A few years following the close of the Civil War, the cattle industry grew in importance and many large ranches were established in Texas and the Indian Territory. Few people have heard of the largest ranch that ever existed in Oklahoma, the Cheyenne-Arapaho Cattle Ranch, 1882-1885.

The Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation had long been sought by cattlemen. The reservation with its prime grass covered about 4,300,000 acres and had been set aside for the Cheyenne-Arapaho Indians in 1869. About 3,500 Indians lived on the reservation; two-thirds were Cheyenne, and one-third were Arapaho. The Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency was located at Darlington, not far from Ft. Reno. In charge of the Indian Agency was John D. Miles.

L. E. Hodge, Jr., Patt Hodge, Lt. Gov. and Mrs. Spencer Bernard at the dedication of the C-A cattle Ranch as a listing on the National Register — April, 1981
On December 12, 1882, the chiefs and warriors of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe met in public council, with the agent, John D. Miles, and Edward Fenlon, long time cattleman. Edward Fenlon made the proposition to lease 2,004,000 acres at two cents an acre for ten years. Half of the money was to be used in buying cattle for the starving Indians. The request was forwarded to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. A second meeting was held on January 8, 1883 with the chiefs. Agent Miles gave the go-ahead for the agreement and Edward Fenlon, long time cattleman, and philanthropist. Cooper was the inventor of the first American steam locomotive, the "Tom Thumb." He was the founder of the Cooper Union, an important center for free instruction in art and science in New York City. Cooper died shortly after the ranch was started, but his estate continued financing the ranch.

From the very beginning, the C. & A. Ranch had nothing but trouble. Cattlemen on the reservation, who had no agreements, refused to move their herds. A small band of Indians,