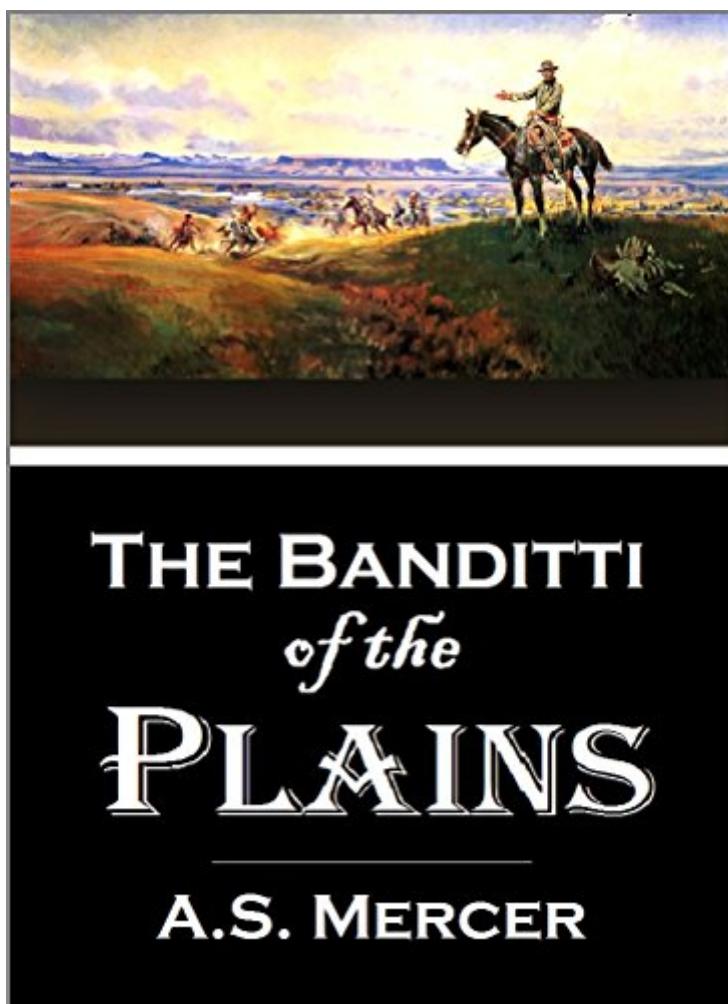


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The Banditti Of The Plains, Or The Cattleman's Invasion Of Wyoming In 1892 (1894)



Synopsis

Asa Shinn Mercer (1839 – 1917) was the editor of the Northwestern Livestock Grower, first president of the Territorial University of Washington, and a member of the Washington State Senate. It has been said that "The Banditti of the Plains" is one of the most important of the Wyoming range war publications. Mercer was the editor of the Northwestern Livestock Grower, a Cheyenne publication, who took the side of the small ranchers/cattle men against the large cattle barons. It was written during the "Johnson County War", and is so well known that it has been reprinted numerous times. Asa Shinn Mercer had been hired to promote the cattle industry, but became disillusioned after he learned the inside scoop. He wrote insightful articles outwardly criticizing the cattlemen. In return, they severely suppressed this book and his paper, ultimately burning down his office. Mercer was one of the founding families of Seattle. He was the first professor and the first president of the University, and the only college graduate there in the mid 1860's. In one of his most famous moves, he went East recruiting young women to come to Washington as teachers and in other business endeavors. They became famously known as "Mercer Girls." The Johnson County War, also known as the War on Powder River and the Wyoming Range War, was a series of range conflicts that took place in Johnson, Wyoming between 1889 and 1893. The conflicts started when cattle companies ruthlessly persecuted supposed rustlers throughout the grazing lands of Wyoming. As tensions swelled between the large established ranchers and the smaller settlers in the state, violence finally culminated in Powder River Country, when the former hired armed gunmen to invade the county and wipe out the competition. When word came out of the gunmen's initial incursion in the territory, the small-time farmers and ranchers, as well as the state lawmen, formed a posse of 200 men to fight them back which led to a grueling stand-off. The war ended when the United States Cavalry, on the orders of President Benjamin Harrison, relieved the two forces, and the failure to convict the invaders of the murders they had committed. "The Banditti of the Plains" covers the Hanging of Averill and Cattle Kate on the Sweetwater; Attack upon Campion and Gilberson on Powder River; Murder of Tisdale and Jones; Kidnapping of the Trappers; March of the Assassins from Cheyenne Across the Country to Burn and Destroy, etc. The book is an exposé which nearly cost the author his life. The printing house was broken down and according to local rumor most copies of the book, were destroyed by the attacking mob. Mercer writes: "THERE BEING a few reckless fellows in various parts of the state who lived by the theft of cattle and horses, it was comparatively an easy matter to create the impression that the losses sustained by cattlemen were much greater than the facts supported. It was as easy to say that a hundred big steers had been taken as to tell the truth and say that one or

two were missing, and that someone had undoubtedly stolen them. This report of wholesale stealing excited the sympathy of the people generally, and here was a point gained. So many cattle could not be stolen by the few known thieves; there must be hundreds engaged in the nefarious business. Of whom does this army of brand-burners consist, was a very natural question. Somebody answered, "The little stockman and settler." Very soon it seemed to be understood that the owners of large herds looked upon all the settlers and home- seekers as rustlers among the herds for mavericks (unbranded animals), and the name "rustler" was used as synonymous with settler. This free use of an offensive term created more or less bad blood and was a direct encouragement to be actually vicious, because they could commit more thefts and charge them to the settlers."Originally published in 1894 and reformatted for the Kindle; may contain an occasional i

Book Information

File Size: 426 KB

Print Length: 114 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publication Date: December 22, 2015

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B019QKMUA2

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

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