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CHILDRESS, HUGH MARTIN, JR.

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CHILDRESS, HUGH MARTIN, JR. (1835–1897). Hugh Martin (Mart) Childress, Jr., cattle dealer and traildriver, son of Rev. Hugh Martin and Susannah (Watters) Childress, Sr., was born in Bastrop County, Texas, on May 24, 1835. He was the third of four children of a Methodist minister; the eldest son, Lemuel, was killed accidentally at the Alamo before the siege. His parents, both Tennesseans, had migrated in 1832 from Alabama to Bastrop County; the elder Childress served as a militiaman and ranger there and later fought under Edward Burleson at the battle of Salado Creek. By 1856 the family had settled near Camp Colorado in Coleman County. Hugh, Jr., entered the stock business in Lampasas and Brown counties and in 1859–60 won contracts to supply beef to Camp Colorado. In 1861 he started a ranch at Post Oak Springs in western Coleman County and was taxed for 400 cattle valued at \$2,000. During the Civil War Childress served with J. J. Callan's minutemen and in Company B under Henry Fossett at Camp Colorado. In January 1865 he fought in the battle of Dove Creek against Kickapoo Indians bound for Mexico. In April he collected cattle to drive to northern markets but lost his horse herd to Comanche raiders. A year later, with his holdings increased to over 8,000 head through purchase and consignment, Childress piloted a small herd from Coleman County to central Iowa. In June 1866 he started 2,500 cattle to Colorado over what became the Goodnight-Loving Trail, but lost both cattle and horses to Indians before reaching the Pecos.

He regularly sent herds to Kansas between 1867 and 1869 and in 1870 was a preeminent drover in West Texas. He trailed more cattle than John Hittson, John Chisum, or Charles Goodnight. By this time he also had suffered \$42,680 in stock losses. In 1872 Childress joined Hittson and others in sweeping the ranches along the Pecos near Las Vegas, New Mexico, and recovered 11,000 stolen cattle and 300 horses. The next year in several drives he took 10,000 head to Kansas, found no market, and turned his herds loose to graze with wandering buffalo herds; he later hired hunters to round them up. "There are few more widely known and persistent drovers than H. M. Childress," wrote cattle entrepreneur Joseph G. McCoy in his classic *Historic Sketches* (1874). But times were changing. When the Comanches burned his headquarters in 1874 in Coleman County, Childress left the trail and settled on a small ranch in Throckmorton County.

He pioneered in driving herds from west central Texas to Kansas markets as early as 1866 and was a major cattle dealer and drover for more than a decade after the Civil War. He dealt regularly with other stalwarts of the trade, and like many of them he abandoned the trail by the mid-1870s. He was never active in church work or politics. He married Hulda Ann Cox in Bell County in 1853, and the couple had four children. In 1888 Childress left Texas, settled on a small ranch in Grant County, New Mexico, and pursued his Indian-depredation claims, most of which were later paid. After he was accused of murdering ranchman Ed Moss, he fled into the Gila wilderness. He was killed by a sheriff's posse on the White House Ranch near Cliff on September 23, 1897.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Tabitha L. Morgan and Frank D. Jenkins, comps., *Two Texas Pioneers Called Hugh Martin Childress* (Ballinger, Texas, 1978).