

Earl Monahan

devoted to Nebraska

Nebraska became a state in 1867. Twenty years later, a settler by the name of James H. Monahan came to the Sandhills region, near present-day Hyannis. He did not come to farm. He came to ranch.

He bought his first quarter in October of 1893. By the turn of the century, Monahan had acquired 1,000 acres, a herd of Hereford cattle and a son. "Dad (Earl) was born Dec. 20, 1899," says James Monahan, the grandson of James H. "He's the one who built the ranch up through the years to what it is now."

What it is now is the Monahan Cattle Company, home to the Hereford cattle with the Circle Dot brand. Earl Monahan took over active management of the ranch in 1923. He pieced the ranch together, quarter by quarter, section by section, buying land from failed homesteaders, some during the bad years of the 1930s. The Monahans knew how to manage the short grass-covered dunes. They had watched the farmers come and go. They had watched the settlers drain the shallow lake beds. They, too, left when the easy water was gone. "The only thing we plow here is our garden," says Monahan. "We've always been a cow/calf operation."

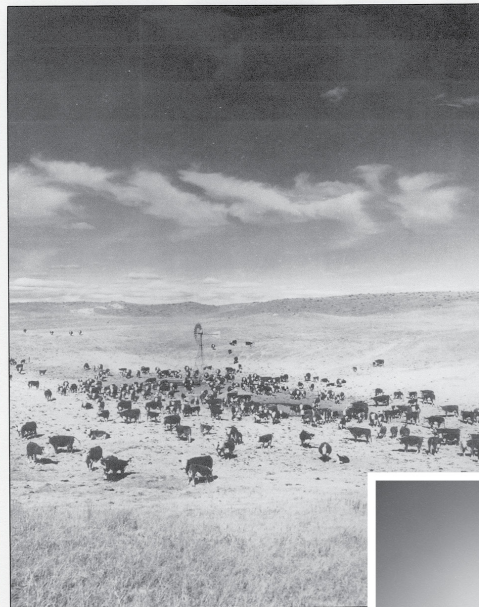
1948 marks the year the registered Hereford herd was established. The intent was to produce bulls for their own herd use, but the commercial cattlemen wanted Circle Dot Hereford genetics in his herd, too. In the early '70s, the ranch began a string of registered production sales.

James Monahan likes to quote his dad. "He used to say we had just enough land to feed the cows," says Monahan, "when they'd ask him how big the place was." And how many cows? "Just enough to eat the grass we got." Whatever the size, Monahan Cattle Company has several big characteristics. The ranch is all one large piece. "A lot of ranchers are bigger, but they're not all one big piece," explains Monahan. And that many cattle require a lot of hay. "We figure we need 20,000 round bales to start the winter," he said.

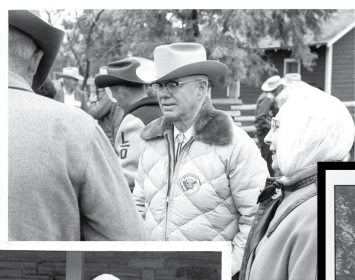
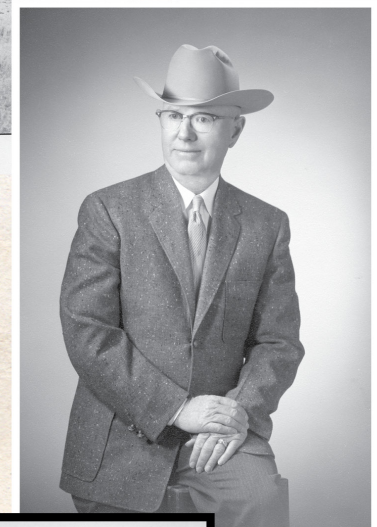
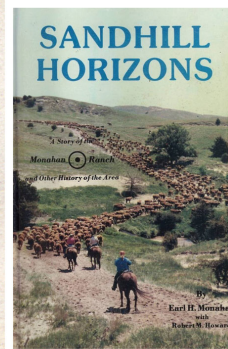
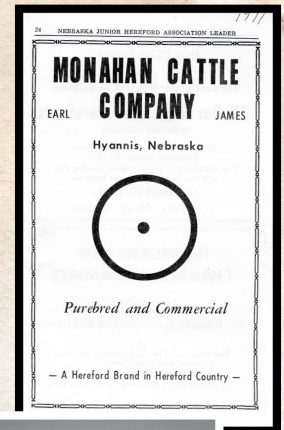
Good work is valued. The workforce includes hands who have been with the ranch 20 years and more. And now there is a next generation of Monahans. Two sons, Bryan and Bob, and a daughter, Joan, live and work on the ranch. Another daughter, Gerri, lives in Lincoln.

In 1987, Earl Monahan published Sandhills Horizons. The book tells of the history and "early times" of Monahan Cattle Company. With the commitment of this next generation to the Circle Dot tradition, expect a sequel to this book ... late in the 21st century.

Adapted from "Monahan Cattle Company," by Katie Nold, Tri-State Livestock News, Jan. 14, 1995



1965



Bulls for Sale at Purebred Ranch site.

