

Burk Burnett and the Four Sixes Ranch

Samuel Burk Burnett became one of the most well-known and prosperous ranchers in Texas. In the early 1870s, he established the Four Sixes (6666) brand. Although the legend states he obtained the cattle in a poker game with a winning hand of four sixes, the story is untrue. With the purchase of 100 cattle came ownership of the brand, and a ranching empire began. Many factors have contributed to the Four Sixes success story, but perhaps one element which the old ranch has been most dependent upon is the Burnett family characteristic of determination.



6666



The Story Begins

Even as a young boy in the 1850s, Burk Burnett was familiar with the ups and downs of farming and ranching. Burk's parents were in the farming business, and in 1857-58, conditions caused them to move from Missouri to Denton County, Texas, where Burnett's father became involved in the cattle business. Burk, 10 years old at the time of the move, began watching the nature of the cow business and learned from his father.

At the age of 19, Burk went into business for himself with the purchase of 100 head of cattle, which were wearing the 6666 brand. In 1874, Burnett bought land and established his ranch headquarters, where the town of Wichita Falls, Texas, would later stand. Drought conditions in the 1880s forced Burnett and other ranchers to drive cattle to the Red River in order to survive. Burnett leased 300,000 acres of grassland from the tribal lands of the Kiowa and Comanche. The much-needed lease continued until the early 1900s, when Burnett moved his Four Sixes Ranch to King County and eventually established the official headquarters there.



After construction of the Four Sixes headquarters in Guthrie, Texas, Burk Burnett's residence remained in Fort Worth, where his businesses were based. Burnett had a private Pullman railcar built and was the first private citizen to have his own car. It was the most modern and thoroughly furnished railcar the company had manufactured. The car could sleep 11 persons and contained three state rooms with brass beds. It also included a sitting and dining room, an observation room and a kitchen.

When visiting the Four Sixes, Burnett traveled by train from Fort Worth to Paducah. From there, he hitched his horse to a buggy for the 30-mile ride south to the Four Sixes headquarters in Guthrie. Although Burnett kept several buggies, the one on exhibit at the National Ranching Heritage Center was among the finest ever built by the Hynds Buggy Co. and is considered very rare.

The Legacy Continues



Tom Burnett
(1871-1938)

Thomas Burnett, the son of Burk Burnett, started working on his father's ranch as a ranch hand in the 1880s and 1890s. He began moving cattle at the age of 16 and worked as a wagon hand, drawing the same wages as other cowboys. For five years, he worked as a line rider on his father's ranch, which spread over more than 50,000 acres on the Red River. He was made wagon boss of the Nation (Indian Territory) Wagon, and he was respected among cowmen and ranch hands. At age 30, Tom had already established himself as a respected cowboy and was on his way to becoming a cattle baron. As an independently wealthy cattlemen, Tom became a rodeo impresario, financing and promoting some of the biggest rodeos in the Southwest. Tom Burnett died on Dec. 26, 1938, leaving his estate to his daughter, Anne Valliant Burnett. His death came in the midst of a long-range campaign to build a fortune equal to that of his father. He fell short of that objective, but he grew in the cattle world as one of the pacesetters of his time. Tom was described as a man who represented the Old West and stood for its traditional ideals of generosity and rugged fair play.



Anne Valliant Burnett Tandy
(1900-1980)

"Miss Anne" was the only daughter of Tom Burnett and Olive Lake. Anne Valliant Burnett was schooled in the East and raised in a society atmosphere but valued the ranch that was part of her heritage. She divided time between Fort Worth and the Triangle Ranch that was established near Iowa Park, Texas, by her father, Tom. She was known for her knowledge of cattle, horses and fine art and the \$200 million foundation she established to support projects from horse ranching to museums. Together with her second husband, James Goodwin Hall, they were instrumental in the establishment of the American Quarter Horse Association. Miss Anne was interested in the Quarter Horse breeding operation at the ranch and was noted for her champions, Grey Badger II and Hollywood Gold, from which many top racers and cutting horses were descended. She was the first woman to be named as honorary vice president of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and the AQHA. At the time of Miss Anne's death on Jan. 1, 1980, her daughter Anne W. Marion, inherited the ranch from Burk Burnett through directives stated in Burnett's will.



Anne W. Marion

For generations, ranching has played an important role in the family of Anne W. Marion, president of Burnett Ranches Ltd., which includes the Four Sixes Ranches in Texas and Montana. Mrs. Marion owns the 345,000-acre Four Sixes Ranches in Guthrie and the West Texas Panhandle and the 20,000-acre Four Sixes Ranch in Montana. The Burnett Ranches in Texas comprise the largest individually owned ranch property in the state. Not since Burk Burnett founded and built the Four Sixes more than a century ago has any family member taken as much interest in the ranches as she, according to her long-time ranch manager, the late J.J. Gibson. At a young age, she spent the summers on the Four Sixes earning the respect of the cowboys as she learned to ride horses and do the things they did. Her strong will and determination have made her a fine leader, both in the ranching industry and the business world. While her civic and cultural activities extend throughout Texas and the United States, her deepest commitment is to her birthright and the continuing success of the historic Four Sixes Ranch.

Four Generations of Sixes

Objective

TLW use primary sources (photographs) to interpret history and will learn about the development of the Four Sixes Ranch through four generations.

TEKS

Social Studies 4.22(A), 4.23

Building Background

- Take a class picture with a digital camera. Enlarge the picture so that students can easily observe details within the photograph. Print the picture and post it in a location for easy viewing.
- Using the attached master*, ask students to list things they observe, know and can conclude after studying the picture.

Observation

Describe exactly what you **see** in the photograph.

What people and objects do you see?

What is the setting and season?

Is the picture posed or candid?

Do you see different forms of technology?

Describe the clothing and hairstyles.

What are the ages of the people in the picture? How do you know?

Knowledge

What do you know about the time period of the picture?

What current events are going on in the world?

By what means do you gain your information?

Interpretation

What can you conclude from what you see? (approximate date, time, place)

What can you conclude about this time period?

What can you conclude about the people in the picture?

Discuss: One minute from now, one hour from now, one day from now, this picture will be considered “history.” We can use photographs to study history and interpret the action in the photograph to learn about another time period.

Procedure

- Print out the photographs of Burk Burnett, Tom Burnett, Anne Burnett Tandy and Anne Burnett Marion. Ask students to observe the photographs and arrange them in sequential order. Discuss the reasoning behind their arrangement. What clues helped students make their choices?
- Read a brief description of each member of the Burnett family. Ask students to match the description with the correct picture. What facts support their choices?
- Discuss: The Four Sixes Ranch has thrived for four generations. What elements must be in

place for a ranch to be successful more than 100 years? A family's heritage is a trait or quality that is passed down from one generation to the next. What words would you use to describe the Burnett family heritage? What words would you use to describe your family heritage?

- Students can record their family tree on the activity sheet.

Extend

Write About It!

Describe your family heritage. What traditions do you enjoy? What talents or interests do you share with older members of your family? How could you learn more about your family's heritage? (Talk to parents and older family members, collect photographs, write down family stories.) Have students make a poster/collage, depicting their family heritage, including pictures of vacations, family get-togethers and other special occasions to share with the class.

*Photo Analysis Master

Observation	Knowledge	Conclusion
Describe exactly what you see in the photograph.	What do you know about this time period or event?	What can you conclude from what you see?

FAMILY TREE

