

*Adventures on the American Frontier*

# COWBOYS

## and Cattle Drives

Part One

**Charlie Goodnight**  
**Blazing the Goodnight Trail**



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This book features QR codes that link to audio of the book being narrated so that readers can follow along.

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Charlie Goodnight woke up early one morning in the fall of 1845. He looked for the last time at the hole in the roof of his Illinois cabin home—the hole that his stepfather had been meaning to fix for more than a year. He saw a thin line of gray light coming through the hole, and he curled up into a ball to sleep until his mother called him. He could hear her stoking a fire in the old range down in the kitchen.

He remembered then.



“Texas!” he cried. He reached across to another curled-up shape under the old quilt and gave it a poke. “Hey, Elijah! Wake up! This is the day we start for Texas!”

That was the day Charlie Goodnight’s life truly began, even though he was already nine years old, for Texas and he were to grow up together in the cattle trade. It was the first day of many that Charlie was to spend on the back of a horse.

By the end of the first day on the trail to Texas, Charlie’s legs and back hurt. He



had ridden the family's white-faced mare, Blaze, all day without a saddle. But he didn't mind because they were twelve miles closer to Texas. The family was going there because Hiram, Charlie's stepfather, had heard so much talk of the new state of Texas that he could no longer see anything good about his farm in Illinois.

“Things grow tall in Texas,” the talk went. “Corn and men, too. And they're just about giving away farmland. A man can get rich there without half trying.”

That sounded good to Hiram, who had never liked hard work. On that fall day, when the oak leaves were turning red and gold, Hiram happily clucked at the horses as he held the reins from the seat of one of his two covered wagons. Beside him was his wife, who had been the Widow Goodnight for a year before she had married him, and her small daughter. Elijah drove the second wagon, with one of his little sisters riding beside him. Charlie, on Blaze, kept the cows moving along behind the wagons,



with no idea that he was doing a job that he would spend much of his life doing.

At that time, there were no bridges across the Mississippi River. When the family reached the river after a few days, they had to wait until it was their turn to load wagons, people, and animals onto a ferry to get across.

Charlie looked around as they waited. "Lije, look at all the steamboats," he said to his brother. "St. Louis must be about the biggest city in all the world!"