

Arizona Daily Sun, Thursday, August 17, 1995

Arizona Daily Sun, Friday, October 31, 1969

## Babbitt Choice For Post Office Was Given Okay

SUNfiles, Feb. 21, 1907

The site for a new postoffice in Flagstaff has been definitely settled by the acceptance by the postoffice department of the proposal of David Babbitt.

The new location will be the southwestern corner of Aspen

avenue and San Francisco street or where the Grand Canyon Hotel formerly stood.

The lease is for a term of ten years and included complete equipment, heat, light, water, safe, etc.

## BABBITT BROS., MEAN BUSINESS AND GOODS MUST BE SOLD.

Having purchased the Riordan Mercantile Co. Stock we will sell the entire purchase, in lots to suit customers,

FOR CASH.

On Monday, July 30th,

We will commence our Great

### Slaughtering Sale

of everything in our

### DRY GOODS DEPARTMENT,

Including

DRESS GOODS, NOTIONS,

TRIMMINGS, BOOTS AND SHOES,

CLOTHING, AND HATS.

In fact anything you may want in that line. Everything goes for cash. This is the time to buy two dollars worth for one Remember the time and place.

BABBITT BROS., MONDAY, JULY 30, 1893.

Cocoino Sun, August 24, 1893

# Water is Where You Find It

By JOHN BABBITT

Probably few areas in the state have as serious water problems as we have in most parts of Northern Arizona. Since we have had ranches here for almost 80 years, we have been fighting the battle for more stock water continuously, with varying degrees of success.

We may well have the dubious distinction of having drilled more dry well holes, including one 2,240' deep and many others over 1,000', than any other party in Northern Arizona, but on the other hand, we also have had some good fortune. On the possibility that other ranchers might have somewhat similar conditions to ours and benefit from our experiences, it seems that several of them might bear telling.

Our Cedar Ranch camp on the C O Bar Ranch was one of the earliest acquisitions of the first Arizona generation of the family. It lies 20 miles north of the San Francisco Peaks and is situated at the foot of a high bluff. The top 100 feet of the bluff is malapai and this caps the Shnarup formation. Small springs break out on the face of the hillside, which we gather with pipelines to a central collecting system, but despite almost continuous work on these seeps, we were only able to produce three to four gallons a minute.

### Timbered Tunnels

At various times we dug and timbered tunnels, ran extensive drifts, and made deep cuts to increase the flow, but overall, these operations were not too successful. In addition, almost every spring the formations tended to slip and slide with a consequent caving of much

of the work we had previously done.

Several geologists looked at our problem, but were not very helpful. More or less in desperation, because of our urgent need for additional water, we decided to drill a well back on top of the rim about a quarter of a mile, even though the prospect of drilling that hard malapai wasn't very inviting. We studied the terrain carefully, although the thick covering of malapai didn't leave much to see, and started to drill.

At a depth of about 100 feet we broke through the igneous malapai and were delighted to hit water with a capacity of about 10 gallons per minute. As we needed even more water, however, we drilled several hundred yards to the east but got less than two gallons per minute. We then tried about the same distance to the west and got practically no water at all. Interpolating the information at hand, we drilled a final well a short distance from the discovery well. This was a bonanza and on a test it seemed this would make about 50 gallons a minute. Now ten years later, our fondest hopes have been justified. It has never shown any signs of weakening in spite of the fact that some years we have pumped our Cedar Ranch well 40 gallons a minute 24 hours a day for six months at a time.

### Cedar Ranch Well

Several years ago we drilled a 440 foot well at the foot of this bluff, which is some kind of fault, and got another good well in a much lower strata, so we feel that we won't ever have another water problem at Cedar Ranch.

Three years ago we had the

opportunity to purchase the Espee Ranch which lies north of Ashfork. We were very interested in acquiring it for the reason that it joined our W Triangle Outfit for 16 miles and is excellent country. Here again, however, the problem that was disturbing was the water situation. The only permanent water on the ranch was two small adjoining springs located well toward the south end of the ranch, which is also the high end. The two springs between them produced only five or six gallons a minute despite the fact they fed a gravity pipeline extending some 10 miles to the north. The springs were completely inadequate and it was not too unusual in dry times for the owners to truck stock water 55 miles from Williams.

Even though these springs - named Howard Spring - are 50 miles west of Cedar Ranch, in considering the possibility of purchasing Espee, we were struck with the similarity of the situations, although competent geologists had been over the ranch and a number of dry holes had been drilled.

### More Dry Holes

After purchasing the ranch, we drilled a number of dry holes, including one 1,400 feet deep. These failures would probably have been the end of our explorations except for the persistence of our ranch manager, Frank Banks.

Finally, we decided to go ahead with a program of four more shallow wells in the vicinity of the Springs. Frank then spent days trying to figure out the direction of flow of the small springs and carefully examining the terrain. His conclusion was that the source of water was from a direction that

seemed most improbable because of the physical features of the country.

Nonetheless, our second attempt was successful and we now produce 50 gallons a minute from less than 100 feet. This find has changed the entire character of the ranch and we are certainly most thankful for our good fortune.

Last year in an area about five miles north of Howard Spring we decided to ride our luck and try again. The spot chosen is out on Long Point and is completely unlikely-looking drill site. No springs break out but there were evidences that many years ago, a small seep may have flowed out from the cliff. Early cattlemen or Indians must have occasionally camped beneath the cliff, as a few old wagon parts, broken utensils and the like, testified.

This time we drilled a couple of hundred yards back from the rim and hit a small amount of water. The next attempt was 200 yards further back from the rim, but it was completely dry. Finally, we drilled 75 yards nearer the rim than the original hole, and at 80 feet hit a water supply that has tested 40 gallons a minute, although we have not permanently equipped it yet.

I am certainly not trying to advise anyone who has a small spring coming out of a bluff under a covering of malapai to go back on top and start drilling, but on the other hand, it may be worth considering. Needless to say, we were extremely lucky in these cases, but nonetheless, much of our luck has been made by the great talents and persistence of Frank Branks.

Cocoino Sun, July 7, 1939

## Largest Mercantile Business In Arizona Completes A Successful Half-Century

\$4,000,000 Worth of Business Annually Handled By Firm

The history of the founding and growth of Babbitt Brothers Trading Company, today admittedly the largest business of its kind in the state of Arizona, is a story of humble beginnings and slow, steady steps up the ladder to success. It is a story which traces the natural results of a mixture of almost unlimited opportunity with brains, integrity, hard work, and ambition.

Such a history, as yet unwritten except in the memory of older generations, would read like fiction; as much of the history of development of the great American west reads like fiction. Great men built the west, and among the greatest of these were the Babbitt brothers. All things have a starting point, and the starting point of the Babbitt brothers was that time, so many years ago, when the boys, hardworking and ambitious, clerked for meager wages in Cincinnati firms until they had sufficient funds to open their own grocery store. That little store, sold before the move to Arizona in 1886, was the foundation of the brothers' immense holdings in later years.

The story of the Babbitts is

a typical story of American enterprise, almost Horatio Algerish in its "poor boys make good" theme. The money from the little grocery store went into a small herd of cattle, purchased in 1886, as told elsewhere in this paper. Just as the Babbitts' livestock interests were built on the foundation of that little store, the greater holdings of later years were built on a foundation of livestock. If you ever have the privilege of discussing the business of the firm today with C.J. Babbitt; the retail stores, the wholesale stores, the ranches, farms, and other immense holdings, you will be struck with the thought that Mr. Babbitt considers himself still, and simply, a stockman. The great trading company was built on, and is an integral part of, the livestock business in northern Arizona.

The Arizona Livestock Loan Company, part of the Babbitt organization, loaned over \$50,000,000 to southwestern stockmen in the years between 1926 and 1939. The company carried scores of stockmen through the depression years, until they were able to regain their footing. Philanthropy? Not all. Simply this: "Our firm is built primarily on the livestock business; you are part of the livestock business; together we stand, divided we fall."

The trading company was founded in Flagstaff in 1889 by

four brothers, David, William, George, and Charles Babbitt. That first little store employed perhaps two or three clerks. Today the company, throughout its vast holding, employs between 350 and 370 persons, with an annual payroll which exceeds \$400,000. That first little mercantile and livestock business has grown in 50 variable years to immense proportions. Today the firm does over \$4,000,000 of gross business annually.

Operated as a simple partnership of the four brothers until 1918, the company was then incorporated, a move made necessary by the immense complexity of a business simultaneously operating thousands of head of cattle and sheep, thousands of acres of farm land, retail and wholesale groceries, hardware stores, drug stores, furniture and drygoods stores, loans, and dozens of other enterprises. With the exception of the utilities and larger mining companies, the company is said today to be the largest single tax payer in the state of Arizona.

Modern wholesale and retail stores operated by the firm furnish practically every need of the housewife, the business man, the stockman, rancher, lumberman, tourist, builder, or Indian. Babbitts' sell, either at wholesale or retail, everything from groceries to

Indian blankets, jewelry and curios; from beer by the carload or bottle to overshoes; from the latest styles in women's and men's clothing to building materials; from fine, long-staple cotton to cowhides; from saddles to Parisian perfumes. You can buy everything from Babbitts' you need or are ever likely to want; a bottle of champagne or a cover for a prairie schooner.

Thousands of Babbitt cattle roam northern Arizona's ranges, branded with famous brands, the "C-O-Bar" and the "Hashknife." Besides the cattle, the firm owns thousands of sheep; 3000 acres of rich farm land in the Salt River Valley, extensively cultivated; modern, up-to-the-minute retail groceries are operated in Flagstaff, Winslow, Holbrook, Grand Canyon, Williams and Kingman. Wholesale houses scattered at centrally located points supply the needs of smaller merchants; five trading posts on the Indian reservation supply the needs of the Indians; Babbitts' drygoods stores provide everything from babies' layettes to 10-gallon cowboy hats.

And all this has come about in a short half-century! Honesty, integrity, and ambition, in this case at least, have gained their rewards.

ARIZONA CATTLELOG

Lil' Dudette eats BEEF... ..You bet!

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