

**THE SOCIO-ONOMASTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF AMERICAN CATTLE BRANDS: A
MONTANA CASE STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

For more than two centuries, cattle ranchers in Montana and other American states such as Texas and Wyoming have used hot iron brands as the primary means of identifying, tracking and proving ownership of their livestock. Despite modern innovations such as the development and use of radio-frequency ear tags (RFID), hot iron brands remain the preferred means of animal identification in the Western regions of the United States. One of the leading arguments put forward in this thesis is that the system of American cattle brands is essentially a linguistic one with a prominent onomastic component. This assumption is based on the fact that cattle brands are compound entities comprising symbols (images) as well as corresponding spoken and written forms which function as proper names.

In addition to possessing onomastic features of their own, cattle brands display a range of associations with other types of names. This network of onomastic relationships is socially-constructed and therefore reflects underlying social meanings. It is therefore posited that although cattle brand names do not possess lexical or linguistic meaning, they acquire various dimensions of meaning on the basis of their associations with different elements in their socio-cultural surrounds. The overall goal of this study is to ascertain and explain the social and cultural significance of the contextual meaning of cattle brands and to determine the extent to which names and naming strategies play a role in its establishment. Since this thesis is primarily concerned with exploring the relationship between the onomastic features of cattle brands and their socio-cultural meanings, it is presented as a study in socio-onomastics.

The research has identified two prominent onomastic practices which play a powerful role in establishing the contextual or associative meanings of cattle brands. The first process entails the use of various types of names (including parts of names) as the basis for the visual designs of cattle brand symbols, whilst in the second approach names of cattle brands are adopted as other kinds of names. The study indicates that cattle brand (language) users purposefully employ these naming strategies to create associations between cattle brands and various elements in their socio-cultural environment. It is contended that these connections not only ascribe meaning to cattle brands but also indicate how deeply cattle brands are embedded within their socio-cultural surrounds. The study has shown, for instance, how the narratives which become attached to cattle brands by virtue of onomastic associations trigger memories of people, places and events that are deemed important in the lives of the individuals, families and groups of people who are connected to the brands. It is

argued that on the basis of these connections, cattle brands become infused with diverse aspects of socio-cultural meaning which are then reflected and projected back into their surroundings during the course of everyday life.

This thesis represents the first scholarly endeavour to examine the socio-cultural meanings of American cattle brands from an onomastic perspective. Through its emphasis on accounting for social and cultural influences in exploring the meanings and functions of cattle brand names, the study makes an original contribution to the field of socio-onomastics and illustrates the value of the approach in research which aims to arrive at socially and culturally-relevant interpretations of onomastic meaning. Furthermore, the intersection of the present work with research in the fields of cultural heritage, cultural identity and social semiotics emphasises the interdisciplinary nature of onomastics research and draws attention to the fact that names are important textual elements in diverse social and cultural contexts.

Key terms

associative meaning; cattle brands; cultural heritage; cultural identity; local knowledge; names in cultural context; onomastics; socio-onomastics; social semiotics.

ABSTRAK

Vir meer as twee eeue het beesboere in Montana en ander Amerikaanse state soos Texas en Wyoming warm brandysters gebruik as die primêre wyse om hulle lewendehawe te identifiseer, op te spoor en eienaarskap te bewys. Ten spyte van moderne innoverings soos die ontwikkeling van en gebruik van radiofrekwensie-oorplaatjies (RFID), bly warm brandysters die voorkeurmetode om diere in die westelike streke van die Verenigde State te identifiseer. Een van die vernaamste argumente wat in hierdie tesis aangevoer word, is dat die stelsel van Amerikaanse beesbrandmerke in wese 'n linguistiese stelsel is met 'n prominente onomastiese komponent. Hierdie aanname word gebaseer op die feit dat beesbrandmerke saamgestelde entiteite is wat uit simbole (figure) sowel as ooreenstemmende gesproke en geskrewe vorms bestaan, wat as eiename funksioneer.

Afgesien daarvan dat beesbrandmerke oor onomastiese kenmerke van hul eie beskik, vertoon hulle ook 'n reeks assosiasies met ander tipes name. Hierdie netwerk van onomastiese verhouding is sosiaal gekonstrueer en weerspieël gevolglik onderliggende sosiale betekenisse. Daarom word gepostuleer dat, alhoewel name van beesbrandmerke nie leksikale of linguistiese betekenis het nie,

dit verskeie dimensies van betekenis verwerf op grond van hulle assosiasie met verskillende elemente binne hulle sosio-kulturele omgewing. Die hoofdoel van hierdie studie is om die sosiale en kulturele betekenis van die kontekstuele betekenis van beesbrandmerke te bepaal en te verduidelik, asook om die mate te bepaal waartoe name en benoemingstrategieë 'n rol in die bepaling daarvan speel. Aangesien hierdie studie hoofsaaklik gemoeid is met 'n ondersoek van die verhouding tussen die onomastiese kenmerke van beesbrandmerke en hulle sosio-kulturele betekenis, word dit as 'n studie in sosio-onomastiek aangebied.

Die navorsing het twee prominente onomastiese praktyke geïdentifiseer wat 'n belangrike rol speel in die bepaling van die kontekstuele of assosiatiewe betekenis van beesbrandmerke. Die eerste proses behels die gebruik van verskeie soorte name (insluitende dele van name) as die basis vir die visuele ontwerp van beesbrandmerk-simbole, terwyl in die tweede benadering die name van beesbrandmerke gebruik word in die skepping van ander tipe name. Die studie dui aan dat gebruikers van beesbrandmerke (of -taal) doelbewus hierdie benoemingstrategieë gebruik om verbintenisse tussen beesbrandmerke en verskeie elemente binne hulle sosiokulturele omgewing te skep. Daar word aangevoer dat hierdie skakels nie alleen betekenis aan beesbrandmerke verleen nie, maar ook aandui hoe diepgaande beesbrandmerke binne hulle sosio-kulturele omgewing ingebed is. Die studie toon byvoorbeeld aan hoe die narratiewe wat met beesbrandmerke verbind word as gevolg van onomastiese assosiasie herinneringe van mense, plekke en gebeure ontlok, wat van groot belang beskou word in die lewens van die individue, gesinne en groepe persone wat 'n verbintenis met die brandmerke het. Daar word geargumenteer dat, gebaseer op hierdie verbintenisse, beesbrandmerke deurdrenk geraak het met diverse aspekte van sosio-kulturele betekenis, wat dan weerspieël word en teruggekaats word in hulle omgewings in die loop van die daaglikse lewe.

Hierdie tesis is die eerste akademiese poging om die sosio-kulturele betekenis van Amerikaanse beesbrandmerke vanuit 'n onomastiese perspektief te ondersoek. Deur die beklemtoning hiervan ten einde rekenskap te gee van sosiale en kulturele invloede in die ondersoek van die betekenis en funksie van die name van beesbrandmerke, lewer die studie 'n oorspronklike bydrae tot die terrein van die sosio-onomastiek en illustreer dit die waarde van die benadering in navorsing wat daarna strewe om sosiaal- en kultureel-relevante interpretasies van onomastiese betekenis te bereik. Die snypunt van die huidige werk met navorsing oor kulturele erfenis, kulturele identiteit en sosiale

semiotiek beklemtoon die interdisiplinêre aard van onomastiek-navorsing en dui aan dat name belangrike tekstuele elemente in diverse sosiale en kulturele kontekste is.

Sleuteltermes

assosiatiewe betekenis; beesbrandmerke; kultuurerfenis; plaaslike kennis; name in kulturele konteks; onomastiek; sosio-onomastiek; sosiale semiotiek.

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“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter introduces the topic, goals and general contextual background of the research that is presented in this thesis. The discussion opens in the next section with an explanation of how and why the author selected American cattle brands as the subject matter for the present study (§1.2). This is followed by a synopsis of the scope, purpose and nature of the research (§1.3). After a short summary of key definitions and terminology used in the thesis (§1.4), the linguistic and onomastic characteristic of cattle brands are discussed (§1.5). Further background information is provided through brief historical surveys of the cattle industry and the use of cattle brands in Montana (§1.6, §1.7), a summary of the State's current official regulations pertaining to livestock brands and branding (§1.8), and relevant demographic information (§1.9). The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis structure (§1.10).

1.2 Background to the study

For more than two centuries, cattle ranchers in Montana and other Western States such as Texas and Wyoming have used hot iron brands as the primary means of identifying, tracking and proving ownership of their livestock. Despite modern innovations in ranching methods and equipment, hot iron brands remain the preferred means of animal identification and tracking in the Western regions of the United States. Young calves are typically branded during the spring months, and many ranchers include other essential measures such as vaccinating, deworming, castrating, de-horning and fly-tagging as part of the branding process, since less frequent handling reduces stress on the animals.

In 2006, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), under the auspices of its Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), initiated the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), an animal traceability system that would enable producers and animal health officials to respond quickly and effectively to animal disease threats and outbreaks in the United States. In August 2011, the USDA issued a proposed ruling which would have required that all cattle (and other livestock) being transported across state lines be identified solely by way of official radio frequency (RFID) ear tags. RFID tags are electronically embedded with a unique identification number, which facilitates and expedites animal tracking. Under this ruling, brands would not have been accepted as an official means of individual animal identification, although the legislation

would have allowed for individual States or Tribes to decide whether or not to recognise brands in addition to tags for the same purpose (Dininny 2011; Krieger 2012). The proposed legislation was met with strong opposition from many cattle ranchers who argued that brands have long played a crucial and successful role in animal identification, and that the proposed enforcement of tag use threatened to eradicate a deeply-rooted American cowboy tradition (Krieger 2012). After considering extensive public comment, the USDA published its final ruling on the matter on January 9, 2013. The ruling states that brands and brand registrations (as well as tattoos) are to be recognised as official identification statements when these are accepted by the shipping and receiving States or Tribes (USDA 2015).

The debate around the APHIS proposal attracted a great deal of media commentary, much of which emphasised the long-proven effectiveness of branding as a quick means of animal identification, as well as (and perhaps more notably) the traditional value of the practice as an enduring cultural practice which is tied to the well-known image of the American cowboy and the cattle ranching lifestyle. In an article written for the *Baltimore Sun*, for instance, Krieger (2012: 15) cites the following comment by Jon Christensen, executive director of the Bill Lane Center for the American West at Stanford University: “Cowboys...ride for the brand. It’s hard to imagine anyone riding for an ear tag...this is not just a fight over the best way to identify, track and ensure the ownership and safety of cattle...this is a battle over a powerful western icon.” The suggestion that cattle brands are cultural symbols indicates that they carry meanings which extend beyond their practical importance as marks of animal identification.

The author’s fascination with cattle brands began in 2007 when she moved from Chicago, Illinois to Lewistown in Fergus County, Montana as the result of a business purchase. Fergus County is located in the cattle-producing region of Central Montana, which is still characterised as a ‘cowboy’ region of the State. It soon became apparent to the author (who had no prior knowledge of cattle brands and branding apart from what she had read about in a few western novels) that cattle brand symbols as well as cattle brand names are highly visible elements throughout the landscape of Central Montana, appearing on the hides of animals as well as on signposts, clothing, interior and exterior décor and a wide range of other items. The author also became aware of a great deal of social discourse surrounding cattle brands, and noticed that cattle ranchers speak about their brands with a sense of pride and enjoy telling stories related to cattle brands and cattle branding events. She learned that the spring cattle branding season is a long-held and much beloved social

tradition that brings much excitement and liveliness to small rural communities in Central Montana. Furthermore, the author identified some interesting onomastic trends associated with cattle brands, even though the names of cattle brands contain no meaning apart from their reference to cattle brand symbols. She noted, for example, that many cattle brand designs incorporate one or more initials of the brand owners' names, and that a number of ranches and businesses in the Central Montana area are named after cattle brands. The author gathered that these connections between cattle brands and other types of names reflect relationships between brands to people, places and other entities in their socio-cultural surrounds. As a names researcher, the author was particularly intrigued by these onomastic phenomena.

On the basis of these early observations, the author began to sense that beyond their use as identifying marks on animals, cattle brands appear to carry a great deal of socio-cultural meaning. When the USDA proposal to essentially do away with brands as a legally-recognised means of livestock identification sparked outrage amongst many Montana ranchers and came into the media spotlight, the author decided that she wanted to delve deeper into the socio-cultural meanings and significance of cattle brands in the Central Montana region. This was the moment of conception for the research that is presented in this thesis.

1.3 The scope, objectives and nature of the research

As indicated by its title, this thesis is defined as a socio-onomastic study of American cattle brands. The overall purpose of the study is to determine how American cattle brands acquire meaning within their social and cultural context, and to establish what the nature and importance of this meaning might be. To the best of the author's knowledge, no prior studies of this nature have been carried out with respect to cattle brands, American or otherwise.

The author's decision to pursue a socio-onomastic approach to the research was based on her identification of the onomastic patterns mentioned in §1.2 above, which appeared to link cattle brands with different types of names and thus to various entities in the world (see Ch. 2 §2.3.1; §2.4). Since names in general are tied to many different aspects of human existence, they are important indicators of social and cultural norms and values, and are frequently employed by language users to signify and express concepts of social and cultural identity (Joseph 2004). In line with this stance, the author hypothesised that the socio-cultural significance of American cattle brands might well be revealed through a contextually-based examination of their onomastic features and relationships. Implicit in the assumption that cattle brands possess 'onomastic features'

is the idea that they are onomastic and thus linguistic elements in their own right; a concept that will be further discussed in §1.5 below. With these hypotheses in mind, the study addresses the following interrelated questions:

- In what ways and on what basis do American cattle brands behave and function as linguistic and onomastic entities?
- What are the relationships between American cattle brands and other types of names (such as personal, place and commercial names), and what are the implications (social or otherwise) of these associations?
- What types of meaning do American cattle brands carry and convey within their socio-cultural context, and what roles do onomastic factors play in the establishment and expression of these meanings?
- How and to what extent do the meanings of American cattle brands contribute to their apparent social and cultural importance?
- How can the overall socio-onomastic significance of American cattle brands be defined?

The author has addressed these issues using an interpretative, or explanatory analytical approach that reflects qualitative (ethnographic) principles. The research takes the form of a case study that focuses primarily on cattle brands found in Central Montana, which is one of America's richest cattle-producing regions. This part of the State constituted a most suitable location for conducting the case study, since it has a rich and colourful 'cowboy' history and many contemporary ranchers in the area still firmly adhere to the tradition of cattle branding. (Further discussion on the methodological underpinnings of the research appears in Chapter 3).

1.4 A note on definitions and terminology

In this thesis, the term 'brand' is used to denote the scar or mark that is produced by searing the hides of livestock with a hot iron. The author has attempted to remain consistent with using the noun phrase 'cattle brand/s' when discussing the subject matter. On occasions when the word 'brand/s' is used without the descriptor 'cattle', it should be construed as a reference to cattle brands, unless otherwise specified. Furthermore, both terms ('cattle brands' or 'brands') implicitly refer to American cattle brands except where the author indicates an alternate denotation.

Throughout the text, the names of cattle brands appear in italics to distinguish them from other types of names.

As will be explained in the following section, the system of American cattle brands is considered here to be a form of language. It is thus crucial to point out that the term ‘cattle brands’ or ‘brands’ is used in reference to cattle brand symbols as well as the written and spoken forms of cattle brands (that is, their names), unless the author specifically distinguishes one form from the other.

1.5 The language of cattle brands

The proposition that cattle brands are a form of language is not a novel one. American author Ivan Doig has been cited as stating that cattle brands are “the classical language of the American West” (Porsild & Miller 2002:81), whilst Wolfenstine (1970: xi) has remarked that “brands have made necessary a coining of a language all their own”. Stamp (2013: n.p.) notes that the system of cattle brands “must comply with a rigorous set of standards...using a specific language ruled by its own unique syntax and morphology.” According to Porsild and Miller (2002: 80), learning to read and interpret the language of brands is an “important skill” that can be of great benefit to historians. This statement implies that cattle brands communicate more than just practical information about livestock ownership. As will be explained in this section, the language of cattle brands comprises a system of signs, represented by brand symbols, and a corresponding written/oral component that is represented by words or names which provide descriptive references for the symbols. Although the two constituents are practically inseparable from each other, each has distinctive features and functions that characterise cattle brands as unique linguistic items.

Since cattle brands are first and foremost used as marks of identification on the hides of livestock animals, they are by definition highly visible signs or symbols that are intended to be seen and recognised from a reasonable distance. The brands that were originally introduced to the North American continent by the Spanish consisted of ornate and complicated designs, which, although visually attractive, were not necessarily practical. In the early days of branding in America, there was much creativity in brand design and almost any type of figure or image could be used as a brand. Nowadays, American cattle brands typically consist of letters, numbers or symbols appearing individually or in any combination.

The individual components used in cattle brands can be portrayed in different positions or directions. Each variation is named accordingly; for instance, a character placed at a ninety degree

rotation is ‘lazy’ (too tired to stand up); an upside-down character is ‘crazy’; a character appearing backwards is ‘backwards’ or ‘reverse’; a character appearing below but joined to another character is ‘hanging’, whilst one leaning in an oblique position is referred to as ‘tumbling’ or ‘leaning’. Different embellishments can be added to characters; for instance, a character with ‘feet’ or ‘legs’ is said to be ‘walking’, and a character with wing-like features is described as ‘flying’. Various shapes can be affixed to cattle brand designs; for example, a brand with cone-shaped lines above it is referred to as a ‘rafter’ brand because it looks similar to the roof of a house. A horizontal straight line is called a ‘bar’; but if it leans at an angle it is a ‘slash’ (Wolfenstine 1970: xvii). These examples are merely a few of the numerous variations that are found in cattle brand ‘graphology’. It would be most interesting to construct a formal typology of the different types of characters used in cattle brand designs both past and present, although such an endeavour falls beyond the scope of this thesis.

As can be imagined, there are literally thousands of possible letter/number/symbol combinations for designing cattle brands. Today, however, the governing authorities who oversee livestock brand registrations in particular States or regions, such as the Montana Department of Livestock’s (MDOL) Brands Enforcement Division (BED), provide guidelines and rules for choosing livestock brands that will be accepted for registration. The following instructions appear on the MDOL website (2015):

When applying for a livestock brand, MDOL suggests applying for brands that are side- by- side containing two letters and/or numbers, with bars, quarter circles or slashes. Brands that cannot be issued include: single letters/figures; monograms; one character/symbol; inverted letter/number brand; and brands containing the letters “I”, “G”, “Q”, the number “1,” or standing quarter circles. Additionally, there are no “CC” or “JJ” combinations available for prime positions.

Although certain types of livestock brands such as those stipulated above will no longer be issued, they may still be used if they are already owned and the registration is current.

When it comes to practical matters, desirable or ‘good’ cattle brands are those which are simple in design, easily recognisable, not likely to blotch, and difficult to alter (Cowboy Showcase 2012). ‘Open’ characters such as *C* and – (*Bar*), for instance, are less likely to blotch when applied and are thus preferred over ‘closed’ characters such as *A*, *B* or *8*. In an interview with the author on 4

November, 2013, rancher Rudi Stulc explained the reasoning behind his preferences in brand design:

The most important thing to me about a brand is how readable it is, and generally speaking, if it's a good readable brand in a good position on the livestock, it's a good brand... the more marks you put on the critter, the more likely it is that one of them is going to blotch or be put on improperly. So from a recognition standpoint, for ease of reading and determining ownership, one letter or number is obviously the easiest, but some are better than others...an '8' for example ends up being two blotches...a '3' is better than a '2'... 'A' is a terrible brand, 'B' is a terrible brand, 'C' is a good brand, 'D' is mediocre...anytime you have something cross or get too close [to something else] there's too much heat and it ends up being blotched...having a good, simple, readable brand protects your livestock...it makes shipping much easier, brand inspecting much easier, roundup much easier...granted we have ear tags and ear marks but it comes down to the brand and if you can read it.

The term "position" refers to the specific place on the animal's hide where the brand is applied. For cattle, there are six different acceptable positions for brands: right rib (RR); right shoulder (RS); right hip (RH); left rib (LR); left shoulder (LS); and left hip (LH). When a brand is registered, it is for one position only on each type of animal, meaning that any particular brand can be registered to different owners, allowing each owner to brand in a different position. Alternatively, a brand can be registered to a single owner more than once for different positions. Some ranchers will purchase all positions for a particular brand so that no one else can own the same brand, and also avoid the risk of their animals being branded in the wrong position. Some positions are considered better than others; Stulc (2013) for instance mentions that shoulder brands are generally the poorest, since they are difficult to apply and the hide on the shoulder tends to wrinkle and hair up, making brands hard to read, whilst rib brands can make hides unusable, especially in the case of larger brands. He contends that the hip is the best position to brand in, because the hide is thick and brands 'take' easily, which makes for better visibility.

Cattle brand designs tend to hold a great deal of aesthetic appeal and often play a role in determining the monetary value of certain cattle brands. For example, single character brands and brands consisting of unusual symbols are extremely rare nowadays and are thus considered by









some people to be particularly valuable and may carry a high price tag should they be made available for purchase by a private party (Milburn 2012; D. Miller 2012). However, perceptions of value are highly subjective and vary from one person to another.














All livestock brands used in the State of Montana are registered with the MDOL and recorded in the State's brand index books. These books are organised by decade, and each decade has two indexes: one comprising an alphabetical list of the names of registered owners of brands, and the other containing a list of brands arranged 'brandabetically' by symbol. The 'brandabet' starts with brand symbols containing the letter 'A', progressing through the alphabet to those that include the letter 'Z' and continuing on to brands made up of abstract symbols (Porsild & Miller 2002:81). Each recording in the brand books conveys a variety of information pertaining to the brand and the person/s who registered it. A typical brand registration includes an image of the brand, its registration date, the name and county of residence of the person or business who registered it, the type of animal for which it was registered, and the positioning of the brand on the animal.



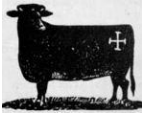









Complementary to their symbolic forms, a semi-standardised system of reading, verbalising and writing American livestock brands has been developed in order to facilitate their description and recording. The reading of brands is commonly referred to in local terms as 'calling the brand'. It is contended here that the expression 'calling the brand' is simply another term for 'naming the brand' and that cattle brand names thus constitute proper names. The reading and writing of brand symbols follows a general syntactic rule of left to right, top to bottom, and outside to inside. Brands are usually written in the same way as they are spoken, and are generally capitalised like other proper names in the English language. It is essential that brands are read correctly so that they can be drawn accurately for livestock transactions as well as to prevent incorrect branding of livestock. In practice, however, not all brands are easy to read or transcribe, and thus individual and regional interpretations of certain brands can and do vary. A brand inspector's recording would usually constitute the 'correct' representation of any particular brand for legal purposes in any given district. Table 1 below (adapted from Table 3 in Appendix 1) illustrates fifty cattle brand symbols alongside their corresponding names and types of designs. The column headed 'design types' indicates the number and types of characters used in each cattle brand design. For instance, the 3 *Lazy S* brand (#1) is a 2 character brand made up of an alphabetic character (A) and a numeral (N), so its design type is abbreviated as 2/A+N; The 7 7 7 brand design (#2) contains three numerals











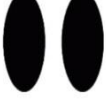


(N), abbreviated as 3/N; the *Apple* brand design (#4) comprises one picture character (P) abbreviated as 1/P; and so on.

Table 1: Cattle brand symbols with corresponding names and types of designs

Brand #	Brand Symbol	Brand Name	Design Type
1		3 Lazy S	2/A+N
2		7 7 7	3/N
3		7 Hanging 7	2/N
4		Apple	1/P
5	No Image Available	Bar 100	unknown
6		Bar Box H	3/P+A
7		Bar Diamond	2/P
8		Bar L C	3/P+A
9		Broken Heart	1/P

10		C Bar Z	3/P+A
11		C M R	3/A
12		Circle	1/P
13		Circle 4	2/P+N
14		Circle D	2/P+A
15		Diamond	1/P
16		Diamond 7	2/P+N
17		Diamond Dot	2/P
18		Diamond H Diamond	3/P+A
19		Dragging Y	1/A
20		E B	2/A
21		Elkhorn	1/P
22		Hanging E 6	2/A+N

23		House	1/P
24		L Hanging E Bar	3/A+P
25	No Image Available	M Hanging E Bar	3/A+P
26		Maltese Cross	1/P
27		N Bar N	3/A+P
28		O X	2/A
29		Pear	1/P
30		Pipe	1/P
31		Quarter Circle Lazy T	2/P+A
32		Quarter Circle Reverse L E	3/A+P
33		Quarter Circle S P	3/P+A
34		R B Bar	3/A+P
35		R P Quarter Circle	3/A+P

36		Rafter N Z	3/P+A
37		Reverse C Bar Heart	3/A+P
38		Reverse R Bar H	3/A+P
39		Reverse R N Connected	2/A
40		Running N Bar	2/A+P
41		S Bar Diamond	3/A+P
42		Star	1/P
43		T Diamond	2/A+P
44		Triangle	1/P
45		Turkey Track	1/P
46		Two Dot	2/P
47		V E T O	4/A
48		X I T	3/A

49	Y	Y	1/A
50	Z/J	Z Slash J	3/A+P

With regards to the practice of naming cattle brands, Wolfenstine (1970) sketches the following scenario which contains reminiscences of the open range days (see §1.6) and reflects some classical cowboy humour:

Cowboys at a branding delighted in giving some brand a new name to see if they could stump the firetender. It developed into quite a game with some of them. When the ketch hand dragged up a calf and called out its mother's brand, the flankers, or brander, called out something entirely different, yet a name that would fit this particular brand. S. Omar Baker gave some good examples of this when he told about a ketch hand calling out "T Bench" and the flanker yelling "Tally one tea party." Or maybe another would sing out, "T at a meetin.'" Wasn't the T sitting on a bench? Or if the brand was a "Quarter-circle jog", he would call "Gimme a jug in the shade." Or if the brand was an "LN" with the N on top of the horizontal part of the L, he would perhaps call it "Sparkin' LN – wasn't N sitting on L's lap? Some brands have received a permanent, though unintended, name because no-one knew their correct interpretation...a brand in Wyoming which is really the "Revolving H" is now better known as the damfino because when asked its name some cowhand answered, "Damn if I know."

In their symbolic and written/spoken forms, American cattle brands display a curious blend of visual and orthographic features — in part arbitrary and in part systematic — which contribute to their overall uniqueness as linguistic items. It is posited in this thesis that although cattle brands often appear to be random and whimsical in design, they function as a specialised form of language that is recognised, accepted and utilised within a well-defined socio-cultural setting. The creation of brand 'dictionaries' (brand index books) by governing authorities has played a vital role in establishing livestock brands as a standardised and specialised form of language. It is clear that names are essential elements of this linguistic system, since it is only through the naming of cattle

brands that cattle brand symbols can be articulated. On the basis of these identified characteristics, it is proposed here that the language of cattle brands possesses a core socio-onomastic component.

1.6 The cattle industry in Montana: a historical overview

The story surrounding the development of the cattle industry and the emergence of the now almost legendary ‘cowboy culture’ in the Northwestern United States has already been thoroughly chronicled in the vast existing body of literature on American Western history. Nevertheless, the historical context surrounding American cattle brands is an important consideration in this thesis. Several of the cattle brands contained in the author’s data set date back to the early days of Montana’s beef industry and are thus of some historical interest and value (see Ch. 4, Table 2). Furthermore, the on-going tradition of cattle branding has been carried out in Montana since the first cattle and cowboys migrated to the region, and is thus a crucial component of the State’s cultural composition. As stated in §1.3 above, this thesis aims to explain the socio-cultural significance of cattle brands from an ethnographic and thus heavily contextual perspective. The author has thus deemed it prudent to provide the following summary of the history of cattle production in Montana in order to establish a sense of the social, cultural, economic and geographical context within which cattle brands originated and became synonymous with the cowboy lifestyle.

1.6.1 Early beginnings: meeting the demand for beef

The cattle industry in the Northwestern United States began to develop in the early 1850s, two decades prior to the American Civil War, as a result of the demand for fresh beef brought on by thousands of emigrants who were trekking westward from the Eastern states to Oregon and California along The Oregon Trail. New economic activities flourished along the trail, including the operation of bridges and ferries, the supply of forage, and the exchange of fresh oxen and cattle for worn out work animals (Osgood 1970: 10). Enterprising stockmen established herds of cattle in the sheltered valleys of the upper Missouri in what later became Western Montana. The Bitterroot, Deer Lodge, Beaverhead, Stinking Water (later Ruby), Sun River, Musselshell, Smith River, Judith Basin and Yellowstone valleys became popular wintering spots for cattlemen of the day. It is reported, for instance, that during the winter of 1857-58, the Russell, Majors and Wadell Cattle Company alone wintered approximately 15,000 head of cattle on a range area that extended south of the Trail for a distance of over two hundred miles (Osgood 1970: 16).

In the autumn of 1858, the discovery of gold in the Rocky Mountains, about two hundred miles south of the Oregon Trail on the upper waters of the South Platte River, started a gold rush and brought about the establishment of mining settlements. In the early 1860s, the U.S. Army arrived and built forts for soldiers who were to protect miners from the Indians. Shortly thereafter, the Indian Reservation system was put in place, with the U.S. government providing food rations to the newly-formed communities on the Reservations. All of these factors brought about a sharp increase in population and a corresponding increase in the already heavy demand for beef in the Northwest. The strong market attracted stockmen from the West Coast as well as from the South, and cattle herds grew rapidly in the Northwestern valleys, where there was apparently unlimited grazing and good water (Osgood 1970; Thiessen 1986). Cowboys herded cattle for thousands of miles along trails from California to Oregon, Texas to Montana, and between the Territories of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and British Columbia. (In 1849, the present states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, parts of Montana and Wyoming, as well as British Columbia formed part of the Oregon Territory. Washington was established as a separate Territory in 1853, followed by Idaho Territory in 1863 and Montana Territory in 1864. British Columbia joined the Canadian Federation in 1871.)

By the late 1870s the cattle boom in Montana Territory was well under way. As cattle were driven into Montana from the West and South, the western valleys became over-crowded and stockmen began to look to Montana's Central and Eastern plains for grazing. During the early 1880s, Eastern Montana and the Western Dakotas constituted a vast area of unsurveyed public land that could not be privately owned or fenced. This was the "open range". Large cattle outfits entered the area to take advantage of the seemingly unlimited grazing, and the cattle industry expanded rapidly (Thiessen 1986: 9). In 1880, for instance, the Davis, Hauser and Stuart (DHS) cattle company under the management of a man by the name of Granville Stuart, settled around 5,000 head of cattle in the Flatwillow Creek area at the foot of the Judith Mountains in Central Montana (Rechert 1931; Thiessen 1986; Niedringhaus 2010). In 1882 two brothers, E.S. "Zeke" and H.L. "Henry" Newman, expanded their Niobrara Cattle Company into Montana from Nebraska and drove 12,000 cattle into the Powder River Valley, located in today's Powder River County in the Southeast corner of the State (see Figure 7). In 1884, another 4,000 head belonging to Niobrara were settled at the mouth of the Musselshell River (Grosskopf & Newby 1991: 1, 3). Granville Stuart (1925, cited in Osgood 1970:89) noted that in 1880 the plains of Eastern and Central Montana were still teeming with wildlife and that there were only 250,000 cattle in the whole of the Territory. By 1883, however,

the buffalo had been exterminated and there were 600,000 head of cattle on the range. In two short years, stated Stuart, “the cowboy...had become an institution [in Montana].”

1.6.2 The open range era

In the early days, land on the open range could be held by pre-emption, first occupation and homestead entries, meaning that anyone could set up a home and make improvements for grazing or cultivation. Each cattleman tried to find an area on the range as isolated as possible since he could not afford to purchase land and could not lease public domain (Osgood 1970: 115). The range provided the sole source of food for cattle throughout the entire year. It was not cost effective for cattlemen to harvest hay for fodder because when the snow was too deep they could not get the feed to their animals. Cattle thus wandered from summer to winter ranges, reaching the latter by early November, and drifting back to summer pastures by the beginning of May (Paul 1973: 109).

Cattle on Montana’s range areas quickly became so numerous that it was impossible to keep one herd separated from others, and stockmen began sharing their ranges with one another. Collaborative efforts arose in order to maintain individual ownership of herds, provide protection to individual herds against theft and disease, and control grazing of the open range so as to prevent overcrowding and preserve the individual’s share of the public domain. Such cooperation eventually led to the development of cattlemen’s organizations, in terms of which, according to (Osgood 1970: 117), one could observe “the characteristic frontier individualism succumb to the equally characteristic frontier need for group effort, the evolution of custom into law, and the appearance of certain institutions, which became part of the economic and social structure of the Far West”.

The desire to preserve individual ownership of livestock led to regulations concerning marks and brands, roundups, mavericks (unbranded animals) and the control of bulls on the range (Osgood 1970: 115-116). For instance, provision was made for the legal purchase of brands, since whole herds bearing a single brand were changing hands. Penalties were imposed for failing to brand any animal over a year old, for failing to obtain a bill of sale with a full list of brands of animals purchased, for killing an unbranded calf, or for skinning an animal carrying another’s brand, unless proof of purchase could be provided by the incumbent (Osgood 1970: 126).

The ‘roundup’ was a significant co-operative event organised by groups of stockowners who joined together to gather and brand their cattle. One of the first roundup districts in Montana was formed

in the spring of 1882 by the various cattle outfits who shared the Flatwillow Creek area (Thiessen 1986; see §1.2.1). Roundups usually took place in the early spring. Cowboys from each individual group, or outfit, were assigned specific duties. A ‘boss’ or ‘representative’ was appointed by each outfit to look out for the owner’s interests, including making sure that the owner’s animals were sorted, branded and counted. On a typical roundup day, a group of cowboys would gather all cattle from within a reasonable distance and drive them to a designated point where branding would take place. The heifers and calves would be separated from the rest of the herd and held in a branding pen. A rider would herd calves one at a time toward the branding area, where another rider would rope and drag each calf with a lariat, and hold it securely in position until it had been branded. Branding irons would be kept heated in a fire which would burn the whole day. The opportunity would also be taken to castrate, dehorn, and/or earmark animals where necessary. Once all the calves had been branded, the outfit would move to another area to carry out the same process, until the entire district range had been worked. In the fall, cattle would again be rounded up and cowboys would separate those animals which were to be sold from the rest of the herd. Cattle that were sold would typically be re-branded with the new owner’s brand (Paul 1973: 83).

The unique (albeit rough, dirty and harsh) lifestyle of the cattle drovers and men who worked cattle on the open range fostered the now almost legendary image of the early American cowboy “as a footloose, hardworking, harder playing, earthy-talking, colourful, skillful man with a horse and saddle, gun and lariat...he worked long hours...was generous with his companions...loyal to his boss and branding iron...[and] was proud of his attire and equipment” (Paul 1973: 17, 84). Although the reality of the cowboy lifestyle was much less romantic than portrayed in film, music, books and art, the range cowboy has become an enduring, cherished figurehead in American Western history, and in many respects, his legacy lives on in certain parts of the Western United States, including Central Montana, which is still very much characterised as ‘cowboy country’.

1.6.3 Disaster and transition: the end of the open range

A number of legislative changes concerning the legal ownership of land on the public domain were enacted during the 1860s, when the cattle industry in Montana and other Western States was booming. These and other shifts in the overall socio-economic and agricultural landscape of the region, as well as natural (climatic) factors, would come to play a major role in drawing the cattlemen’s days on the open range to an end.

In 1862, President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act into effectiveness, which offered settlers one hundred sixty acres of land on the public domain in return for residence and cultivation. These parcels of land could not accommodate large herds of cattle but instead attracted small farmers, including Civil War veterans (Paul 1973: 44). Many cattle ranchers resented the arrival of homesteaders because the cultivation of arable land along with the erection of fences took away from available grazing, and the settlers' introduction of sheep to the range was said to ruin the grass roots. In 1867, an Act of Congress gave the government legal jurisdiction over grazing rights. Land previously claimed by individuals was made available for grazing only to those qualifying for permits; however, no charge was levied for these grazing rights (Paul 1973: 84). The decreasing open range area along with the rapidly increasing cattle population began to seriously hinder grazing in Montana, especially for the larger cattle outfits.

Overcrowding and growing competition for fodder on the range set Montana's cattle producers up for impending disaster during the winter of 1886-87, which was said to have been the harshest one yet in the history of America's West. The spring and summer of 1886 had been unusually hot and dry, the grasses were late in starting and springs and creeks dried up, all of which led to a severe shortage of both water and food for livestock. Cattlemen began to sell off their animals at low prices in order to reduce the size of their herds. On January 28, 1886, a blizzard brought high winds, heavy snow and bitterly cold temperatures to the region. Since ranchers had been entirely dependent on the range for winter feeding, no provision had been made to gather hay, and thousands of cattle starved to death in the treacherous conditions.

The events of that winter brought about irreversible changes to Montana's cattle industry. Montana stockmen lost approximately sixty percent of their herds, and more than half of the cattle companies in the Territory faced bankruptcy the following spring. The large cattle outfits suffered badly. The Newman brothers' DHS operation for instance, lost seventy-five percent of its assets (Grosskopf and Newby 1991: 3). Faced with a shrinking range area and depletion of forage, stockmen gradually gave up their "unhindered, unbounded grazing privileges" in exchange for smaller individual ranches where they could harvest and store hay and more competently attend to the welfare of their animals and the condition of their land (Paul 1973: 18). The days of Montana's open range were over.

Today, the vast majority of cattle ranches in Montana are family owned and operated cow-calf ranches. The latter are ranches on which calves are weaned from their mothers at about eight

months of age, and then sold directly to feedlots or to agents who transport the animals to feedlots. There are also some grass-finishing ranches where cattle are grazed on grass and hay until they are ready to be slaughtered. A few large cattle outfits remain in the State, mostly belonging to wealthy absentee owners from other parts of the country. In 2011, for instance, two billionaire brothers from Texas purchased the famous N Bar Ranch in Fergus County from the software billionaire, Tom Siebel. In late 2012, the 124,000 acre Broken O Ranch in Lewis and Clark County was bought by an out-of-state billionaire who owns two other sizeable ranches in Montana. The wealthy former media celebrity, Ted Turner, also owns several large ranches in the State (French 2012).

There are still areas of public domain (open range) in Montana, managed primarily by the Federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the United States Forest Service (USFS). Many of these areas are leased out to cattle ranchers for grazing. Nationwide, the BLM has almost 18,000 grazing leases covering 155 million acres and supporting approximately 12.3 million cow-calf pairs, whilst the USFS has 8,000 leases on ninety-four million acres, supporting 8.3 million pairs. Close to 4,000 Montana ranchers currently hold grazing leases on BLM land, and about 1,000 lease USFS tracts (Chaney 2012; BLM 2015; USFS 2015). According to the BLM, “the Bureau administers public land ranching in accordance with the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, and in doing so provides livestock-based economic opportunities in rural communities while contributing to the West’s, and America’s, social fabric and identity” (BLM 2015).

1.7 A brief history of cattle branding in Montana

Illustrations on Egyptian tomb paintings suggest that the Ancient Egyptians were branding oxen with hieroglyphics as far back as approximately 2700 B.C., and there is also historical evidence indicating that hot iron brands were used by the Ancient Greeks and Romans to mark their livestock (Wolfenstine 1970; Paul 1973; Thiessen 1986; Stamp 2013). It is thought that the first livestock brand to appear in North America was one used by the Spanish conquistador, Hernando Cortes, who introduced horses and cattle to Mexico in 1540 and branded his animals with three Christian crosses (Wolfenstine 1970; Paul 1973; Thiessen 1986). Although historical details as to when and how the practice of branding livestock found its way to America’s Northwestern region cannot be verified with complete accuracy, it has been established that brands were already being used in the area in the early 1800s for animal identification (Paul 1973: 144).

In the early days of the open range (see §1.2.2), brands were used to declare ownership of animals by stockmen who shared public grazing lands. At that time it was common for cowboys to increase their herds by seeking out wandering, unbranded calves, called ‘mavericks’ or ‘slickears’, and branding them; a practice that was referred to as ‘slickearing’. Although brands did function as a deterrent to theft, it was (and still is) possible to rework a particular brand into a different one. One popular method used to accomplish this was the use of a running iron; a heated circle of iron held between the prongs of a forked stick or two sticks and turned, using part of the circle to create the brand design (Paul 1973:142).

When cowboys drove large herds of cattle thousands of miles across country, they typically branded their animals with a ‘trail brand’ so that they could be distinguished from cattle belonging to other outfits that were using the same trail. Rechert (1931:7) explains as follows:

All cattle starting on the trail were given a trail brand and there would be a man left at the central points along the way for a number of days after the herd had passed through; this man would look over the other herds that came in and he could claim all the cattle bearing the brand of his outfit no matter who brought them in. The way an expert could look over hundreds of head of cattle and classify them according to brands was almost uncanny.

Cowboys kept informal records of brands so that they could recognise which animals belonged to each outfit that was running cattle along the trail. Thiessen (1986) provides the following colourful description of the practice:

Back in the days of the cattle driving era, every cowboy carried his own personal brand book. This reference was as much a part of his trail equipment as his six-gun or lariat. Brand books followed no standard size or pattern — they were as individualized as their owner. Some of the more wealthy cattlemen carried handsome leatherbound volumes filled with elaborate notes — while the ordinary cowboy packed a cheap paper tablet, curled and stained from use. However, the contents of each book were the same. They contained brands of local herds, reports of stolen cattle, rough maps of cattle drives and other trail information that the cowboy needed for ready reference. Through the scribblings in a brand book, it was often possible for stray cattle to be returned to the rightful owner. When a strange

brand turned up in a herd being sold, the owner — sometimes several counties away — would receive a check for steers he had never even missed!

Official recording of livestock brands in the Northwest began in the 1850s in what was then the Oregon Territory, when the Territory legislature passed a law “requiring the county clerk of each county to record, upon application of any person, a description of brands and [other] marks of livestock” (Paul 1973: 143). Many of the early brand records are no longer in existence because territorial, district and county boundaries were ultimately redefined by the political and legislative processes which led to the transitioning of the Territories into Statehoods (Paul 1973: 142). In Montana, the first law requiring cattle owners to register brands was passed in 1864, becoming effective on January 1 1865. This law required that brands be recorded at County Courthouses. In 1872 the legislature passed a law requiring brands to be registered with the Clerk of the Supreme Court of Montana Territory. The County Clerk and Recorders offices had to send all their registered brands to the State Recorder’s office in Virginia City, which was then the State Capitol. The Montana Livestock Commission was subsequently established in 1885, under the name of The Board of Stock Commissioners, to handle the recording of brands, as well as to combat theft and benefit animal health in the Territory (Paul 1973: 145; Thiessen 1986: 129).

One of the first brands to be recorded in Montana in around 1870 was the *Square and Compass* brand which belonged to the Pointdexter and Orr cattle company of Beaverhead County (Paul 1973: 145). Other well-known brands to be used in Montana in the early 1880s were the *Maltese Cross* and *Elkhorn* brands, which were claimed by Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt; the *DHS* brand – later changed to *D Bar S* because *DHS* blotched in branding – which was owned by the prominent Davis-Hauser-Stuart cattle outfit from Central Montana’s Judith Basin area (Rechert 1931, Thiessen 1986:4,34,128); the Niobrara Cattle Company’s *N Bar* brand (Grosskopf and Newby 1991:1); and the *N Bar N* brand belonging to the Niedringhaus brothers (Niedringhaus 2010). Today, all matters pertaining to brands are regulated through the Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL), through its Brand Enforcement Division (BED). The regulations and activities of the BED will be further explained in §1.5.

As mentioned in §1.2, hot iron brands remain the most preferred means of marking animal identification amongst Montana’s cattle ranchers. It is argued that because brands are highly visible and hard to alter, they ensure that animals are identifiable throughout their lifetime, whether out on the range or in a feedlot (Cremer 2012: 9). Whilst some ranchers still use open wood fires to heat

the branding irons, propane-heated fires are now widely-used, as are electric irons where there is a ready source of electricity. Chemical (freeze) branding was devised in the 1960s, but at this time it is not legal to use freeze brands on cattle in Montana, although this method is legal (and commonly used) for horses. The traditional ‘roping and dragging’ technique to catch and position calves for branding is still very popular. However, many ranchers have now turned to less labour-intensive methods such as putting calves through a branding chute and then onto a branding table which holds them in place while the brands are applied.

Over the past few decades, alternative identification methods to branding have been developed, including, for instance, coded capsules which can be implanted and read with a scanning device, and radio frequency (RFID) ear tags (see §1.1). Despite such innovations, the ‘old hot iron method’ still appears to be irreplaceable. In practical terms, brands are permanent and highly visible, whereas ear tags can fall off and get lost, and coded capsules can only be deciphered with scanners, a system that is highly impractical given range conditions in Montana. Furthermore, as noted in §1.2, brands and the tradition of branding are considered to be important and treasured elements of the heritage and culture of cattle ranching communities in the American West. Paul (1973: 146) contends that “present-day ranchers, many of them descendants of pioneer cattle families who registered the first brands, prefer to use the brand of their fathers. The feeling [a rancher] has as he holds his branding iron in his hand and puts it on a quality beef animal will be hard to forget.” The social and cultural significance of brands and branding will be dealt with at length in Chapter 4.





Figure 1: (from top to bottom, left to right): cowboy roping calves; branding irons heating on a propane fire; branding a calf with a hot iron; calf branded with *Z Slash J* brand.

1.8 Current livestock brand regulations and enforcement in Montana

As mentioned in §1.3, livestock brands in the State of Montana are regulated by the MDOL's Brands Enforcement Division (BED), headquartered in the State capital of Helena. Any person wishing to own a brand is required to register such ownership with the MDOL for a recording fee of US\$200.00. Brands registration is valid for a period of ten years, after which brand owners are required to re-record their brands. Brands that are not re-recorded by their current owners are made available for acquisition by other parties through the MDOL. An index of available brands is published on the MDOL website, and a hard copy can also be viewed at the BED office in Helena. In 2011, the BED re-recorded 46,388 brands and in 2013 it registered 1083 new brands (MDOL 2015).

Since livestock brands constitute the primary official means of animal identification and proof of ownership in Montana, MDOL regulations governing livestock brands are stringent and rigidly enforced. Brand inspections are required before cattle or horses are taken out of County or out of State, and are also mandatory prior to change of ownership, sale at livestock auction, or slaughter at a licensed establishment. All brand inspections have to be carried out in daylight. Cattle are usually re-branded when ownership changes (MDOL 2015).

The practical and legal implications of branding and re-branding are explained as follows by Paul McKenna, a Brand Inspector from Central Montana's Petroleum County, as he describes his duties on a typical sale day at the local stockyard (McKenna 2012: 1B):

[As the calves come off the producer's trailer] I push [them] onto the scale and one of us (buyer, owner, or I) will weigh them. Both parties trust the brand inspector...so I often do the weighing. I'm looking for the correct brand, or brands, and tallying them...if an animal goes by and I don't see the brand I'm looking for, I can usually follow it back to the pen and get another look...anything I have doubts about, or any strays, I put in one of the little pens. When all the others are done, I inspect the 'strays' further. If they're slick (unbranded) they're held back. I'll run my hands over the animal where the brand should be, and if it was branded, I can feel the scar...what helps us most is when a producer brings in calves that are branded well – that makes the local job so much easier...one animal can have five, six, even eight brands. Producers need to keep the paperwork that shows their ownership, especially if the branding is fresh...if you lose an animal and report it as missing, stolen or strayed, an auction yard will hold it up and call you if it's brought in for sale...the brand and the paperwork is the producers' insurance – there's a much better chance they'll get an animal back if it's missing.

There are currently eighteen District Brand Inspectors employed by the BED. These District Inspectors supervise and regulate 509 Deputy State Stock Inspectors and Permit Writers. In 2013, a total of 2,533,338 cattle inspections were carried out in Montana, with Inspectors finding a total of 4,630 stray cattle in the State during that year (MDOL 2015).

1.9 Montana demographics

Montana is one of the least densely populated states in the United States. With a land area of approximately 147,000 square miles and a population of just over one million, the population density of this Northwestern State averages at about 6.9 persons per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). According to the Montana Stockgrowers Association (MSA), there are close to 2.5 million cattle in Montana, which (theoretically, of course) means that there are about 2.5 cows for every person in the State! It is reported that the cattle ranching industry contributes approximately US\$1 billion in cash receipts annually to the State of Montana; this totals about half of the overall cash receipts generated by the agricultural sector, which is Montana's largest economic force (MSA 2013).

The Central Montana region, with its geographical blend of plains and mountains, is prime cattle ranching country and home to many modern-day cowboys. The vast majority of cattle ranches in the area are family-owned by second, third, or fourth generation ranchers. The city of Lewistown (population 5,867) in Fergus County (population approximately 11,500), serves as the commercial hub for many of the surrounding counties (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). The Lewistown Livestock Auction (LLA), which was established in 1951, houses a steady market for cattle ranchers in the area by holding a weekly auction during peak season (every second week in the off-season). In 2011, the enterprise reported cattle sales of 34,346 head (MSA 2013; LLA 2015). The map of Montana Counties in Figure 2 below shows Fergus County in the centre of the State, alongside Judith Basin, Wheatland, Golden Valley, Musselshell and Petroleum Counties which together constitute the Central Montana region.



Figure 2: State Map of Montana showing counties (World Atlas 2013).

1.10 Outline of the thesis structure

In this chapter, the scope, purpose and nature of the current research into American cattle brands have been set out. Crucial background information including explanation and illustration of the linguistic features of cattle brands, a historical overview of the cattle industry and livestock branding in the State of Montana, as well as information on current Montana demographics, has

been presented as a means of providing a general contextual framework for the remaining discussion in this thesis.

The remainder of the text is arranged as follows: Chapter 2 comprises a literature review which relates various aspects of this study to theoretical approaches in several social science disciplines. The methodological underpinnings of the current research are identified and discussed in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4 the author's data are presented and analysed in line with the theoretical and methodological principles outlined in the second and third chapters. The thesis is concluded in Chapter 5 with a summary of the results of the study along with some discussion concerning its limitations and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: Literature and theory review

2.1 Introduction

As indicated in Ch.1 §1.3, this thesis represents the first academic study of its kind to examine the socio-cultural meanings and functions of American cattle brands from a linguistic and predominantly onomastic perspective. One of the leading arguments in this research is that the system of cattle brands is in essence a linguistic one which comprises symbols and corresponding names. A further premise is that although they are devoid of any ‘formal’ linguistic meaning, cattle brands are assigned various dimensions of extra-linguistic meaning by cattle brand users who associate cattle brands with various aspects of their socio-cultural environment. It is posited that these connections are evidenced in the onomastic features of cattle brands as well as in a network of onomastic relationships between cattle brands and various social elements (see Ch. 1 §1.2).

The discussion in this chapter sets out the theoretical framework against which these foundational tenets can be explained and defended. In §2.2, an overview of pertinent literature concerning the broader aspects of American cattle brands is provided as a means of establishing a general contextual setting for the current research. This is followed in §2.3 by an examination of various theoretical perspectives that are drawn from the fields of onomastics, pragmatics, socio-linguistics, cultural heritage and cultural identity studies, as well as social semiotics. The overall theoretical approach that has been adopted in the thesis is explained and defended in §2.4. Concluding remarks on the present chapter appear in §2.5.

2.2 Review of literature on American cattle brands: placing the research in social context

This section contains a survey of the various materials consulted by the author that have yielded valuable insights into the origins, uses and identifying characteristics of American cattle brands, as well as related issues such as the history and development of America’s beef industry and the emergence of the classic American cowboy culture. The selected texts provide a great deal of background information that has aided in establishing the nature and composition of the socio-cultural context within which American cattle brands originated and gained significance.

Literature dealing with the history of the American West has proven to be a particularly rich source of pertinent information regarding the general features of cattle brands, including their historical origins as well as general features such as design elements and practical functions. These materials

contain rich descriptions, stories, drawings and photographs of brands, which make for some fascinating and entertaining reading. Comprehensive accounts of the historical development of the cattle industry in America's Northwest, including the State of Montana, are found in the publications of Osgood (1970), Paul (1973), Thiessen (1986), Randolph (1981), McCumber (1999) and Pattie (2002). These texts also contain colourful descriptions of the typical cowboy lifestyle that was embraced during the open range days of the cattle industry in the region (see Ch. 1 §1.6). Paul's (1973) book titled '*This was cattle ranching yesterday and today*' (1973), for instance, includes chapters with headings such as '*Drives and drovers*' (pp 59-82), '*Roundup, cowboys and chuckwagons*' (pp 83-108), and '*Free range to fences*' (pp 109-141), and '*Mark of man*' (a reference to cattle brands, pp 142-157). These captions provide an indication as to the historical content of this particular text.

Thiessen's (1986) manuscript titled '*Empty boots and dusty corrals*' comprises a similar account to Paul's (1973) but contains a more specific focus on the development of the cattle industry in the State of Montana. This is especially relevant to the present study, which comprises a case study of cattle brands found in Montana. Of particular interest is Thiessen's (1986) illustration of an early geographical map of the State of Montana on which cattle brand symbols depict the range areas of various cattle outfits, a phenomenon that is also noted by Randolph (1981). With the help of Thiessen's (1973) map and her additional reference to many cattle brands that were run in Montana during the late 1800s, the author has been able to place several of the brands contained in this study's data set into verifiable historical context.

A further valuable resource that has been utilised in this study is Van Dersal and Connor's (1900) book, '*Montana stock growers' directory of marks and brands for the State of Montana 1872-1900*' which, as stated on the title page, comprises "an alphabetical list of all live stock (sic) companies and individual stock raisers, showing the recorded marks and brands of each one as they appear on the books of the State Recorder of Marks and Brands; a complete directory of all the recorded brands in the state." Using this historical text, the author has been able to trace several of the cattle brands contained in her data set back to the open range era and thus verify some of the information gained from other sources.

Wolfenstine's (1970) publication '*The manual of brands and marks*' comprises an extremely thorough examination of cattle brands in which the history of cattle branding, methods of cattle branding and the orthography of cattle brand designs are addressed in some detail. Particularly

relevant to the arguments put forward in this thesis is Wolfenstine's (1970) reference to the system of cattle brands as a type of language and his recognition of the importance of cattle brand names (Wolfenstine 1970: xi, xix-xx; see Ch. 1 §1.5). Although Wolfenstine (1970) primarily deals with United States' cattle brands, he also includes mention and visual illustrations of cattle brands used in Canada and Mexico, as well as German and Hungarian horse brands, which suggests some potential for cross-cultural research on livestock brands.

Pattie (2002) also addresses the history of cattle branding in America and provides many illustrations of cattle brand symbols. Of great significance to the present research is Pattie's (2002) emphasis on the heritage value of cattle brands, which is made apparent through her in-depth discussion of the Leonard Stiles Branding Iron Collection which is housed at the Cattle Raisers Museum in Fort Worth, Texas. Although Pattie's (2002) focus is on cattle brand symbols, her reference to the latter as "Ironclad Signatures" (from the title of the book) implies that cattle brands may be perceived as some type of linguistic entity.

In terms of local (Montana) literature, magazine publications such as *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* and *Rural Montana* contain some interesting articles about the history of certain cattle ranches and cattle brands in the State of Montana, and also offer various insights into the tradition of branding as it is practised today on certain ranches in this region (for example, Niedringhaus 2010; Hall 2014). The *Heritage Book of Central Montana* (Deal & McDonald 1981) is a particularly noteworthy local resource which contains some personal anecdotes concerning certain Central Montana cattle brands used in Central Montana. These stories not only offer glimpses into the lifestyle and traditions of Montana's cattle ranchers but also provide further evidence to suggest the importance of cattle brands as elements of family history and heritage (see Ch. 4 §4.5.2) .

One of the most vital contributions to the current research has emerged from a large corpus of oral literature that the author has been able to access through her personal interviews with members of the local cattle ranching community in Central Montana (see Ch. 3 §3.3.3.1). The oral narratives that have been shared with the author have yielded a wealth of authentic first-hand information pertaining to many diverse aspects of cattle brands and the tradition of cattle branding. This body of local knowledge has provided valuable clues about the 'real' meaning of cattle brands as perceived by the people who use them during the course of their everyday lives.

Although the literature dealing with the general and historical aspects of American cattle brands does not offer any theoretical insights for researching the topic at hand, its rich descriptive content has provided essential background information which has helped the author to establish a well-defined historical, social and cultural context for the research presented in this thesis. For example, several of the published resources mentioned above contain quite detailed illustrations of various cattle brand symbols along with practical examples of how to read or interpret these images. Such explanations have provided the author with a good understanding of how brands ‘work’ in everyday practice, which has been very important from a background-building standpoint. Other written and oral sources offer thorough and in some cases entertaining accounts of the origins and development of the beef industry as well as the history of cattle brands and branding in the State of Montana and beyond. As a whole, this body of general literature strongly indicates that cattle brands constitute significant elements of personal as well as cultural history and heritage in this region of the country, and thus provides some solid evidence in support of one of the most important assumptions in this thesis (see Ch. 1 §1.2; §1.3).

2.3 Onomastic perspectives in the study of cattle brands

The title of this thesis indicates that the research presented herein is a study in socio-onomastics. The domain of onomastics is concerned with the study of names, wherein the term ‘name’ refers to ‘proper’ nouns versus ‘common’ nouns or appellatives. This thesis takes that stance that names are without question part of language; a view that is held by a number of scholars in onomastics (Algeo 2006; Pamp 1985; Bright 2001; Nuessel 1992; Van Langendonck 2007). Algeo (2006: 6) for instance points out that “if we consider names apart from the things they name, apart from the circumstances in which they are given and used, and apart from their users; that is, if we focus on names per se, it is clear that they are a kind of word. And words are a basic feature of language.” It is further posited here that names are linguistic items in the sense that they are used to communicate ideas; specifically, to convey concepts of reference and distinctiveness. Since the written and spoken forms of cattle brands are, at their simplest level, words that provide an oral and/or written means of articulating and thus referencing cattle brand symbols, they are considered in this thesis to be proper names.

The prefix ‘socio’ in the term ‘socio-onomastics’, which appears in the thesis title, implies that cattle brands are onomastic items which possess some sort of social characteristics. At a very basic level, socio-onomastics refers to the study of the sociological aspects of names (Leslie & Skipper

1990: 280). Names in general are purposefully created by people to fulfil a specific function; that is, to provide a means of referencing things in the world. However, names do not exist in a vacuum, abstracted from the rest of human experience, but are created and utilised within specific social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, as stated by Leslie & Skipper (1990: 273), names are not simply arbitrary symbols or labels but they communicate what is meaningful within these social contexts. Thus, in order to grasp what names really mean, one has to understand the context in which they are used.

Socio-onomastic concerns are very relevant to the current study because cattle brand names, like other types of names, originate and function within a well-defined socio-cultural context (see §2.2). It is within this context that cattle brands are assigned diverse aspects of meaning. There are nevertheless some difficulties and shortcomings in using the basic socio-onomastic approach outlined above to comprehensively explain the nature, functions and meanings of cattle brands. One of the main challenges lies in the fact that cattle brands are not only names but also symbols. As noted earlier, cattle brands comprise a linguistic system in which each symbol has a corresponding name (see Ch. 1 §1.5). A further complication is that both of these components (symbols and names) display close associations with different types of names (see Ch. 1 §1.2; Ch. 4 §4.2). It is posited here that these onomastic connections are socially-motivated and that they reflect social perceptions of various elements in the surrounding socio-cultural environment. The issue, therefore, is whether or not socio-onomastic principles (as outlined above) are entirely applicable and/or sufficient in accounting for the multidimensional characteristics and onomastic relationships that are displayed by cattle brands.

Another difficulty facing this study is that the domain of socio-onomastics itself is not yet very well-defined insofar as it seems to lack a solid theoretical framework to guide research and analysis. Apart from the fact that it has been determined that socio-onomastics has to do with exploring the sociological aspects of names – that is, as a means of understanding what names mean and how they communicate meaning in social context – not much is known about what this research really entails. It could be argued that since names are linguistic items, the study of names in social context forms part of socio-linguistics, which is concerned with how different forms of language/s are used in defined social contexts. Van Langendonck (2007) suggests that the difference between socio-linguistics and socio-onomastics is that whereas socio-linguistics

examines language use in social context, socio-onomastics focuses on how names “relate to the social properties of their referents, the objects in reality they refer to”.

The author is in agreement that the domain of socio-onomastics is concerned with understanding the meaning of names in social context. Unlike most common nouns whose meaning can be analysed on the basis of formal semantic properties, (proper) names generally do not possess lexical or linguistic meaning (see §2.3.2). This, perhaps, could be a factor which distinguishes concerns in socio-onomastics from those in socio-linguistics. The author also concurs with Van Langendonck’s (2007) proposal that socio-onomastics involves the examination of the social qualities of the entities in the world to which names refer. With respect to the current research in cattle brands, however, the author has found these definitions of socio-onomastics to be somewhat restrictive, given the multi-dimensional onomastic features of cattle brands mentioned earlier. For this reason, and taking into account the lack of clear theoretical guidelines for carrying out socio-onomastic research, the author has turned to theoretical perspectives from several disciplines in the social sciences for direction (including existing theories in “mainstream” onomastics), before returning to a ‘re-defined’ socio-onomastic approach in the final analysis (see §2.4).

2.3.1 Pragmatic and socio-linguistic considerations

As indicated in Ch. 1 §1.5, the practice of assigning names to cattle brand symbols originated as a result of practical considerations; specifically, the need to have a standardised oral and scripted vocabulary for referencing cattle brand symbols in the field as well as for the official recording of cattle brands. This is a crucial observation, since it implies that cattle brand names do not exist in a ‘vacuum’ but are created and used within a definitive real-life setting by real people for specific purposes, which in turn suggests that their existence is based on underlying pragmatic principles. It therefore follows that any analytical framework used to establish and explain the meanings and functions of cattle brand names should encompass a strong pragmatic element. Such is the approach taken in this thesis.

In linguistics, pragmatics is concerned with investigating language choice in social interaction (Crystal 1997: 120). According to this approach, language users are considered to be dynamic agents who establish what constitutes language and what linguistic expressions mean, and ideas about language are seen to be based not only on linguistic factors but also on social relationships, attitudes and meanings in particular social settings (Strawson 1950; Hymes 1974; Alford 1988;

Basso 1996). The pragmatic view holds that language is “socially-constituted” within defined social groups and is thus viewed as being part of overall human communication and a form of social action. Analyses of linguistic expressions in any form consider the basic unit of description as a social entity rather than a linguistic one, and therefore take into account social (‘real-world’) as well as referential meanings (Hymes 1974: 47, 196). These principles form the basis of socio-linguistics.

Hymes’ pragmatic, or socio-linguistic approach, which he termed “the ethnography of communication”, posits that language is not simply a passive or automatic reflection of culture, but is itself a form of cultural behavior, which, like any other aspect of culture, partly shapes the whole. Hymes (1974) contends that since language plays such a central role in social and cultural life, it is crucially important to take account of socio-cultural context in the study of language and communication. He further argues that since language has a social basis and communication is a social activity, one must begin with a particular social group, or “speech community” as the central reference point for describing and explaining language use and communicative events within that context (Hymes 1974: 16, 47, 125). In this regard, Hymes (1974: 4) states that:

One cannot take linguistic form, a given code, even speech itself, as a limiting frame of reference. One must take as context a community, or network of persons, investigating its activities as a whole, so that any use of channel and code takes its place as part of the resources upon which its members draw...facets of the cultural values and beliefs, social institutions and forms, roles and personalities, history and ecology of a community may have to be examined in their bearing on communicative events and patterns.

This is a dynamic view of language in which speaking is considered to be a social act that is not only subject to the constraints of social action, but also produces social action (Duranti 1997: 9).

When applied in onomastics, pragmatics holds that the ways in which names derive meaning from their use as referring expressions within specific contexts is determined by language users, in line with the linguistic ideology that is shared amongst any particular group of speakers (Sapir 1927; Strawson 1950; Hymes 1974; Alford 1988; Basso 1996). The term ‘linguistic ideology’ is explained by Basso (1996: 99) as the notion that “every culture...includes beliefs about how language works and what it is capable of doing...[and] the kinds of social contexts in which these

capabilities may be realized most effectively.” This statement echoes Hymes (1974: 72), who argues that “for both the individual and the community, a language in some sense is what those who have it can do with it—what they have made of it and do make of it.”

Particularly pertinent to the present study is Van Langendonck’s (2007) pragmatic approach to the study of (proper) names, which forms a framework for understanding and explaining how the written forms of cattle brands might even be considered as names in the first place. Van Langendonck (2007: 87) defines a proper name as “a noun that denotes a unique entity at the level of established linguistic convention to make it psychosocially salient within a given basic level category.” A key phrase in this definition is “established linguistic convention” which refers to accepted norms of language use within a specific social context; in other words, the ways in which a given language or form of language is used by members of the speech community whose language it is (Hymes (1974). When applied to cattle brand names, Van Langendonck’s statement supports the fact that every cattle brand name refers to a particular cattle brand symbol which is a distinctive unit that exists in the world. For example, the cattle brand name *Apple* denotes a cattle brand symbol which depicts the shape of an apple, whilst the cattle brand name *Circle H* refers to a cattle brand symbol consisting of a circular shape together with the letter ‘H’, and so on. However, the name *Apple* does not refer exclusively to a certain cattle brand in all possible contexts, since the naming of cattle brands is not a universal concept in all societies in the world and the name *Apple* is used as a designator for different kinds of entities in other contexts. In the field of technology, for instance, the name *Apple* refers to a distinctive brand of electronic devices as well as to the corporation that manufactures them. Furthermore, words like ‘apple’ and ‘circle’ are also common nouns, or appellatives, that refer universally to an infinite number of entities. In other words, the word *Apple* is only used as a cattle brand name within the community of speakers – made up of ranchers, brand inspectors and so on – who recognize it as such.

Shifts in reference between proper names and appellatives are considered by Searle (1969: 173) to be “analytical relations” that are not definite descriptions but merely descriptions or predicates; for example, in an expression such as ‘the *Apple* brand’ the proper noun ‘*Apple*’ acts as a predicate for the common noun ‘brand’. It is interesting to note, however, that within the local social context of this case study, it is not uncommon to hear utterances such as ‘Phillips owns an *Apple* [brand]’, or ‘The *House* [brand] belongs to Yaeger’, where the common noun ‘brand’ is implied but not actually articulated. This phenomenon appears to support Van Langendonck’s (2007: 87) claim that

“the meaning of [a] name, if any, does not (or not any longer) determine its denotation.” According to (Van Langendonck 2007: 90), when a common noun is used as a name the meaning of the word is retained as a connotation, but “it no longer determines the denotation of the name in the way it does in the corresponding common noun.” In the same manner, when nouns such as ‘apple’ or ‘house’ are used as names for cattle brands, their asserted lexical meanings become “secondary connotations” in a process that has been referred to as “semantic bleaching” (Van Langendonck 2007: 90, 92). Since society dictates how words can function as names in specific contexts (Hymes 1974; Nicolaisen 1978; Algeo 2006; Basso 1996; Van Langendonck 2007), social practice, including knowledge of local norms pertaining to language use (Hymes 1974: 51), ensures that different references of the same noun do not become confused (Van Langendonck 2007: 88).

Of further cognisance is Van Langendonck’s (2007) statement that the entity denoted by a proper noun is made “psychosocially salient” through the naming process. Van Langendonck (2007: 89) contends that a proper name gives salience to an entity “within a given basic level category”. He maintains that in close appositional structures such as ‘the poet Burns’, ‘Fido the dog’, ‘the River Thames’, the ‘City of London’ and ‘*Dolly* the sheep’, the noun that acts as the identifier is the proper name whereas the other noun indicates the category to which the entity referred to belongs. Thus in these examples, ‘Burns’, ‘Fido’, ‘Thames’ and ‘London’ are proper nouns that identify entities belonging to the basic-level categories of ‘poet’, ‘dog’, ‘river’ and ‘city’, respectively. Likewise, in an appositional structure such as ‘the *Pipe* brand’, the noun ‘*Pipe*’ draws attention to a unique entity belonging to the category ‘cattle brand’.

Since not all things in the world are assigned proper names, it follows that by being named “entities are made salient and important in a given psychosocial context” and that through names various connotations become attached to these entities (Van Langendonck 2007: 89). Again, this boils down to the way in which speakers in any given social and/or cultural context determine how language is used. The concept of ‘psychosocial salience’ is a crucial one here, since one of the pivotal claims made in this thesis is that cattle brands are prominent elements of the socio-cultural environment in which they exist and function and that their socio-cultural significance is largely stressed through the socially-motivated process of naming (see Ch. 1 §1.3).

The pragmatic and socio-linguistic considerations discussed here support the author’s argument that although cattle brand names do not possess semantic content beyond their direct reference to cattle brand symbols, they derive a great deal of meaning from socially-constructed associations with

various elements in their real world surrounds; in other words, the system of cattle brands as a whole is “socially-constituted” and “socially-realistic” (Hymes 1974: 196; Ch. 1 §1.3). This idea also reflects Sapir’s (1985) notion of “a linguistic unit...which is a subform of a language which is current among a group of people who are held together by ties of common interest” (Sapir 1985: 16).

2.3.2 The associative meanings of cattle brands

Although pragmatics theory sufficiently accounts for the social basis underlying the existence and functioning of cattle brand names, it does not offer adequate explanations for the ways in which these names acquire and convey meaning within their surrounding socio-cultural context. In the field of onomastics, however, the issue of contextual meaning has become an important consideration in establishing how various types of names possess and convey various dimensions of meaning when they lack linguistic or lexical meaning. Extensive research into the meanings of names has resulted in the emergence of the theory of associative meaning, which forms the basis for understanding and analysing the contextual meanings of names. Within the overall framework of associative meaning theory, the non-lexical meaning of names is referred to in various interchangeable terms such as ‘descriptive backing’ (Searle 1969), ‘onomastic meaning’, ‘connotative meaning’, ‘associative meaning’ (Nicolaisen 1978), and/or ‘descriptive meaning’ (Pamp 1985). The alternate use of the terms ‘contextual meaning’ and ‘associative meaning’ has been adopted in this thesis.

The main tenet of associative meaning theory is that non-linguistic meanings become attached to names by processes of association. Mill (1872, cited in Nicolaisen 1978: 42) for instance, posits that “a proper name is but an unmeaning mark which we connect in our minds with the idea of the object, in order that whenever the mark meets our eyes or occurs to our thoughts, we may think of that individual object.” This statement appears to hint at the idea that since names lack lexical meaning, people assign meanings to them by making mental connections between names and the entities to which they refer. Searle’s (1969) theory of descriptive backing expands this idea through the hypothesis that, since names form part of dynamic linguistic systems used by real people in real space and time, they carry a wide variety of descriptive backings or non-linguistic associations which include elements such as beliefs, values, experiential factors and motivational forces. Searle (1969: 171) proposes that when a name is uttered, both the speaker and hearer associate some aspect (or aspects) of the name’s descriptive backing with it, so that the particular reference that

was intended by the use of the name is successfully achieved. Nicolaisen (1978: 43), meanwhile, states that names carry “onomastic meaning which seldom has to do with lexical meaning and cannot be recovered by etymological procedures.” From this position, he contends that onomastic meaning is based on associations and that “knowing and using names involves a knowledge of the appropriate onomastic associations, the range of which may differ widely from name user to name user.” Nicolaisen (1978) makes a clear differentiation between the universal “denotative” or referential function of names, and their “connotative” characteristics, which are variable and subjective implied or associative meanings (Nicolaisen (1978: 40). This distinction underscores the point that meaning associations do not interfere with the referential function of names, but instead appear to facilitate and perhaps even expand this role.

Associative meaning theory also holds the assumption that names are inextricably connected to the social, cultural, psychological, emotional and physical worlds of name users. Since names derive meaning from context, it must be taken into account in order to arrive at a full understanding of what names mean to the people who use them (Nicolaisen 1978; Alford 1988; Leslie & Skipper 1990; Basso 1996; Van Niekerk 2005; Lombard 2011). This line of reasoning reflects cognitive as well as pragmatic principles. Cognitive linguistic theory, for instance, holds that language is systematically grounded in human cognitive experience which is constructed out of perceptions, impressions, associations, experiences and understandings of the cultural, social, mental and physical worlds (Sweetser 1990; Ungerer & Schmid 1996; Crystal 1997; Duranti 1997). According to this position, “meaning is not autonomous but exists against the background of our general assumptions about the world (sociocultural beliefs included)” (Sweetser 1990: 12, 16). As discussed in the previous section, the central tenet of the pragmatic approach is that the intended meaning of any utterance can only be understood if the full context surrounding the speech act in which the utterance is made is taken into account. The term ‘context’ refers to factors such as, but certainly not limited to, time and place, the identities and personal histories of the participants involved in the speech act; the relations between participants, such as gender, kinship and/or status; and the situation, including social and cultural, in which the event occurs (Strawson 1950; Keenan 1971; Crystal 1997; Duranti 1997; Joseph 2004).

Studies of names and naming practices in different cultural groups provide extensive evidence in support of the view that names not only denote individual uniqueness but also carry and convey various different elements of meaning derived from the social and cultural environments in which

they are embedded. A great deal of this research has focused on personal names and nicknames (for example, Sapir 1924; Miller 1927; Morice 1933; Wieschhoff 1941; Beidelman 1974; Underhill 1979; Moore 1984; Salomon & Grosboll 1986; Watson 1986; Alford 1988; Leslie and Skipper 1990; De Klerk & Bosch 1996; Moyo 1996; Musere & Byakutaga 1998; Onukawa 1998; Gengenbach 2000; Rymes 2000; Schottman 2000; Skhosana 2005; Watanabe 2005; Alia 2007; Gray & Cohen 2007; Lieberman & Kenny 2007; Little Bear 2007; Louie 2007; Cheng 2008; Haggan 2008; Lombard 2011; Makondo 2008; Neethling 2008; Burt 2009; Huschka, Gerhards & Wagner 2009; Heffernan 2010; Ikotun 2010; Laskowski 2010; Gao 2011; Laversuch 2011; Leung 2011; Emmelhainz 2012; Starks, Leech & Willoughby 2012).

Studies regarding place naming recognize and account for the contextual meanings of toponyms (Nicolaisen 1978; Basso 1996; Kadmon 2000; Raper 2012). Kadmon (2000: 48), for instance, observes that certain geographical names “give rise to the association of ideas, especially when [the names] are uttered under specific conditions”, and that whilst these associations may frequently be “subjective and personal”, there are also instances where fixed sets of connections are recognized by groups of people. For Basso (1996), the meanings associated with toponyms are crucial elements in the process through which individuals and communities construct ‘senses of place’, that is to say, “render their places meaningful and endow them with social importance.” Basso posits that such meaning is both assigned and interpreted through “bodies of local knowledge” that reflect and express cultural norms, values and beliefs, as well as experiential factors such as memories of events which may or may not be of historical importance (Basso 1996: xiv). In this way, place names themselves can become repositories of local wisdom and take on a great deal of socio-cultural significance. These ideas are illustrated in the following statement by Basso (1996: 120) with respect to Apache place names:

Formerly nothing more than a nicely descriptive toponym, [the name] has acquired the stamp of human events, of consequential happenings, of memorable times in the life of a people. As a result, the name seems suddenly fuller, somehow larger, embedded with added force. Because now, besides evoking images of a piece of local countryside, it calls up thoughts of fabled deeds and the singular cast of actors who there played them out.

Basso's statement emphasizes the point that names (and indeed language itself) are not abstracted from the rest of human experience, but are always utilized within a particular context that is made up of a "universe of meanings" (Basso 1996: 40).

Several studies concerning product brand names have revealed that the latter also carry an array of sociological and ideological associations that have socially relevant meaning within specific contexts (King 1973; Gardner and Levy 1955; Moore 2003; Van Niekerk 2005; Hendry 2006; De Vinne 2007; Neethling 2005; Nuessel 2010; Danesi 2011; Hernandez 2013 and Pfukwa 2013). Danesi (2011: 175, 182) for instance, posits that product brand names create certain impressions and images and evoke certain patterns of thought which form part of "meaning codes" that are associated with particular product brands. This, according to Danesi (2011: 176, 177) reflects the "semiotic power" of product brand names, which is, their ability to give "sense and meaning" to simple products. He states that since "it is easier to remember things as words than to remember the things themselves", a product brand name imparts a distinctive reference or "character" to a particular product and thus plays a crucial role in creating brand image (Danesi 2011: 184). Citing the case of *Armani®* shoes, for example, Danesi (2011: 176) states that "the name of the manufacturer allows us...to identify the shoes as denotatively different from other shoe brands...but...much more than that...it taps into a code of meaning that is designed to evoke images of artistry, craftsmanship, and superior quality to the shoe product." Implicit in this statement is the notion that the associative meanings carried by names might actually enhance their referential function, which effectively narrows the gap between the 'sense' and 'reference' aspects of names.

Hernandez (2013) approaches the issue of the extra-linguistic meaning of product brand names from a cognitive and pragmatic perspective. Taking a theoretical approach which draws and expands upon Lakoff's (1987) ideas concerning the human cognitive processes involved in metaphoric and metonymic mappings, Hernández (2013: 35) contends that product brand names function as cognitive cues that generate certain inferences and associations. The fundamental argument underlying her approach is that human cognitive mechanisms (referred to primarily as 'encoding' and 'decoding') enable us to elicit semantic representations from linguistic expressions within a particular context (de Mendoza 2010, cited in Hernandez 2013: 35). Hernández (2013: 35) posits that "the encoding and decoding of brand names are guided and constrained by a set of cognitive operations, which results in the generation of felicitous inferences that enhance the

semantic and evocative power of brands beyond that of their literal interpretation.” This point lends credence to Danesi’s (2011) contention that product brand names become associated with certain images and concepts that comprise an overall meaning code, or brand image, in which the name and the product that it names, are inextricably tied together.

In this thesis, cattle brands are considered to be composite linguistic entities made up of symbols as well as names (see Ch. 1 §1.5). Although the current study examines the meanings of cattle brands from a primarily onomastic perspective, the inseparable relationship between cattle brand names and cattle brand symbols suggests correlations between the types of meanings carried by both. Cattle brand symbols share certain features of other standardized sign systems that function as written forms of language (see Ch. 1 §1.5). Generally-speaking, standardised sign systems occur in specific and for the most part anticipated settings; for example, motorists anywhere in the world would generally expect to encounter road signs on public roadways and would know that the instructions coded onto these signs need to be followed since they constitute legal ‘rules of the road’. Similarly, a traveller at a large airport would anticipate seeing signs indicating facilities such as restrooms, or informational signs such as those giving directions to baggage claim or ground transportation. In the same way, most people in the cattle ranching communities of Montana and other branding States expect to see cattle brands on the hides of cattle, since it is common knowledge in these regions that cattle brands are used as marks of livestock ownership. However, unlike more universal standard sign systems such as road signs, whose meanings can typically be inferred from their visual content, the meaning of cattle brand symbols is far more opaque. Although some cattle brand symbols depict definite objects such as apples, pears, houses and pipes (see Ch. 1 Table 1), they no longer denote these objects; in other words, the image of a house appearing on a cow’s hide makes no direct reference to a real-world entity ‘house’, although there may be some underlying connotation regarding the choice of cattle brand. Typically, therefore, cattle brand symbols do not exhibit any asserted representational meaning. Nevertheless, it is contended here cattle brand symbols do possess contextual meaning that extends far beyond their practical referential function, which is to serve as identifying marks on the hides of animals. For instance, entries in the brand books establish connections between cattle brand images, people, and places, which can offer interesting and valuable insights into the history and social structure of Montana’s families and ranches (Porsild & Miller 2002: 81; see Ch. 1 §1.5).

In general, not much is known about how visual images are cognitively processed (Buttle & Westoby 2006: 1182), and an investigation into the cognitive functions underlying visual perceptions of cattle brand images would be far beyond the scope of this thesis. It is interesting to note, however, that marketing research provides some evidence that the images which comprise product brand logos generate meaning associations, referred to as “symbolic meanings” or “symbolic associations” (Karjalainen 2007: 67-68). Neuro-psychological studies have shown that visual logos attract people’s attention and have a strong and positive impact on memory. Levin, Joiner & Cameron (2001: 1) for instance, observe the following:

A television clip of a NASCAR race, complete with commercials, was used to assess the impact of brand sponsorship on consumer attitude and recall. Attitudes towards brands that appeared as logos on cars were higher for those who watched the video than for those who did not...recall was higher for brands exposed through logos than for brands exposed through traditional ads.

Similarly, studies conducted with pre-school age children indicate that while they may not know brand names, they are frequently able to recognise the product associated with a particular logo (Fischer et. al 1991; Kinsky & Bichard 2011). Karjalainen (2007: 67-68) posits that the meanings associated with logos are to a large extent based on logo design or “design semantics”. It is currently unknown whether or not the meaning associations attached to cattle brand symbols have anything directly to do with their designs. The current research shows, however, that like commercial logos, cattle brand symbols possess visual qualities that are highly recognisable and tend to ‘stick in the mind’, evoking certain remembrances, attitudes, and emotions (see Ch. 4 §4.5).

Marketing theory emphasizes the idea that the associative meanings of product brands are tied to all aspects of the brand, including its name, logo, image and so on. Gardner and Levy (1955: 34), for instance, posit that a product brand “is a complex symbol that represents a variety of ideas and attributes...a body of associations it has built up and acquired as a public object over time.” The meaning associations attached to product brand names in particular consist of ideas, impressions, images and attributes that become attached to the brands and with which consumers closely identify. These sets of intangible qualities play a major role in distinguishing individual products one from another and are therefore considered to epitomise the true value of brands (King 1973; Klein 2002 cited in Moore 2003: 338). It would appear, therefore, that the theory of associative meaning is applicable not only within the domain of onomastics, but also to the field of sales and

marketing and possibly to research concerning other types of sign systems as well. On this basis, the approach appears to be completely adequate for explaining how cattle brand symbols acquire contextual meaning.

2.3.3 Cattle brands and cultural heritage theory

Whilst associative meaning theory provides a suitable framework for understanding how cattle brand names and even cattle brand symbols acquire and convey meaning outside of their direct reference to cattle brand symbols, it does not quite suffice for addressing the question as to why cattle brand names and symbols take on the extra-linguistic functions and meanings that they so clearly display (see Ch. 1 §1.3). As indicated in §2.2 above, the general literature concerning cattle brands suggests that cattle brands are valuable components of individual as well as social heritage, and it is posited here that ideas about heritage form part of the overall socio-cultural context within which cattle brands exist and function. If, as proposed in this thesis, cattle brands derive meaning from their associations with various elements in these contextual surrounds, it follows that certain aspects of this meaning will reflect some concerns about heritage. In an effort to provide a clear explanation for what appears to be a very important aspect of the overall meaning of cattle brands, the author has drawn on some of the main principles of cultural heritage theory.

The concept of ‘heritage’ is a relatively recent development in Western society. It emerged subsequent to the Industrial Revolution and European political revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries amongst the working classes, and was based on a socially-motivated desire for commemoration, remembrance and preservation of the past (Byrne 2008: 167). In anthropology, the term ‘culture’ has been used to refer to patterns of thought and behaviour that are specific to a particular group of people and which distinguish them from other groups (Byrne 2008). These patterns are based on conceptualizations of, and attitudes towards, societal elements such as kinship relations, language use, religion, politics, economics, social protocols, beliefs, values, morals, knowledge, government, law, and education, to name just a few. Culture, in other words, denotes the entire way of life, worldview, and thus collective social identity, of a certain group of people. Use of the word ‘heritage’ as a qualifier for ‘culture’ implies that ‘cultural heritage’ is a narrower category than culture (Blake 2000: 68) and that it is concerned with those components of culture that are passed down as a form of inheritance from one generation to the next. Buildings, architecture, monuments, sites, relics, artwork and texts are some examples of tangible elements of culture that are frequently considered to be important to the cultural heritage of

particular groups of people, and thus worthy of preservation. Non-tangible aspects of heritage include local knowledge, philosophy, oral traditions (e.g. stories, poetry), music and language.

Within the context of cultural heritage theory, culture is viewed as a social construct which does not remain static, but constantly shifts and changes along with transitions and variations in the behavioural and thought patterns of people in society (Geertz 1983; Hymes 1974; Duranti 1997; Byrne 2008). These changes may be due to internal factors, such as increasing urbanization and social reconstructions, or external factors such as increasing contact with other cultural systems and the influence (reciprocal or one-way) of one culture over another (Kroeber 1948: 387, 425). The fluidity of culture thus hinges on the fact that people do not passively receive or inherit it, but instead actively own and transform it (Byrne 2008: 162). According to this stance, culture is not only a social construct, but also a social action. It is thus crucial to note that although cultural heritage is by definition concerned with the past, it is a dynamic concept which relates to how aspects of the cultural past are constructed in the present, and therefore reflects changing moods and perceptions within in the wider culture (Soderland 2009: 55). Blake (2000: 68) points out that decisions as to which elements of the broader culture are deserving of preservation as heritage are based on “active choices” about what has heritage value or significance. According to Lipe (1984, cited in Schofield 2010: 23), “value is not inherent in any cultural items or properties received from the past...value is learned about or discovered by humans and thus depends upon the particular cultural, intellectual, historical, and psychological frames of reference held by the particular individuals or groups involved.” Thus, just as pragmatic theory holds that language and communication are social processes (see §2.3.1) heritage theory posits that the determination of cultural heritage values is a form of social action.

It is somewhat remarkable that language (including onomastics) issues are not specifically addressed to any great extent in the heritage discourse. This situation is perhaps due to a general tendency to treat language as an assumed rather than a featured aspect of culture (Moore and Hennessy 2006: 127). Nevertheless, if language is the primary vehicle for “cultural accumulation and historical transmission” (Sapir 1985: 16), and if it plays a central role in defining collective as well as individual notions of social and cultural identity, then language, including names, must constitute an important component of cultural heritage. Personal names comprise an obvious category of ‘heritage names’ since these names are often passed down from generation to generation within families. Place names too, might be considered as part of the same category.

Basso (1996: 23-24) and Raper (2012: 12), for instance, express the idea that the contextual meanings of place names in particular are tied to the cultural heritage of specific groups of people. Danesi (2011: 178), meanwhile, points out that since longstanding product brand names “are perceived to be of vintage quality...they can also be called heritage names”. It follows that if cattle brand names reflect concepts of cultural heritage, as is posited in this thesis (see Ch. 4 §4.6), they too must be worthy of consideration as heritage names.

2.3.4 Matters of cultural identity in the study of cattle brands

As indicated above, ideas about what constitutes cultural heritage have to do with social considerations about which particular elements in a given culture are worthy of preserving and passing on to future generations. If heritage encompasses what is culturally meaningful to a group of people at a particular point in time (Byrne 2008), then conceptualizations of cultural heritage must therefore be inextricably tied to perceptions of cultural identity. The concept of identity-building refers to the social process whereby people engage in the continuous activity of shaping individual conceptions of ‘self’ as well as their sense of belonging within their surrounding social and cultural communities. Byrne (2008: 170) contends that local communities are “cultural constructions in the sense that they come into being and maintain their integrity only through the ceaseless work of identity building.” This is a dynamic and reflexive process in which people shape their society as their society shapes them (Byrne 2008: 167).

If one accepts the argument that language is a social process that provides the basis for human communication, it follows that language must play an essential role in identity formation (Hymes 1974, Sapir 1985; Alford 1988; Duranti 1997; Joseph 2004). According to Sapir (1985: 15), “language is a great force of socialization, probably the greatest that exists. By this is meant not merely the obvious fact that significant social discourse is hardly possible without language but that the mere fact of a common speech serves as a peculiarly potent symbol of the social solidarity of those who speak the language.” Names in particular appear to play a vital role in representing concepts of social and cultural identity. Alford (1988: 167), for instance, maintains that “naming systems both reflect and help create the conceptions of personal identity that are perpetuated within any society.” Joseph (2004: 12) argues that names are “primary texts of personal identity” and that on this basis “the entire phenomenon of identity can be understood as a linguistic one.”

Studies of names and naming practices in diverse social and cultural groups show that names do indeed play a crucial role in creating and maintaining perceptions and constructions of individual and collective identities within specific socio-cultural contexts. A large proportion of the research concerning the identity-building function of names has focused on different categories of personal names, including given names as well as nicknames and pseudonyms. The research shows that perceptions of identity as shaped and established through names have varying dimensions, based on several different motivating factors. For example, notions of identity are often based on how name-bearers see themselves as individuals and/or how they wish to project themselves to others in terms of gender, cultural, ethnic, religious, political or professional identity. In other instances, it is name-givers who envision a certain identity for a certain individual, place, or entity, and attempt to 'create' or establish such identity through the bestowal of a name, as is often the case with nicknaming (Leslie & Skipper 1990; Watanabe 2005; Alia 2007; Little Bear 2007; Lieberman & Kenny 2007; Louie 2007; Cheng 2008; Haggan 2008; Makondo 2008; Neethling 2008; Burt 2009; Huschka, Gerhards & Wagner 2009; Heffernan 2010; Ikotun 2010; Gao 2011; Laskowski 2010; Laversuch 2011; Leung 2011; Lombard 2011; Emmelhainz 2012; Kelley 2012; Starks, Leech & Willoughby 2012).

Matters of cultural identity have also been addressed in studies of place names (Basso 1996; Kadmon 2000; Rutkiewicz-Hanczewska 2010; Tucker 2011; Raper 2012) and product brand names (Holt 2004; Hendry 2006; Nuessel 2010; Pfukwa 2013). Of particular interest is Hendry's (2006) case study of *Rioja* wine brands, which shows how various socio-historical and socio-cultural factors can play an important role in constructing perceptions of meaning that become attached to certain names. Hendry (2006) also draws attention to interconnections between product brand names and place names, and illustrates how the strategic naming of places as well as wine products is used as a means of establishing and promoting distinctive cultural identities in the Riojan wine region of Northern Spain. Her research emphasises the social/pragmatic underpinnings of place and product naming in the Rioja area, and suggests that the interplay between place and product names that is created through various naming strategies strengthen concepts of regional cultural identity.

The topic of cultural identity has been addressed from a slightly different angle by Holt (2004) in his research on product branding. The main thrust of Holt's (2004) argument is that group conceptualizations of cultural identity are expressed through 'cultural icons', which are defined as individuals or things that are regarded as symbols of what people hold to be extremely important

ideas and values. This is a pragmatically-oriented stance in terms of which the construction of cultural identity is viewed as a form of social action.

Holt (2004: 1, 11) defines a 'cultural icon' as "a person or thing regarded as a symbol", and points out that these symbols epitomize what people consider to be extremely important ideas and values. According to Holt (2004: 2, 11), cultural icons represent "identity myths" — simple stories based on familiar cultural source material — which people want to believe in and which they use to "resolve cultural contradictions" and "address identity desires and anxieties" (Holt 2004: 2,11). Holt (2004: 2, 3) states that "icons perform the particular myth society especially needs at any given historical moment, and they perform it charismatically." He notes that people identify strongly with cultural icons and often rely on these symbols in their everyday lives (Holt 2004: 1). Holt (2004: 2-3) contends that many of the world's most well-known consumer brands have been developed along similar principles. The following statement sheds light on how product brands become cultural icons (Holt 2004: 3-4):

Customers value some products as much for what they symbolize as for what they do. For brands like Coke, Budweiser, Nike and Jack Daniels, customers value the brands' stories largely for their *identity value*. Acting as vessels of self-expression, the brands are imbued with stories that consumers find valuable in constructing their identities. Consumers flock to brands that embody the ideals they admire, brands that help them express who they want to be. The most successful of these brands become iconic brands.

Implicit in this explanation is the notion that product brands carry various dimensions of meaning associations which, as Holt (2004) posits, are held within narratives that become attached to the brands. To the extent that consumer brands are largely recognized on the basis of their names, Holt's theory ties into, and perhaps even expands, the theory of associative meaning in onomastics. Although Holt's main concern is with explaining the cultural iconicity of product brands, he points out that people (real and fictional, such as Nelson Mandela, Oprah Winfrey, Superman and Rambo), companies (such as Disney and Apple), universities (such as Harvard and Oxford), places (such as Paris and Harlem) and objects (such as the Zippo lighter) can be cultural icons as well. Adhering to Holt's (2004) principles and line of reasoning, it is plausible to assume that cattle brands might also become symbols and even icons of cultural identity if the people belonging to the

community in which they are used consider them to be worthy representations of closely-held cultural ideals and values.

2.3.5 Cattle brands and social semiotics

Since cattle brands are considered to be compound entities comprising symbolic and written forms, their cultural significance is assumed to be applicable to both their images and names; a concept that has some ties to the field of social semiotics. Crystal (1997: 403) defines semiotics as “the structure of all possible sign systems... and the role these play in the way we create and perceive in sociocultural behaviour.” Social semiotics places an emphasis on studying sign systems within social context in order to understand their origins, motivations, functions, uses and meanings (Hodge & Kress 1988: 1).

According to this approach, sign systems are structured around three main components which are messages, text and discourse. ‘Messages’ are taken to be the smallest semiotic forms. Each message possesses a source and a goal, as well as a social context and purpose; its meaning is derived from the world to which it is connected and to which it refers. Messages are passed back and forth between participants in ‘semiotic acts’. Structured together, a group of messages is referred to as ‘text’, and the larger social process within which texts are embedded and produced is referred to as ‘discourse’. It is in the arena of discourse that “social forms of organization engage with systems of signs in the production of texts, thus reproducing or changing the sets of meanings and values which make up a culture” (Hodge & Kress 1988: 5-6). Furthermore, the set of messages that make up a particular semiotic exchange imply and reflect certain social relationships as well as social and cultural values; in other words, every semiotic act has an ideological content (Hodge & Kress 1988: 40).

The position taken in this thesis that cattle brands comprise a linguistic system made up of symbols and names (see Ch.1 §1.5) ties into the assumption held in semiotics theory that sign systems comprise “patterned human communication in all its modes” (Crystal 1997: 403). To this extent, social semiotics theory lends further support to the notion that cattle brands, in both their symbolic and written form, function as tokens of cultural identity and that this role is determined by a particular group of people within a defined social context. With its emphasis on the idea that sign systems derive meaning from their surrounding socio-cultural environment, the approach intersects

with associative meaning theory and provides further insight into the ways in which linguistic systems become infused with various dimensions of socially-constructed meaning.

2.4 Towards a socio-onomastic approach in the study of cattle brands

In the absence of any clear-cut theoretical framework in the domain of socio-onomastics, the author has drawn on socially-oriented theories that are already well-established in several disciplines: onomastics, because this thesis is primarily concerned with examining the onomastic dimensions of American cattle brands and establishing the nature and significance of their extra-linguistic meanings (see §2.3; §2.3.2) pragmatics and socio-linguistics, since this study draws attention to the fact that the system of cattle brands is a linguistic one which exists and functions in a well-defined socio-cultural context (see §2.3.1); cultural heritage, because cattle brands are tied to history and heritage of cattle brand users (see §2.3.3); research in language and identity studies (see §2.3.4), since cattle brands symbolize individual and group perceptions of cultural identity; and social semiotics because cattle brands represent onomastic texts of social and cultural identity (see §2.3.5). This interdisciplinary tactic is supported by arguments put forward by a number of scholars that since names intersect with many aspects of human existence, the field of onomastics frequently intersects with work in various disciplines and thus requires multiple approaches in explanation and analysis (Algeo 2006; Leslie and Skipper 1990; Nuessel 1992; Bright 2001; Zelinsky 2006; Holt 2004; Rosenthal 2005; Evans and Lawson 2006).

The common thread linking all these approaches is that they are all based on social theories which acknowledge the importance of studying social phenomena on the basis of understanding the social contexts within which they occur, in order to grasp the true (or socially-realistic) meaning and significance of such phenomena. In this thesis, the author has incorporated relevant aspects of these various perspectives into a socio-onomastic framework which, on the basis of its interdisciplinary constitution, reflects the multi-dimensional onomastic features of cattle brands. The social basis of the approach emphasizes the importance of accounting for the socio-cultural context within which cattle brands exist and function, and which thus provides a social basis for analyzing the contextual (non-linguistic) meanings of cattle brands. It is argued here that such an approach facilitates accurate and socially-realistic interpretations of the socio-cultural meanings and significance of cattle brands, construed by the people who use cattle brands during the course of everyday life. In this way, the current study satisfies an essential requirement of socio-onomastics research, in which, according to Leslie & Skipper (1990: 280), “name analysis must deliver rigorous theoretical

knowledge of actors' social structures, of which naming is an important part, as human constructions."

More importantly, however, the author has used the lack of rigid theoretical guidelines in socio-onomastics to construct a somewhat liberal and holistic socio-onomastic approach which is based on the author's argument that socio-onomastics research should not only be concerned with establishing how names derive meaning from their surrounding social context, but that it should also consider the entire range of complex and oftentimes reflexive relationships that exist between names and various social forces and attempt to explain the significance of these associations. In the context of this thesis, such an outlook can be used to account not only for the onomastic characteristics of cattle brands themselves (that is, the names of cattle brands) but also for the striking onomastic interplay that takes place between the system of cattle brands as a whole (names and symbols) and other types of names that exist within the surrounding social context (see Ch. 4 §4.2). These onomastic connections are not arbitrary but are constructed by cattle brand users based on underlying social and cultural motivations. It is contended here that socio-onomastics should give equal consideration to the contextual meanings of names and other social constructs whose meanings are brought to bear on names through social naming processes.

2.5 Summary

One of the leading arguments put forward in this thesis is that the system of American cattle brands is essentially a linguistic one with a prominent onomastic component. This assumption is based on the fact that cattle brands are compound entities comprising symbols (images) as well as corresponding spoken and written forms which function as proper names. It is contended that although cattle brand names do not possess lexical or linguistic meaning, they acquire various dimensions of meaning on the basis of their associations with different elements in their socio-cultural surrounds. In addition, cattle brands display a range of associations with other types of names. These connections are socially-constructed and have underlying social meanings. The overall goal of this thesis is to ascertain and explain the social and cultural significance of such meaning and to determine the extent to which names and naming strategies play a role in its establishment.

Since this thesis is primarily concerned with exploring the onomastic dimensions of American cattle brands and the ways in which cattle brands take on various aspects of contextual meaning

based on their onomastic features, it is presented as a study in socio-onomastics. The domain of socio-onomastics is broadly defined as the study of names within social context, with an emphasis on gaining an understanding as to how names acquire and express various aspects of extra-linguistic meaning in relation to their socio-cultural surroundings. It has been noted, however, that theoretical approaches in the field of socio-onomastics are not yet well-defined.

To address this issue in relation to the present study, the author has drawn on theoretical perspectives from several disciplines, including onomastics, socio-linguistics, heritage and identity studies, and social semiotics, all of which share a strong social orientation. The multi-disciplinary approach taken in this study is warranted by the fact that cattle brands (both names and symbols) display close associations with diverse elements their social, cultural and even physical worlds. It is contended here that since these connections impinge upon the other fields mentioned above, it makes sense to draw upon applicable theories within these disciplines to inform and enrich the current work.

The incorporation of social theories from other disciplines has provided a platform for the author to craft a socio-onomastic approach which not only facilitates the study of how names are used and acquire meaning in context, but which also provides a basis for exploring the relationships that exist between names and various elements that exist within complex social structures. These relationships reflect underlying social beliefs and values which are ultimately expressed through purposeful naming strategies and in names themselves. It is the author's contention that this approach accounts for the onomastic features of cattle brands as well as the ways in which other onomastic components in the surrounding social context influence the meanings and social impact of the system of cattle brands as a whole.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The main objective of the research presented in this thesis is to describe and explain the socio-onomastic features and functions of American cattle brands against the backdrop of their socio-cultural surrounds. In this thesis, cattle brands are considered to be composite linguistic entities that possess a strong onomastic component (see Ch. 1 §1.5). One of the primary arguments set forth in this thesis is that although cattle brand names and symbols lack true linguistic meaning or semantic content, they derive various dimensions of contextual meaning from their surrounding social and cultural environment (see Ch. 1 §1.3; §1.5). It is further contended that these meanings have underlying social motivations insofar as they are not inherent but are purposefully assigned by individuals and groups of people who are intimately familiar with cattle brands (see Ch. 2 §2.3.2; §2.4). These core assumptions were originally based on the author's personal observations which were made from her social position as a member of a small rural community in Central Montana where cattle brands are used extensively during the course of everyday life. In terms of methodology, it was crucial to establish a framework that would facilitate the collection of relevant data which could then be used to determine whether the author's intuitions about the socio-cultural meanings and significance of cattle brands were correct or not.

This chapter sets out the methodological approach that was crafted by the author with a view to providing realistic and accurate explanations of these fundamental issues which, to the best of the author's knowledge, have hitherto not been addressed in scholarly research. In §3.2, the author explains the overall suitability of qualitative (ethnographic) methods to the type of research that has been undertaken in the current study (§3.2.2), with reference to the fundamental principles of ethnographic methodology and how these concepts have been successfully applied in studies of other types of names (§3.2.1). The specific methods and procedures used by the author for data collection and analysis are set out in §3.3. An evaluation of the methodology on the basis of the author's perceptions of its strengths and weaknesses appears in §3.4. A summary of the chapter is given in §3.5.

3.2 The issue of context: principles of qualitative research

With its focus on investigating the contextual meanings of cattle brands, the current study inherently favoured the adoption of a qualitative methodological approach. In general, qualitative

research emphasises the importance of accounting for social context in order to understand behaviours, actions and events in the real world. This view is based on the assumption that people engage in everyday events using cultural knowledge and cues from their social context (Neuman 1997: 331, 347). It is also recognised that the same elements can have different meanings in diverse cultures and/or social groups. Thus for example, whilst cattle brands may carry a great deal of cultural meaning for cattle ranchers in the State of Montana this may not be the case in other cattle producing regions such as Argentina, Australia and South Africa.

The core approach to data collection and analysis in qualitative research is participant-observation, also referred to as 'field research' or 'ethnography' (in this thesis the latter term is used). This technique requires the researcher to become immersed in the socio-cultural setting chosen for study in order to gain first-hand, or 'common sense', knowledge of various dynamics and nuances within the given setting and to begin to see and experience reality from an insider's perspective. Typically, the researcher develops a social role(s) for him/herself within the group or community concerned, by forming personal relationships with individual group members and participating in various community activities over a prolonged period of time (Marshall and Rossman 1989; Duranti 1997; Johnstone 2000). It is from this insider's or 'emic' point of view that the researcher sets out to isolate, describe and interpret the data (Geertz 1983: 56, 152, Marshall and Rossman 1989: 11; Duranti 1997: 85; Neuman 1997: 327, 346, Johnstone 2000).

Qualitative research techniques are empirical; that is, based on systematic observations, documentation and/or recording of various tangible aspects of the real world as well as the examination of oral literature, written materials and/or visual images, from which the researcher can then describe and interpret the social and/or cultural phenomenon/a in question (Neuman 1997: 328). Personal interviews, also referred to as 'ethnographic' or 'in-depth' interviews (Marshall & Rossman 1989), are used extensively by ethnographers as a data collection method. Interviews involve interaction and collaboration between the researcher and participants; interviewees must be willing to share information with the interviewer and the researcher must therefore be capable of building rapport with his/her informants. It is for this reason that the ethnographer should first establish relationships with members of the community in which the research is being carried out, in order to develop a measure of trust and mutual understanding.

Data analysis in qualitative research centres on interpretation and explanation, in terms of which the researcher assigns meaning to the data and then explains the findings. Geertz (1983: 18) states that

“a good interpretation of anything...takes us into the heart of that of which it is the interpretation.” Interpretation therefore involves bringing insight and meaning to the things that constitute the data, based on the point of view of the people being studied; that is, how they perceive the world and what the particular phenomenon/a in question means to them within this context (Geertz 1983; Marshall & Rossman 1989; Johnstone 2000). Neuman (1997: 35) posits three ‘levels’ or ‘steps’ in interpretation, which are applied in the present study: “first-order” interpretation, which involves reviewing the data and discovering what it means from the point of view of the people being studied; “second-order” interpretation, in which the researcher tries to determine how this meaning is derived from the socio-cultural context in which the data is embedded; and “third-order” interpretation, in terms of which the researcher links the findings of the second-order interpretation to general theory.

It has been argued that the emic or insider perspective favours the point of view of the members of the group or community being studied and thus requires the researcher to adequately identify or empathise with the group in order to provide an insider’s interpretation and explanation of the data. For this reason, some scholars contend that a ‘good’ ethnography calls for a certain degree of objectivity, in which other perspectives including the researcher’s own perceptions and intuitions about the phenomenon/a under investigation are also reflected (Geertz 1983: 58; Duranti 1997: 85). In this regard, Duranti (1997: 87) states that such an approach “combine[s] a sense of awe at what the ethnographer might see or notice for the first time with a genuine attempt at finding out how such practices are made “ordinary” for the participants, or conversely, how something that is taken for granted by the ethnographer appears exceptional or incomprehensible to the people being studied.” This method also facilitates relationship-building between the researcher and the participants, which makes the research process interactive and collaborative (Marshall and Rossman 1989: 11, 79; Neuman 1997: 327).

3.2.1 Ethnographic research in onomastics

Over the past few decades a great deal of ethnographic research has been carried out in the field of onomastics, especially with respect to personal names (including nicknames and pseudonyms) and place names. Research into the names and naming practices of diverse cultural groups indicates that there are different cultural interpretations regarding the roles and communicative function of names, how names acquire and convey meaning, and what the nature of such meaning might be. These differing perspectives are based on the traditional philosophies of thought, values, beliefs and

customs that are inherent and unique to any given culture. Basso (1996: 40) maintains that names exist and acquire their “appropriateness” within a “universe of meanings that comprise cultural context”, and that in order to arrive at an understanding of how names are perceived and used, various aspects of this context need to be explored and made explicit.

In his study of Apache place names, Basso (1996) immersed himself in the Western Apache culture, language and landscape in order to understand Apache approaches to place naming and the meaning of place itself. Basso’s approach to data collection entailed listening carefully to the oral narratives told by Apache elders about the origins of place names. Through this method, which highlighted the value of local (Apache) knowledge and philosophies of thought, Basso (1996) was able to offer a unique Apache interpretation of place naming and the meanings of place names without recourse to Western theories of knowledge. His exclusive focus on the Apache ‘voice’ in his interpretative analysis yielded fascinating insights about the ways in which cultural beliefs and values become attached to place names and how place names thus become important elements of the cultural make-up of certain groups of people. Although critics may argue that Basso’s (1996) deliberate exclusion of outside (non-Apache) perspectives renders the data and its interpretation highly subjective, it is undeniable that his approach provides the emic perspective that is required of ethnography.

The author’s research into the socio-cultural importance of Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Indian) personal names and naming practices (Lombard 2008, 2011) was characterised by an ethnographic methodology similar to Basso’s (1996) approach. In typical ethnographic custom, the author took on the role of participant-observer during several visits to the Kainai (Blood) Indian Reserve in Alberta, Canada, where she spent several extended periods of immersion. During these visits she built up relationships with a number of community members who collaborated closely with her over the course of the project. Data for the study was collected primarily through personal interviews with Niitsitapi elders and scholars and to a lesser extent from historical literature. In a manner similar to Basso (1996), the author based her interpretations of the meanings of Niitsitapi personal names on local theories of knowledge. This approach proved to be extremely successful insofar as it led to rich cultural insights into the meaning associations and extra-linguistic functions of personal names that are spoken and written in the Blackfoot language.

Ethnographic methods guided the research conducted by Hendry (2006) on the names of wine brands in the Rioja region of Northern Spain. Hendry’s (2006) techniques consisted primarily of

participation and observation combined with field interviewing and the administration of written questionnaires, over an extended period of immersion in the case study setting. The data that were collected by these methods showed how the connections between wine brands, people and places are strategically employed to define and promote distinctive cultural identities in the Rioja wine-producing area (Hendry 2006: 23). Research carried out by Pavia and Costa (1993) on alpha-numeric brand names rests on a combination of ethnographic and statistical (quantitative) methods which included field interviews and surveys. These methods were utilised as a means of investigating “integrated cultural beliefs about alpha-numeric brand names” (Pavia and Costa 1993: 88). Work undertaken by Holt (2004) concerning iconic product brands in the United States acknowledges the incorporation of ethnographic methods as a means of addressing the cultural significance of brands. Specifically, Holt used field interviews to conduct a study of ESPN consumers in order to describe the “constituencies of an iconic brand” (Holt 2004: 12, 240).

Since ethnography emphasises the importance of using local knowledge to establish an insider’s view of the phenomenon being investigated in any particular socio-cultural context, its methods, as indicated by the studies mentioned above, appear to be quite fruitful in research that is concerned with exploring the social and cultural aspects of onomastic meaning. These studies by no means comprise an exhaustive summary of the substantial amount of ethnographic research that has been carried out in onomastics. The author has referenced them here as a means of illustrating the versatility of qualitative methods in studies of different types of names, including product brand names, in which the focus is on establishing and explaining the meaning associations and socio-cultural significance of names within specific social and cultural contexts (see Ch. 2 §2.3.2, §2.3.3, §2.3.4). On this basis, there was little doubt in the author’s mind that an ethnographic approach in her research of cattle brands would be suitable and effective, given the onomastic dimensions of cattle brands and considering her personal experience with the success of ethnographic methods in her prior onomastic research (Lombard 2008, 2011).

3.2.2 An ethnographic approach in the study of cattle brands

As noted above, the current study was from the outset oriented towards an ethnographic methodological framework on the basis of its concern with investigating the meanings and functions of cattle brands, as perceived by the users of cattle brands within the socio-cultural context of cattle ranching itself (see Ch. 1 §1.3; Ch. 2 §2.4). The author must draw attention to the point that although she was a member of the wider social community in which the research was

conducted (see §3.3.1), she is not a cattle rancher, and was thus to some extent an ‘outsider’ in relation to this demographic sub-group. The author’s objective of obtaining an ‘insider’s’ perspective of her subject matter was therefore just as vital as if she had been a total outsider with no local ties.

The methodology adopted in this research closely follows Geertz’s (1983) notion of “interpretative explanation”, in terms of which the researcher focuses on establishing “what institutions, actions, images, utterances, events, customs...mean to those whose institutions, actions, customs, and so on they are” (Geertz 1983: 22). The author’s data comprises oral and written narratives surrounding cattle brands, as well as examples of cattle brand names and cattle brand symbols. When considered as a whole, these various elements form an integrated text which has been analysed against the backdrop of the socio-cultural setting in which the textual components have been identified. Towards this end, a strong emphasis has been placed on utilising local knowledge as the basis for interpreting and explaining the data, although other sources, including archival and historical material, as well as public documents and opinions, have been consulted to ensure objectivity. The research is presented as a case study which examines the meanings and functions of cattle brands within a well-defined and somewhat narrow socio-cultural context whilst illuminating larger theoretical issues in the fields of linguistics, onomastics, cultural heritage and social semiotics (see Ch. 2 §2.3).

It is important to mention, however, that although existing academic literature does provide solid general guidelines for conducting ethnographic research, it cannot possibly provide specific directions to the individual researcher, since each setting chosen for study has its own distinctive aspects and nuances, and each researcher is gifted and skilled in different ways from others (Marshall & Rossman 1989: 45; Johnstone 2000: 16; Lombard 2008: 39). Johnstone (2000: 16) notes that “no a priori description of field or analytical techniques will ever predict exactly what the [research] process will be like...however, sociolinguists know what kinds of information they are after, and if they are successful they will collect that information (and perhaps other rich data as well).” This observation is particularly applicable to the current research, which is the first of its kind to deal with the subject of cattle brands from a primarily onomastic perspective, using an ethnographic approach (see Ch. 1 §1.3). It is thus crucial to emphasise the fact that the author’s refining of the methodology has been a largely intuitive process which has evolved along with the work’s progression as opposed to carrying out the research according to predetermined procedures

and techniques, meaning that this study has involved a combination of both careful planning as well as a measure of improvisation.

3.3 Methods and procedures in the present study

3.3.1 Location and duration of the research

The research was conducted within the boundaries of Fergus County, Central Montana, which was the selected locale for the case study (see Ch. 1 Figure 2). It was mentioned in Ch. 1 §1.2 that the Central Montana region is prime cattle ranching country where many ranches have deep historical roots dating back several generations to the early settlement days of the American West. Since the tradition of cattle branding is still strong in this area, the district presents an almost perfect setting in which to carry out any type of research on American cattle brands. Furthermore, and most advantageously, the author resided in the city of Lewistown in Fergus County for seven years, and thus became intimately familiar with the culture and social structure of the local community. Her status as a community member greatly facilitated her ability to access the required data for the present research. The research project as a whole was carried out over a period of three years from September, 2011 until October, 2014.

3.3.2 Observation and participation

As a member of the larger social community within which this research project has been carried out, the author was able to gain valuable first-hand experience of the practical applications of cattle brands as well as ideas about their social and cultural significance. The author's initial intuitions about the socio-cultural importance of cattle brands originated as a result of casual observations that she made whilst driving through the countryside, talking with local ranchers and taking part in cattle branding events at different ranches in Central Montana over a period of approximately four years prior to commencing this study. Her observation and participation in the social life of her local community continued, of course, throughout the period during which she conducted the research, for a total of seven years.

Taking part in various cattle branding events was one of the most valuable aspects of the author's immersion in her social surroundings. Aside from the satisfaction of gaining hands-on experience of the practical aspects of cattle branding, including the different methods that are used, it has also been most gratifying for the author to be able to take part in the social and cultural tradition of

cattle branding and to thus experience and play a role in the on-going process of heritage-building in the local community. Under the watchful eyes of seasoned experts, she has learned the correct way to apply a cattle brand with both hot and electric branding irons - how to get the brand ‘just right’ so that it will ‘take’ to the hide and not blotch – and how to vaccinate and dehorn calves. Furthermore, cattle branding events have naturally provided the author with opportunities to make contact with local ranchers, take photographs, and experience the highly social aspect of this tradition in Central Montana. A typical cattle branding involves hard, dirty work along with fun, fellowship and a hearty meal for everyone!



Figure 3: The author (left) with rancher Steve Clark (right) branding a calf using an electric branding iron and a branding table. Note the *Quarter Circle Lazy T* brand symbol displayed on a post in the background at top right.

A different aspect of the author’s participation and observation activities involved her boarding her horse on a working cattle ranch. Whilst riding on the ranch the author began to recognise the ranch’s brand on the cattle and became curious as to whether or not the brand held any particular meaning for the owners. After a casual conversation with one of the ranch owners, Doug Miller, the author learned that the family has owned the *A E Bar* brand for many years and was told that the family looks forward to branding their calves each spring after all the hard work of caring for the cows and calves through the harsh, cold winter months in this part of the country. Most importantly, the conversation presented the author with the opportunity to ask Miller if he would be

willing to participate in a personal interview, to which request he readily agreed. This interview subsequently took place in September, 2012 (D. Miller 2012).

A further dimension of the author's active engagement with the subject matter of her study is reflected in her purchase of a livestock brand which she has registered for use on both cattle and horses. In April, 2012, the author made the three-hour drive to the Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL) headquarters in Helena, Montana to apply for a livestock brand. Initially, the author wanted to obtain a brand with some combination of her initials, 'C', 'G' and 'L'. She was advised, however that the letter 'G' was no longer permitted in brands, so that left different combinations of 'C' and 'L' as possibilities. This also proved to be problematic, since two-letter brands are very hard to obtain nowadays. After consulting the impressive volumes of brand books that show which brands are available for purchase, the author narrowed down several options and she was ultimately able to obtain the *Reverse C Bar Heart* brand for right rib position on cattle and right shoulder position on horses, upon payment of the \$100.00 registration fee (see Figure 4). This process provided the author with first-hand experience of the legalities attached to livestock brands and helped her to gain a better grasp on the intricacies involved in obtaining a livestock brand in Montana. It also served to reinforce her perception of how seriously these brands are taken by individuals as well as by State authorities in Montana.

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK - BRANDS ENFORCEMENT DIVISION
OFFICIAL BRAND CERTIFICATE

CERT # N2-054821-A
CERT. DATE: 4/17/2012

THIS IS TO CERTIFY, That
CAROL GAYE LOMBARD
608 W WATER ST
LEWISTOWN, MT 59457

Has/Have paid the fee required by law for recording brands and/or marks and has/has adopted and claimed the following brand and/or marks, which I have this day recorded, to wit:

SPECIES	LOCATION
CATTLE	RIGHT RIB
HORSES	RIGHT SHOULDER

REG. TATTOO:
IDENTIFYING MARKS:
COUNTIES WHERE LIVESTOCK WILL RANGE: FERGUS

Carol Lombard
BRAND RECORDER

THIS BRAND MUST BE RERECORDED DURING THE YEAR 2021
FOR TRANSFER OF BRAND USE ASSIGNMENT FORM ON THE
REVERSE SIDE.
MAIL TO: DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK, PO BOX 202001
HELENA, MT 59620-2001

INFORMATION TO BRANDOWNERS
DO NOT USE A SMALL BRANDING IRON FOR CATTLE. LETTERS, FIGURES OR CHARACTERS SHOULD BE 4 INCHES IN LENGTH WITH 1/4 INCH FACE. IRON SHOULD BE HEATED TO ROSE RED BEFORE APPLYING. THEN SHOULD BE BURNED RED SO THAT SCAR WILL PEEL.
§1-3-211 MCA Inspection of livestock before change of ownership or removal from county - transportation permits
APR 32.18.101 HOT IRON BRANDS REQUIRED
IN CASE OF CHANGE OF ADDRESS, PLEASE go to www.dvl.mt.gov

OFFICE USE ONLY
BE-1 Brand No. 259336 Brand Owner Number: 426253

Figure 4: The author's livestock brand registration certificate.

The author's role of participant-observer within her local community provided her with a great deal of information pertaining to the general features and practical functions of cattle brands as they are used in Central Montana. On the basis of this background knowledge, the author was able to establish what kind of data she wanted to obtain in order to be able to delve deeper into the cultural aspects of cattle brands and thus ascertain the accuracy of her initial perceptions concerning their apparent cultural significance. Her participation in day-to-day activities with her home community also enabled her to formulate a strategy for data collection which she anticipated would be acceptable to potential participants in the study and which would be likely to yield authentic results.

3.3.3 Data collection methods

As indicated in §3.3.2, the author gathered various types of data which as a collective whole form a general text about cattle brands that have ties to the State of Montana and the Central Montana region in particular (although not exclusively). This data includes a randomly-selected representative sample of Montana cattle brands that are illustrated by their symbols and names in the master table (Table 3 Appendix 1; see also Ch. 1 Table 1; Ch. 4 Table 2). The data additionally comprises oral and written narratives which in many cases pertain to particular cattle brands contained in the author's sample. These cross-references are made explicit in the discussion in Chapter 4. Narratives have yielded a great deal of general information pertaining to cattle brands and the tradition of branding which has been used as a basis for explaining the contextual setting in which the current research has taken place (see Ch. 1. §1.6). The author's data collection methods are set out below.

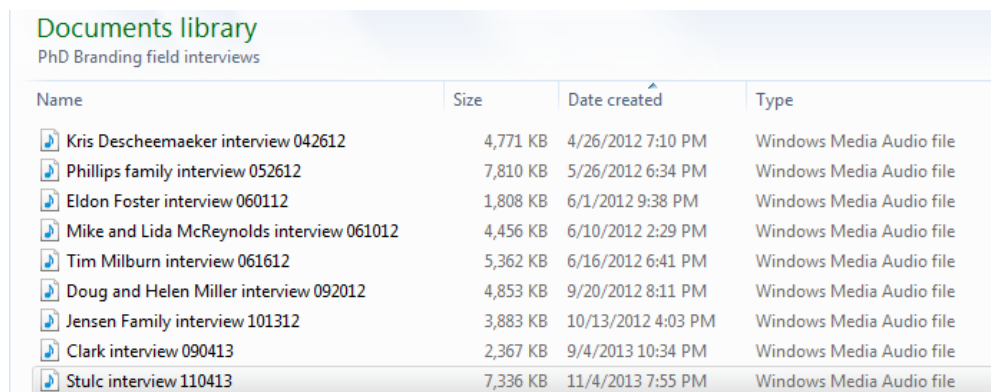
3.3.3.1 Personal interviews

Personal interviews constituted one of the primary means of data collection for this study. Fifteen of the fifty cattle brands contained in the sample data set were discussed and thus gathered from personal interviews. The interviews yielded a wealth of first-hand information from cattle brand users and provided the author with valuable clues as to the importance of cattle brands within families as well as in the wider social community. Interviews were initially conducted with ranchers in the Lewistown area with whom the author is personally acquainted and who had demonstrated an interest in contributing to the project. As indicated in 3.3.2, for example, the author's connection with the Miller family through horse boarding on their cattle ranch facilitated the arranging of an interview with two of the family members. Several of these 'early' participants

helped expand the participant base by referring the author to other people to obtain information. The Phillips family, for instance, referred the author to Eldon Foster, and the McReynolds' suggested that the author interview Tim Milburn (see Figure 5 below for details of interviews). This 'snowball effect' continued throughout the duration of the research.

All interviews were scheduled by prior appointment, and in all but one instance the author drove to people's ranches so that conversations could take place in familiar environments for participants, where they would have easy access to personal materials such as books, photographs and so on. One exception was the interview with Tim Milburn on 16 June, 2012, which was conducted at the public library in Lewistown. During this interview Milburn consulted some historical literature held in the library's reference section and discussed the material with the author.

An Olympus WS-100 digital voice recorder (DVR) was used to record each session. Each digital recording was downloaded onto the author's personal computer and copied onto a flash-drive for back-up storage. The screen-shot appearing in Figure 5 below is taken from the author's computer and shows the digital audio files of the interviews listed in chronological order. Figure 6 indicates the date, place, number of participants, timespan, and digital size of each recorded interview.



Name	Size	Date created	Type
Kris Descheemaeker interview 042612	4,771 KB	4/26/2012 7:10 PM	Windows Media Audio file
Phillips family interview 052612	7,810 KB	5/26/2012 6:34 PM	Windows Media Audio file
Eldon Foster interview 060112	1,808 KB	6/1/2012 9:38 PM	Windows Media Audio file
Mike and Lida McReynolds interview 061012	4,456 KB	6/10/2012 2:29 PM	Windows Media Audio file
Tim Milburn interview 061612	5,362 KB	6/16/2012 6:41 PM	Windows Media Audio file
Doug and Helen Miller interview 092012	4,853 KB	9/20/2012 8:11 PM	Windows Media Audio file
Jensen Family interview 101312	3,883 KB	10/13/2012 4:03 PM	Windows Media Audio file
Clark interview 090413	2,367 KB	9/4/2013 10:34 PM	Windows Media Audio file
Stulc interview 110413	7,336 KB	11/4/2013 7:55 PM	Windows Media Audio file

Figure 5: Screenshot of digital audio files of field interviews conducted by the author.

Interview name (by last name)	Date of interview	Place	Number of participants	Length of interview minutes and seconds	Digital File Size and
Descheemaeker	26/4/2012	Lewistown	1	39:09	4.65MB
Phillips	26/5/2012	Lewistown	4	64:07	7.62MB
Foster	1/6/2012	Hilger	1	14:49	1.76MB
McReynolds	10/6/2012	Hilger	2	36:34	4.35MB
Milburn	16/6/2012	Lewistown	1	44:00	5.23MB

Miller	6/9/2012	Lewistown	2	39:49	4.73MB
Jensen	10/10/2012	Lewistown	4	31:51	3.79MB
Clark	2/9/2013	Beaver Creek	2	19:24	2.31MB
Stulc	4/11/2013	Lewistown	1	60:13	7.16MB
Total			18	309.27	36.95MB

Figure 6: Table showing date, place, number of participants, length and digital size of personal interviews, in chronological order.

The interviews were informal and partially-structured around sets of general guiding questions that were prepared beforehand. Typically, interviews commenced with the author thanking the participant/s for being willing to take part in the interview, explaining the overall purpose of the study, and requesting their permission to record the interview and to use any information provided by participants in the written thesis. The author typically opened each discussion by asking participants to talk about their families' histories and about the brands that they have used, including details such as how long the brands have been in their families, how the brands were obtained, and what the reason/s may have been for choosing a certain brand. In many instances, people would spontaneously share the stories about their brands when talking about their family histories. The author made hand-written notes in a notebook during interviews in order to highlight certain issues for later analysis or to use as pointers for further questioning. Depending on how much and what type of information was forthcoming, the author would try to encourage participants to share more detailed information by prompting them with additional questions, such as the following:

- Why is branding important to you?
- What changes in branding methods have you observed and/or adopted?
- Could you explain more about the social aspects of branding?
- Do you attach any kind of value to your brand?
- Why is your brand important to your family?
- Are there any interesting stories associated with your brand/s?
- Do you use your brand in any other capacity/place apart from applying it to cattle?

These types of questions elicited much valuable data and frequently led to discussions around broader matters such as the social and cultural significance of the tradition of branding, the issue of government regulation regarding livestock identification and tracking (see Ch. 1 §1.2), the advantages and disadvantages of different branding techniques, and even explanations about the different types of ropes that are used in the traditional ‘rope and drag’ method of branding.

Without exception, participants in the interviews enjoyed sharing stories about their family histories, brands and branding experiences. People seemed to quickly forget about the DVR and on many occasions interviewees brought out books, magazines and photographs which they would discuss with the author. It also frequently happened, especially when two or more people were present, that lively discussions would ensue about family brands and even brands used by neighbours and friends. For instance, in an interview conducted on 20 September, 2012, Doug Miller and his mother, Helen, spent at least an hour perusing through the local brand book with the author, pointing out various brands held by area ranchers and sharing the history around some of those brands. When the author interviewed Paul and Jennifer Jensen on 13 October, 2012, their two children sat listening quite intently and showed so much interest that eventually the author asked them to share their thoughts and feelings about brands and branding in their family. This spontaneous development yielded some extremely valuable input that expressed a younger ranching generation’s perspective on the subject of brands and branding. In many cases, conversations would continue between the author and participants long after the DVR had been turned off. Following each interview, the author wrote and mailed cards to the interviewees to thank them for their participation. Notably, a number of people verbally expressed their gratitude to the author for reminding them about how important brands and the tradition of branding are to their families and to the wider community.

3.3.3.2 Historical and local literature

In addition to personal interviews, historical literature and a variety of local (Montana-based) publications including county brand books, magazines and newspaper articles have also served as primary sources of data for this research. The Lewistown Public Library houses a substantial collection of historical books and other reference material that have been consulted and which have been found extremely useful in researching cattle brands that have ties to the Central Montana region. The monologues by Paul (1973), Randolph (1981) and Thiessen (1986), for instance, are part of the library’s collection and have been particularly helpful in this regard, since they contain

references to many cattle brands dating back to the late 1800s and show how these brands are connected to ranches as well as individuals and groups of people (see Ch. 2 §2.2; Ch. 4 §4.2). The brand index book for Fergus County (MDOL 2003) contains a list of livestock brands alongside the names of their owners and provides excellent illustrations of brand symbols. This book has enabled the author to look up cattle brands that are owned by members of the local ranching community and thus verify the information that has been shared in oral interviews. The MDOL brand books have now become available in digital format through the MDOL website and the digital version has very recently been developed into a mobile application which the author has installed on her Smartphone (see Figure 7).

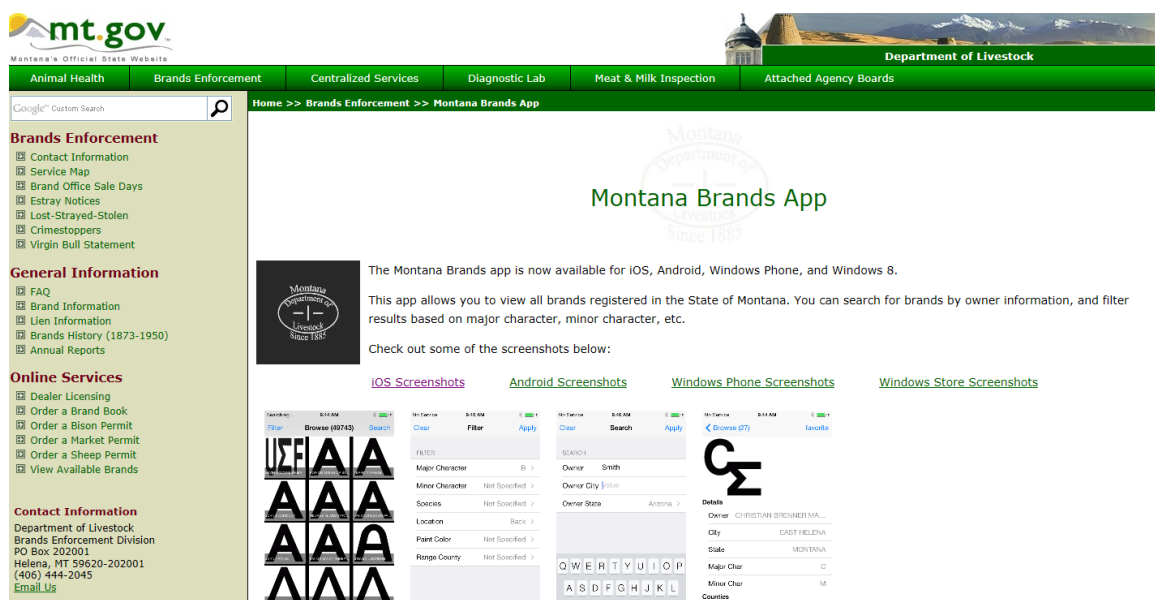


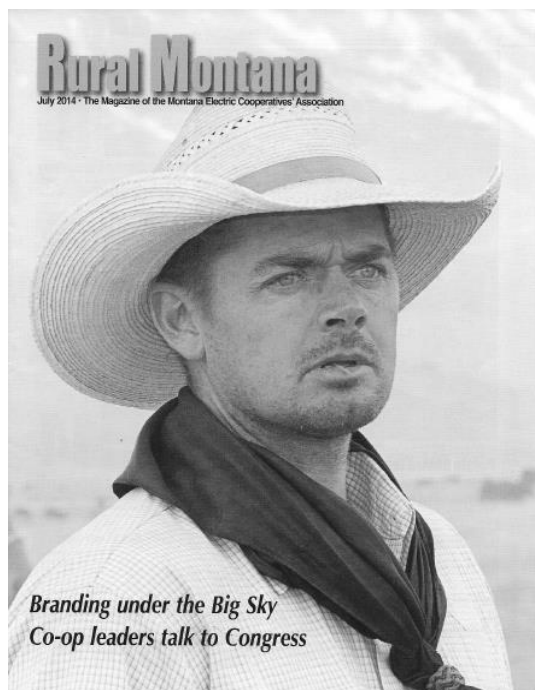
Figure 7: Screenshot of the MDOL’s website link to its “Brands App” (MDOL 2015).

The Montana Historical Association’s periodical, *Montana. The Magazine of Western History* contains a wide range of articles pertaining to the history of the State of Montana. Of particular pertinence to this study is the article written by Niedringhaus (2010) which gives a concise account of the history of the N Bar N Ranch and its *N Bar N* cattle brand (see Ch. 4 §4.2.1.1). Van Dersal and Connor’s (1900) publication, *Stockgrowers' directory of marks and brands for the State of Montana 1872 to 1900*, contains an exhaustive index of livestock brands that were officially registered in the State of Montana during the time-frame indicated by the book’s title. This publication has proven to be of exceptional value to the author insofar as it has provided a means of cross-referencing and verifying information derived from other sources about certain cattle brands.

Local newspapers as well as agricultural magazines have also constituted good data sources. During branding season, for example, the *Lewistown News-Argus* newspaper usually publishes articles, guest editorials and photographs that draw attention to the tradition of branding in Central Montana. Agricultural periodicals such as *Range Magazine*, *Western Ag Reporter*, *Rural Montana* and *Working Ranch Magazine* sometimes contain articles about brands and branding. Clippings from newspapers and magazines were placed in individual sheet protectors and filed chronologically in a dedicated binder.



Figure 8: *Range Magazine* article (Fall 2014) containing reference to cattle brands, with the author's hand-written note at top.



IN FEATURE

More Than a Chore

Traditional branding brings friends, family and neighbors together

Story and photos by Ryan G. Hall

Mark Salmond, a fifth-generation rancher and Sun River Electric Cooperative member, has fond memories of the annual spring-time branding when he was a child on the family ranch in the shadows of Big Mountain, outside of Choteau.

"As soon as we were old enough to come here, we were out here — probably before that even," he said with a grin that brightened the stubble cut by his black cowboy hat.

With the exception of a few modern conveniences, he does things much the same way today. In the timing hall when he was younger. They still bring the branding corral to the herd instead of the other way around, family, friends and neighbors still rope each calf, and the irons are still heated by fire — though the family has made the switch from wood fires to propane.

"I guess we prefer it," Salmond said of hogging tables, chutes and electric branding irons for the more efficient and the most practical method for us. ... As long as we can get the help, I don't think we'll change."

He said the family still use and breeds a little later than most, which means his calves and cows are already in the pastures before they are branded. Because of that, the family chooses to bring a mobile branding corral to the area the cattle are in, rather than try to drive them all back to the ranch — on this mid-May day, that's a difference of more than three miles.

The crew, about 15 or so

fell in this particular day, pens the cows and calves — about 400 in this batch, which is one of three or four batches the family will brand this spring — into a circular corral earlier in the day. On one side of the arena is an opening about 20 feet wide. A crew member stands on each side of the opening with a pole and a flag to control the unweaned calves stay in the corral, and the branded cows stay out. Almost constantly, cowboys and cowgirls ride their horses into the corral, rope the nearest calf — often on the first throw — and bring it out.

Just a few feet outside the corral waits a line of five crew members, each ready with a Nerd Fork — a device that glid (OVER THE HILL) and around its neck to safely hold it in place and restrict its head movement. When the cowboy rides by, the crew member slips the Nerd Fork over the head of the calf, and the horse continues forward until the rope anchoring the fork is pulled tight. This is

one of the few modern devices at a Salmond family branding. But Salmond said it's one that was necessary because he could no longer get local high school kids to wrench the calves to the ground and hold them while they were given vaccines and branded.

"We used to always have high school kids to wrench 'em," he said, before joking that there are some advantages to the Nerd Forks — they don't have to be fed, "and they don't talk back, either."

Once a calf is restrained, several crew members rush over to quickly complete their tasks. Any bull calf is restrained, and all calves

RURAL MONTANA

The crew, from cowboys and cowgirls to branders and people administering vaccines, go to work in the shadows of Big Mountain on the Salmond family ranch near Choteau.

receive the "Double O" brand and a round of vaccinations. Each calf also is earmarked — a specific way of trimming a small piece off the ear for further identification. Salmond said the earmark was an easy way to identify one ranch's herd from someone else's, even if the brand was blocked. Nowadays, Salmond uses it as a counting method — the small piece of ear is placed into a box marked for heifers or steers. At the end of the day, Salmond will count to see how many calves of each sex were born, and get a more precise count of the total calves born that year.

"I don't know 'til today how many calves I've got — but I have a pretty good idea," he said.

Salmond said his family's herd, which is now almost exclusively black angus, has been getting the "Double O" brand on their left side since about the 1930s, when his grandfather bought some calves and the brand came with them. The family also has the "Heart M", which has been used since about 1900, and Salmond's cousins have the family's original cattle brand of "77" — which was established when the Salmonds' ancestors, the Collins' family, homesteaded the ranch in 1878.

No matter what brand a calf is given, the key is to do it right, Salmond said. If the brander doesn't use enough pressure, he will just burn hair and not properly mark the calf, while too much pressure results in a blotchy brand and could seriously injure the calf.

"When the color of the 'O' is a buckskin color, that's what you're shooting for," Salmond said. "It usually doesn't take much, it's just kinda a stamp."

Chas Salmond, Mark's nephew and one of two branders on this day, said the irons also have to be the right temperature — too cool and you won't get a good brand, too hot and the brand blotches.

"You want a nice mark," he said.

For more photos from the Salmonds' branding, see the inside back cover.

Bruce Kessler throws a rope at a calf's back legs prior to taking it to be branded.

JULY 2014

Figure 9: Article about cattle branding appearing in *Rural Montana*, July 2014.

3.3.3.3 Informal personal communication

In addition to gathering data through personal interviews, the author has had several unexpected and spontaneous opportunities to collect information through informal conversations with people in various social settings. The author's different places of employment have proven to be particularly fruitful environments for obtaining data. For example, on July 26, 2012, the author was asked to manage her employer's exhibition booth at the annual County Fair for several hours a day over three days. Noticing that the neighbouring exhibitor was a cattle broker, the author introduced herself and explained the nature of her research to the young lady (K. Johnson) who was attending to the booth. Quite spontaneously, Johnson proceeded to tell the author about how she and her fiancé came to own their two cattle brands, the *Diamond H Diamond* and the *Bar Box H* brands (see Ch. 4 §4.2.1.1, example (2)).

During the period June 2013 through September 2014, the author worked at an accounting firm in Lewistown. Whilst assisting a client (M. Pester) on August 27, 2013, the author noticed that the name of the ranch that appeared on some business documents belonging to Pester appeared as though it might have been based on a cattle brand. The author asked Pester if the ranch name was derived from a brand. Pester explained that the name did not come from a brand, but was a combination of her and her husband's first names' initials. She told the author that they had attempted to purchase a brand with those particular letters but had been unsuccessful. Pester then described the history surrounding the brand that they do currently own. On June 10, 2014, the author noticed a client (C. Yaeger) wearing a baseball cap with a cattle brand symbol in the shape of a house. The author asked Yaeger if the brand belonged to him. He replied that it was indeed his brand and explained the history surrounding the *House* brand to the author (see Table 2 #23). A similar encounter with another customer occurred on February 25, 2014, and resulted in the following note being written to the author:

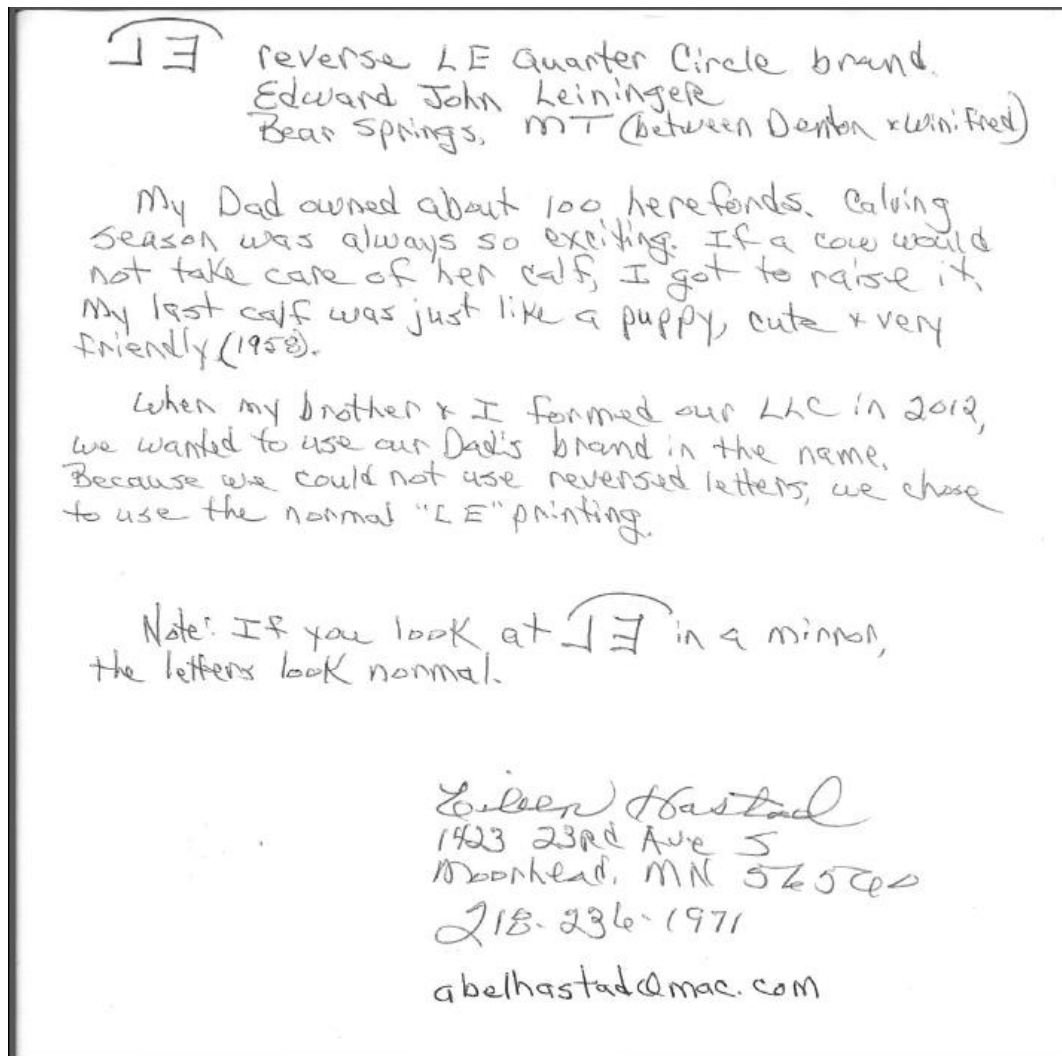


Figure 10: Handwritten note to author regarding the *Quarter Circle Reverse L E* cattle brand (see Table 2 #32).

Outside of the workplace, one of the author's most valued contacts is her close personal friend, Audrey Clark, who together with her husband, Steve, owns three cattle ranches south of Lewistown. The author has had many in-depth conversations with the Clarks about brands, branding and many other aspects of ranching life. Such encounters have been too numerous to record, but the author has noted the contents of one particular telephone conversation between her and Clark regarding the name of a bar in the town of Judith Gap, Montana. The following is the literal transcription of the relevant part of the conversation with Clark on June 23, 2014:

Clark: Guess where the name Bar 100 comes from?

Author: Where?

Clark: A brand. It belonged to the lady who used to own the bar previously.

Author: Cool.

By remaining observant and sensitive within her social surroundings, the author has recognised and taken advantage of opportunities such as those illustrated here to engage different people in conversations about cattle brands, with extremely rewarding results. It is important to mention that the author did not always make notes during or following informal conversations, since such encounters usually occurred unexpectedly. In instances when notes were obtained, such as the one illustrated in Figure 10 above, these were placed in individual plastic sheet protectors and filed chronologically in the same binder as that containing newspaper and magazine clippings (see §3.3.3.2).

3.3.3.4 Internet sources

Internet resources consulted by the author deal primarily with the general aspects of cattle brands and have thus provided good supporting materials for the current research. The Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL) website (<http://liv.mt.gov/>) for instance, contains a wide range of information pertaining to livestock brands in the State, including historical, practical and legal perspectives on the topic. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) website (<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome>) proved useful for staying abreast of the latest developments on the proposed USDA legislation concerning the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) (see Ch. 1 §1.2). Demographic information for the Central Montana area has been obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau website (<http://www.census.gov/>). A few private websites, although sometimes a little ‘rough around the edges’, have provided some interesting insights about various aspects of cattle brands, including, for instance, notes about the origins and history of livestock brands in North America, and informal guidelines on how to read and apply brands. One example is the Cowboy Showcase website, (<http://www.cowboyshowcase.com/>), an excerpt from which appears in Figure 11 below. Although far less data have been derived from consulting online sources compared to the other methods described throughout §3.3.3, the author has used the information obtained from internet sites to construct the broad contextual backdrop for the current study which is the focus of Chapter 1.

Part of the data organization process included selecting which cattle brands would be included in the author's sample of cattle brand symbols and names (see Ch. 4 Table 2) Specific cattle brands that were discussed in personal interviews and mentioned in informal conversations were included in the sample. Historical as well as local literature sources contained numerous references to Montana cattle brands. From the literature, the author randomly selected cattle brands for the sample on the basis of their historical interest, onomastic features (such as their connections with other types of names) and/or their semiotic features (see Ch. 4 §4.2, §4.4, §4.5.2). A number of cattle brands were selected for inclusion in the sample based on the author's personal observations concerning, for instance, the appearance of cattle brand names and symbols on ranch signposts or as logos on items of clothing (see §4.4). Of the 50 cattle brands contained in the sample, 15 were selected from personal interviews, 13 from historical literature, 11 from informal communication, 6 from local literature and 4 from personal observation (see Appendix 1 for specific details).

After organizing the data, the author set about identifying patterns of similarities and differences between the various pieces of information. This preliminary examination revealed consistencies in content across the different data sources. For example, in every one of the personal interviews conducted by the author (see §3.3.3.1), participants made some manner of reference to the importance of their cattle brands and the tradition of cattle branding in their family's history and heritage. Another topic that was mentioned by several participants in the interviews was the practice of naming ranches after cattle brands (Foster 2012; Milburn 2012; Phillips 2012). The author's informal conversations with people (see §3.3.3.3) as well as various literature sources that were consulted (see §3.3.3.2) contained references to the same facts and ideas.

In the next step of analysis, the author re-examined the data in order to establish what the identified consistencies might reveal about the non-linguistic meanings of cattle brands. The author focused in particular on the first-hand information that she had obtained through personal interviews and informal communication so as to gain an insider's perspective on the issue. This process of first order interpretation (Neuman 1997: 35) entailed paying very close attention to the explanations offered by various cattle brand users as to their perceptions and reasoning as to what cattle brands mean to them.

Once the author had identified the various aspects of meaning that are assigned to cattle brands by the people who are most familiar with them, she re-examined the data as a collective whole in order to determine an overall sense of how these meaning assignments might be related to the wider

social and cultural context within which cattle brands are used, and what the broader socio-cultural implications of these meanings might be. Through this stage of second order interpretation (Neuman 1997: 35), the author was able to validate and expand upon her initial assumptions about the onomastic qualities, associative meanings and socio-cultural significance of cattle brands (see Ch. 1 §1.3; Ch. 2 §2.3.2; Ch. 4 §4.5, §4.6). In a final phase of third order interpretation (Neuman 1997: 35), the author went on to link these specific elements to aspects of general theory in the fields of linguistics, onomastics, cultural heritage, identity studies and social semiotics (see Ch. 4 §4.6).

3.4 Evaluating the methodology

3.4.1 Strengths of the methodology

Overall, the ethnographic methods utilised in the current research have proven to be most appropriate and highly effective for extracting and analysing the data within its situational context. The empirical nature of the data as well as the author's intimate familiarity with the social and cultural environment within which the data are embedded, are two major factors that predisposed the study towards an ethnographic methodological orientation. Within this framework, personal interviews and informal personal communication have generated a great deal of information and valuable insights which have facilitated interpretation and explanation of the data. The author's status as a member of the community in which the research was carried out greatly facilitated the ethnographic work, since the author had already established relationships with many people in the ranching community long before the research project was even conceived. This state of affairs allowed the author to gain immediate and almost unlimited access to local sources of information when the study commenced in earnest. The author's ability to easily engage people in conversation has created numerous opportunities in a wide variety of social settings to interview and informally talk with friends, fellow-workers, business clients and even strangers about cattle brands and branding, with extremely successful results.

The combination of personal interviews with informal communication has turned out to be a very suitable approach for gathering and interpreting data in the socio-cultural setting within which the case study took place. A distinctive characteristic of the local culture in Central Montana is that people are generally very friendly and enjoy 'visiting', or stopping to chat, with one another. Without exception, participants in the field interviews spoke willingly and openly with the author

about cattle brands and the tradition of cattle branding, and seemed proud to share this aspect of their cultural heritage with her. The author's process of setting up and recording interviews lent a great deal of credibility to the study by demonstrating to participants that she was gathering data legitimately and taking the project seriously. Local people were nonetheless equally enthusiastic about speaking informally with the author, and, as described in §3.3.3.3, a great deal of valuable information was gathered in a wide range of ordinary, everyday settings. Since cattle ranchers' schedule tend to be very busy (and in Central Montana, highly weather-dependent), it was oftentimes difficult for the author to schedule interviews, so these impromptu encounters proved to be an invaluable supplemental means of data collection.

The emphasis that the author placed on obtaining first-hand information and local perspectives on cattle brands through field interviews and informal conversations draws attention to the dual roles that the author took on as a researcher in her home community. As a community member, the author enjoyed the advantage of having virtually unlimited access to data because she was a well-known community member and thus trusted as an 'insider'. Nevertheless, the author is not a cattle rancher, and in this respect she remains somewhat of an outsider in cattle ranching circles. Given this situation, the author adopted the stance of 'learner' when questioning and engaging in conversations with more knowledgeable people on the topic of brands and branding; an approach which appeared to encourage local experts to share their knowledge, experiences, and thoughts with her.

A further advantage of the author's familiarity and good relationships with people in the community is that there was a high level of collaboration between the author and participants in the study. This reciprocity became very evident through exchanges of ideas between the author and her informants. The study was conceived on the basis of the author's intuitions about the socio-cultural importance of brands in Central Montana (see Ch. 1 §1.2), and the author discussed these ideas with members of the cattle ranching community to ascertain whether or not her impressions were valid. During this process, a number of ranchers told the author that they found her emphasis on the cultural aspects of cattle brands to be very interesting because ordinarily they do not think about the brands in this way, given that cattle brands are so much a part of everyday life. Conversely, the author had much to learn from these local experts about the practical and legal aspects of brands and how these elements are tied into the region's history and heritage. In addition to an overall willingness and eagerness to speak with her, a number of people spontaneously provided the author

with additional information by, for instance, sending her photographs, books, magazines and newspaper clippings containing pertinent information on brands and branding. Other individuals expressed their interest at reading the author's research, to which she has responded by having certain individuals review initial drafts of relevant portions of the thesis. In this way, the author has gained and welcomed the opportunity to have her interpretations and explanations checked, verified and expanded upon from different perspectives at the local level.

The author's use of triangulation, that is, the incorporation of other views or 'voices' by consulting additional types of sources from outside of the local community, has proven to be an effective method of expanding the data base, allowing for variations and expansions in interpretation, verifying data and thus ensuring objectivity (Neuman 1997: 336; Johnstone 2000: 61). Through library and archival resources such as books, monologues, memoirs and newspaper articles, for example, the author has secured a great deal of historical information about cattle brands that could not be obtained through interviewing and personal communication. In some cases, the author has been able to verify the accuracy of first-hand information obtained in interviews and informal conversations by cross-referencing historical publications. For example, in a conversation with the author on October 17, 2013, Lynn McMillan told the author that his family's brand, the *Circle 4* (Table 2 #13) is a very old cattle brand that was one of the first to be registered in the State of Montana. The author later consulted Van Dersal & Connor ([1900] 1974), which comprises a complete directory of livestock brands that were registered in the State during the period 1872 to 1900, and noted that the *Circle 4* brand was indeed listed there. This confirmed the information that the author obtained from McMillan. Public internet sites such as those belonging to USDA, MDOL and The Montana Stockgrowers' Association have provided important factual information regarding the legalities of cattle brands and brand ownership that has supplemented and sometimes balanced the knowledge, views and opinions held and expressed at the local level. This 'verification strategy' has lent more legitimacy to the author's analysis of the locally-obtained data and has opened the study up for deeper scrutiny, since the 'outside' references that have been cited can be readily consulted and read by others (Neuman 1997).

3.4.2 Weaknesses of the methodology

Although the methodology adopted in the current undertaking has yielded the desired results, certain practical difficulties were encountered that presented some drawbacks for the research process. One problem encountered by the author was the fact that cattle ranchers have extremely

busy schedules throughout the year, which made it very difficult to schedule interviews. In some cases, despite her repeated attempts to arrange meetings, the author simply had to cross certain people off her list of potential interviewees. Adverse weather conditions, especially during the winter months, also hampered the author's efforts to conduct field interviews. Rural roads in Central Montana are very difficult to navigate after a major snowfall, especially without a large vehicle and four-wheel drive. Although the author's vehicle was equipped with the latter, a number of interviews were cancelled because of dangerous driving conditions and were never re-scheduled because of other commitments on the part of the would-be participants and/or the author. The author's own work schedule also placed limitations on her ability to set aside time to conduct interviews. Her attempts to compensate for cancelled appointments by sending people written requests for information via e-mail met with little to no success. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but it is the author's perception that local cultural norms favour face-to-face interaction and that this perhaps influenced lack of responses to requests for information through e-mail correspondence.

In retrospect, the author is also of the opinion that the current research could have benefitted from a quantitative element which could have been used to support the results of the qualitative work; an approach that was adopted by Pavia and Costa (1993) and Hendry (2006). For example, it would have been interesting to quantify the author's findings pertaining to the identified onomastic trend of naming cattle ranches after cattle brands to establish whether or not cattle brand names are encountered more frequently than other types of names in the naming of ranches.

3.5 Summary

The methodology utilised in the current research is based on general ethnographic (qualitative) principles that have been adapted by the author to suit the unique subject matter and socio-cultural context of the research. The methods and strategies used for data collection and interpretation have facilitated close examination, in-depth description and authentic explanation of the uses, functions and meanings of cattle brands within their unique socio-cultural context, based upon the knowledge and perspectives drawn from the community of people to whose heritage cattle brands belong and who use cattle brands during the course of their everyday lives. In this respect, the methodology satisfies a crucial ethical requirement of ethnographic research; that is, to take into account what people (whose groups and cultures ethnographers are entering and exploring) have to say in their own words about their own worlds. The approach stresses the relevance and value of using local

knowledge as the basis for data explanation and emphasizes the importance of close collaboration between field workers and people in the communities where research is being carried out. It also demonstrates the value of utilizing 'outside' sources such as historical literature and public media to support, expand and verify data obtained at the local level.

On the basis that this thesis represents the first scholarly study to address the onomastic characteristics of cattle brands, it draws attention to the versatility and effectiveness of ethnographic research methods in studies of different types of names, and makes a fresh contribution to ethnographic research in onomastics. Furthermore, the intersection of the present work with research in cultural heritage, cultural identity and social semiotics implies that the methodology employed here can be successfully carried over into other disciplines in the human sciences.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the data that were collected through the methods described in Chapter 3 are presented. The following discussion supports the argument put forward in this thesis that American cattle brands are composite linguistic entities comprising symbols and names which acquire various meaning connotations on the basis of their close connections with diverse elements in their socio-cultural surroundings. The qualitative analysis contained herein emphasises the onomastic importance of cattle brands and shows how the extra-linguistic meanings that become attached to cattle brands reflect the overall significance of cattle brands within their social and cultural context.

The chapter is structured around five main sections in addition to the current introductory section and the conclusion (§4.7). The discussion in §4.2 focuses on the onomastic dimensions of cattle brands and highlights two main characteristics thereof, which are, the integration of names in cattle brand design (§4.2.1.1), and names that are based on cattle brand designs (§4.2.2). The lexical and semantic features of cattle brand names are examined in §4.3. In §4.4, the semiotic applications of cattle brands are explained, including their use as logos (§4.4.1), their appearance on ranch signposts (§4.4.2) and on maps (§4.4.3), as well as their decorative uses (§4.4.4). In §4.5, the author surveys the various ways in which cattle brands take on functions and acquire meanings that go beyond their primary use as marks of animal identification. The onomastic significance of these extended meanings and functions are explored in §4.6.




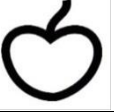

The information contained in Table 2 below provides a visual summary of the most salient aspects of the discourse in this chapter. The 50 cattle brands that comprise the author's data set are listed in the table next to individual item numbers. These numbers are consistent with those used in the master table (Table 3, Appendix 1) and are used throughout this chapter as a means of cross-referencing the cattle brands that are dealt with here. Thus, for instance, a reference to the cattle brand named *3 Lazy S* is followed by the applicable item number (#1), and so on. Each cattle brand is listed by name next to its symbol, and the table is arranged alphabetically according to the cattle brand names. As explained in Ch. 1 §1.5, the column 'design type' refers to the number and types of characters contained in each brand design. Expanding on Table 1 in Chapter 1, Table 2 contains abbreviated notes pertaining to the onomastic dimensions and semiotic associations of cattle brands which are discussed in §4.2 and §4.4 respectively.









4.2 The onomastic dimensions of cattle brands









Every cattle brand symbol has a correlating name that occurs in spoken and written (alphabetised) form. Cattle brand names are descriptive expressions that provide essential verbal and written references for brand symbols. The utterance of a particular brand name must be understood as a reference to a specific brand symbol; conversely, the visual stimulus of a certain brand symbol requires some kind of corresponding oral or written expression for practical reference and official recording purposes. As explained in Ch. 1 §1.5, the act, or art, of reading or naming cattle brand symbols is referred to in lay terms as ‘calling the brand’. In the days of the open range, the iron tenders of the various branding crews had to know the names of brands and the irons they required; likewise, today’s brand inspectors must have the ability to recognize brands and know their names in order to ensure the accurate recording of livestock sales and brand registrations. Even within the context of this thesis, it would not be possible to talk about cattle brands without the knowledge and use of their names.





Whilst cattle brands frequently comprise arbitrary selections of characters, there are also instances in which brand design is purposefully-crafted on the basis of underlying meaning connotations that are derived from the surrounding socio-cultural context in which the brands are embedded. In addition to existing as names in their own right, cattle brands display various associations with other types of names, and these onomastic connections provide important clues for identifying and understanding the contextual meanings of brands. The onomastic relationships exhibited by cattle brands are encompassed within two broad categories, each having several sub-categories.









Table 2: Onomastic and Semiotic Associations of Montana Cattle Brands









Brand #	Brand Symbol	Brand Name	Design Type	Onomastic Connections		Semiotic associations of cattle brands
				Incorporated in brand design	Derived from brand	
1		3 Lazy S	2/A+N	personal name - 'Smith'		
2		7 7 7	3/N	unknown - numeric	ranch name - '777 Ranch' group name - '777 Outfit'	open range map
3		7 Hanging 7	2/N	unknown – numeric	ranch name - '7 Hanging 7 Ranch'	ranch signpost
4		Apple	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'apple'		
5	No Image Available	Bar 100	unknown	unknown - numeric	business name - 'Bar 100'	business sign
6		Bar Box H	3/P+A	personal name - 'Hamilton'		






7		Bar Diamond	2/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'diamond'	ranch name - 'Phillips Bar Diamond Ranch'	personal decorative use
8		Bar L C	3/P+A	organization name - 'Lutheran Church'	ranch name - 'Bar LC Ranch'	barn
9		Broken Heart	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'heart'	business name - 'Broken Heart Antiques'	business sign
10		C Bar Z	3/P+A	Unknown	ranch name - 'Taylor's C Bar Z Ranch'	
11		C M R	3/A	personal name – 'Charles Marion Russell'		museum logo
12		Circle	1/P	common name - 'circle'	geographic name - 'Circle', ranch name - 'Circle Ranch'	
13		Circle 4	2/P+N	unknown but refers to common name - 'circle'		
14		Circle D	2/P+A	unknown but refers to common name - 'circle'		

15		Diamond	1/P	common name - 'diamond'	ranch name - 'Diamond Ranch' group name - 'Diamond Outfit'	open range map (Figure 15)
16		Diamond 7	2/P+N	unknown but refers to common name - 'diamond'		ranch signpost, personal decorative use, Angus cattle breed
17		Diamond Dot	2/P	unknown but refers to common names - 'diamond', 'dot'	ranch name - 'Stevenson's Diamond Dot Ranch'	advertising material
18		Diamond H Diamond	3/P+A	personal name - 'Hamilton'		
19		Dragging Y	1/A	Unknown	ranch name - 'Dragging Y Ranch'	logo on clothing
20		E B	2/A	personal name - 'Emmet Butcher'		Simmental cattle breed
21		Elkhorn	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'elkhorn'		
22		Hanging E 6	2/A+N	Unknown		ranch signpost, Hereford Cattle Breed

23		House	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'house'		logo on clothing
24		L Hanging E Bar	3/A+P	personal name - 'Leda'		
25	No Image Available	M Hanging E Bar	3/A+P	personal name - 'Montgomery'		
26		Maltese Cross	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'Maltese cross'		open range map (Figure 15)
27	N-N	N Bar N	3/A+P	personal name - 'Niedringhaus'	ranch name - 'N Bar N Ranch' personal nickname - 'N Bar N Kid' group name - 'N Bar N Cowboys'	open range map (Figure 15)
28	OX	O X	2/A	Unknown	ranch name - 'OX Ranch' group name 'OX Outfit'	open range map (Figure 15)
29		Pear	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'pear'		barn, advertising material

30		Pipe	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'pipe'		
31		Quarter Circle Lazy T	2/P+A	Unknown		personal decorative use
32		Quarter Circle Reverse L E	3/A+P	personal name - 'Edward Leininger'	ranch name - 'LE Quarter Circle Ranch'	
33		Quarter Circle S P	3/P+A	personal name - 'Sam Phillips'		
34		R B Bar	3/A+P	personal name - 'Ross Butcher'		
35		R P Quarter Circle	3/A+P	personal name - 'Robert Phillips'		
36		Rafter N Z	3/P+A	geographical name - 'New Zealand'	ranch name - 'Rafter NZ Ranch'	
37		Reverse C Bar Heart	3/A+P	personal name - 'Carol'		

38		Reverse R Bar H	3/A+P	Unknown		
39		Reverse R N Connected	2/A	personal name - 'Randolph'		
40		Running N Bar	2/A+P	personal name - 'Newman'	ranch name - 'N Bar Ranch'	ranch signpost, roof top, advertising materials, Angus cattle breed, open range map (Figure 15)
41		S Bar Diamond	3/A+P	personal name - 'Stella'		
42		Star	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'star'		open range map (Figure 15)
43		T Diamond	2/A+P	Unknown		ranch signpost
44		Triangle	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'triangle'		
45		Turkey Track	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'turkey track'		open range map (Figure 15)

46		Two Dot	2/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'dot'	Geographic name - 'Two Dot' (Montana) Personal nickname - 'Two Dot Wilson'	
47		V E T O	4/A	common name - 'veto'		political action
48		X I T	3/A	(?) geographical name - 'Texas'	ranch name - 'XIT Ranch' group name - 'XIT Cowboys'	open range map (Figure 15)
49		Y	1/A	personal name - 'Yaeger'		
50		Z Slash J	3/A+P	Unknown		logo on clothing

4.2.1 Category 1: Cattle brand designs that integrate onomastic components

Some cattle brand designs integrate certain aspects of various types of names, including personal, geographic, ranch and business names. This category also includes cattle brand designs that primarily depict ‘everyday’ or ‘real-life’ objects which are designated or referenced by common nouns, designs based on (names of) numbers, and designs based on words (nouns) that reference abstract concepts.

4.2.1.1 Cattle brand designs that incorporate elements of personal names

The data presented in Table 2 shows that elements of personal names are incorporated in and thus associated with certain Montana cattle brand designs. The following examples are contained in the table:

- 1) The letter ‘S’ in the *3 Lazy S* brand (#1) is the first letter of the name ‘Smith’, which is the last name of the original owner of the brand. In this instance, the numeral ‘3’ is also of significance, in that it refers to the three sisters in the Smith family that owned the brand. The family jokingly insists that the brand stands for ‘3 Lazy Sisters’ (D. Miller 2012).
- 2) The *Bar Box H* and *Diamond H Diamond* brands (#6, #18) both contain the initial of the last name of the brands’ owner, Thomas Hamilton, from Grass Range, Montana (Johnson 2012).
- 3) The *C M R* brand (#11) is based on the initials of Charles M. Russell (1864-1926), a cowboy and artist who is a cultural icon in Montana. The brand’s design also closely replicates the personal artist’s mark that Russell placed on his paintings and sketches.
- 4) The *E B Connected* brand design (#20) contains the initials of its owner, Emmet Butcher, who ranches near Lewistown, Montana.
- 5) The letter ‘L’ in the *L Hanging E Bar* brand (#24) represents the initial of the first name of its owner, Leda McReynolds, from Hilger, Montana. The letter ‘M’ in the *M Hanging E Bar* brand (#25), which belonged to her father, contains the initial of Leda’s maiden name, ‘Montgomery’.
- 6) The letter ‘N’ which occurs twice in the *N Bar N* brand (#27), is the first letter of the last name of the two brothers Frank and William Niedringhaus, who first registered the brand in 1885. It is said that the brothers chose this brand to symbolise their close relationship in their jointly-owned business venture, the Home Land and Cattle Company (Niedringhaus 2010).

- 7) The *Quarter Circle Reverse L E* brand (#32) contains the initials of the first and last names of brand's owner, Edward Leininger.
- 8) The *Quarter Circle S P* and *R P Quarter Circle* brands (#33, #35) both contain the initials of their respective owners, brothers Sam and Robert Phillips from Lewistown, Montana (R. Phillips 2012).
- 9) The *R B Bar* brand (#34) contains the initials of the first and last names of its owner, Ross Butcher, from Lewistown, Montana.
- 10) The *Reverse C Bar Heart* brand, (#37), which belongs to the author, was chosen because the first character of the brand, the letter 'C' (in reverse position), is the same as the first letter of the author's first name.
- 11) The *Reverse R N* brand (#39) contains the initial (in reverse position) of the last name of the brand's original owner, Edmund Randolph (Randolph 1981). The following anecdote, which appears in Randolph's personal memoirs (1981: 50), tells the story behind his selection of this particular brand design:

My new brand was recorded as "*Reverse R N*" [author's italics]. The R is reversed, and its upright coincides with the first upright of the N, making the letters connected to form a neat, compact stamp iron. It was the nearest approach to my own initials that could be worked out, and an altogether appropriate brand...during supper I sketched my new brand on the back of an envelope for...[my friend]...Skel. "What do you think of it?"

"Not bad," he pronounced, giving it a quick scrutiny. "What does it stand for, Royal Navy or Registered Nurse?"

Obviously, he was not brand conscious.

- 12) The letter 'N' in the *N Bar* brand (#40) represents the initial of the last name of the brand's original owners, brothers Zeke and Henry Newman (Grosskopf & Newby 1991).
- 13) The letter 'S' in the *S Bar Diamond* brand (#41) stands for the name 'Stella', which is the first name of the brand's original owner, Stella Lucier (Vestal 1981).
- 14) The *Y* brand (#49), owned by Charles Yaeger from Lewistown, Montana is based on the first letter of his last name.

The incorporation of elements of personal names in brand design establishes connections between certain people and cattle brands which can facilitate the identification of livestock and their owners. Alongside these practical implications, links between people and brands can have personal as well as social and cultural significance. The importance of these associations will be further discussed in §4.5.

4.2.1.2 Cattle brand designs that incorporate elements of geographic names

As illustrated in Table 2, that certain brand designs integrate components of place names. For example:

- 15) The letters ‘N’ and ‘Z’ contained in the *Rafter N Z* brand (#36) are the initials of the name of the country, ‘New Zealand’. This Montana brand is owned by a family that hails from New Zealand.
- 16) Popular legend holds that the letter ‘T’ in the *X I T* brand (#48) represents the name ‘Texas’, and that the brand as a whole stands for ‘Ten in Texas’, since the original ranch that owned the brand was spread over ten counties in the State of Texas. Despite the insistence on the part of historians that the brand design has nothing to do with the name ‘Texas’ but that it was chosen because it would be difficult for rustlers to alter, the myth surrounding the brand name continues to hold (Texas State Historical Association 2015).

The associations between places and cattle brands that are generated by the inclusion of elements of geographic names in brand design may hold some social significance. In example (15) for instance, the name New Zealand, represented by the letters ‘N’ and ‘Z’ in the brand, will no doubt always hold a measure of sentimental value for the family that currently owns the brand, since the name speaks to an aspect of their personal heritage. Furthermore, could the placement of the ‘rafter’ symbol preceding the letters be taken as an implied reference to a concept such as ‘home of the New Zealanders’? With respect to the *X I T* brand mentioned in example (16), the association between the brand and the State of Texas (although possibly based on an erroneous assumption) will most likely never fade or lose its historical fascination.

4.2.1.3 Cattle brand designs that incorporate elements of names of organizations

Alongside personal and place names, the names of organizations are also known to form the basis for cattle brand designs.

- 17) In an e-mail to the author on 15 May, 2014, Roger Berg told the author that the letters ‘L’ and ‘C’ in the *Bar L C* brand (#8) represent the name of the Lutheran Church organization, which used to own several cattle ranches in the State of Montana. As with cattle brands that include aspects of personal and place names, brands such as the *Bar L C* also carry social meaning. The fact that the *Bar L C* brand has remained with the ranch over several changes of ownership suggests that the brand has acquired some historical value, and the brand itself stands as an onomastic token of its association with the religious organization from which its design and name are derived.

4.2.1.4 Cattle brand designs that are based on common objects

Certain cattle brands depict and are thus named after natural and man-made objects (including shapes and abstract designs) that exist in the real world. The following brands contained in the author’s data set represent this category:

- 18) *Apple* (#4) (natural)
- 19) *Circle* (#12) (shape)
- 20) *Diamond* (#15) (shape/natural)
- 21) *Elkhorn* (#21)
- 22) *House* (#23) (man-made)
- 23) *Maltese Cross* (#26)
- 24) *Pear* (#29) (natural)
- 25) *Pipe* (#30) (man-made)
- 26) *Star* (#42) (shape/natural)
- 27) *Triangle* (#44) (shape)
- 28) *Turkey Track* (#45) (natural)
- 29) *Two Dot* (#46) (shape)

Unlike cattle brands that incorporate aspects of personal, place, or organisational names, underlying associations between brands and the entities they depict are not always evident. It is quite possible, however, that brands depicting certain natural objects may have originated as a result of associations that were established on the basis of cowboys' familiarity with things that they encountered in the natural environment around them. For example, the *Star* brand may have been inspired by sleeping under the stars; the *Elkhorn* brand may have arisen from the sighting of elk or finding their shed antlers; whilst the *Turkey Track* brand could have originated from the sight of wild turkey tracks in the dust. Similarly, brands such as the *Apple*, *House*, *Pear* and *Pipe* could very well be based on peoples' acquaintances with the types of everyday objects depicted by the images. It has been suggested that brands containing images of diamonds, hearts, clubs and spades could be derived from the gambling games played by cowboys (Pattie 2002), but the author has not been able to verify whether or not this is indeed the case. Although the types of associations mentioned above are mere conjectures, their plausibility rests in the reality of the surrounding context within which cattle brands have traditionally been conceived and used.

4.2.1.5 Cattle brand designs based on numbers

Cattle brands may consist exclusively of numbers, as in the following examples contained in Table 2:

30) 7 7 7 or *Triple Seven* (#2)

31) 7 *Hanging 7* (#3)

The underlying meaning connotations of the brands listed in examples (30) and (31) above are unknown, although there have been suggestions made that brands such as the 7 7 7 (or *Triple Seven*) brand could be based on the names of gambling 'hands' in games such as poker (Pattie 2002).

4.2.1.6 Cattle brand designs based on abstract concepts

In some instances cattle brands may represent ideas or concepts, as in the next two examples:

32) The *V E T O* (or *Veto*) brand (#47) is based on the name of a political concept and/or process (see §4.5.2).

33) The *Broken Heart* brand (#9) represents an emotional concept.

The expression of concepts and feelings through the use of cattle brands is particularly intriguing. As will be further explained in §4.5.2, the *V E T O* (or *Veto*) brand was designed to convey a particular political stance as well as to make a statement about cultural identity in the State of Montana. The origin of the *Broken Heart* brand is unknown to the author, but could it possibly harken back to a cowboy lamenting a lost love?

4.2.2 Category 2: Names that are derived from cattle brands

The second category of the onomastic associations of cattle brands comprises various types of names that have been coined from cattle brands.

4.2.2.1 Personal names that are derived from brands

Adams (1970: xix) notes that during the open range era it was common practice for cowboys to be nicknamed after the brands run by the ranches that they worked for. The author's Montana-based data contains the following two cases in which personal names (nicknames) have been coined from cattle brands:

- 34) A cowboy by the name of D. L. O'Malley earned the nickname 'The N Bar N Kid' because of his long affiliation as an employee of the N Bar N Ranch, which was named after its *N Bar N* brand (#27) (Niedringhaus 2010; see §4.2.2.3).
- 35) A rancher by the name of H.J. Wilson was nicknamed 'Two Dot' Wilson after the *Two Dot* brand (#46) which he owned and ran on his cattle. What is intriguing about this particular case is the fact that the town of Two Dot in Montana was named after 'Two Dot' Wilson and his brand (Cheney 1983: 262; Aarstad 2009: 270; see §4.2.2.4).

4.2.2.2 Group names that are derived from brands

During the days of the open range (see Ch. 1 §1.6), the teams of cowboys who worked for specific cattle companies were commonly associated with the brands that were owned by their respective employers. These associations were marked through a group naming technique in which each outfit was named after the brand that it represented. Table 2 contains the following examples of these collective names:

- 36) The '7 7 7 outfit' or '7 7 7 cowboys' from the 7 7 7 brand (#2),
- 37) The 'Diamond outfit' or 'Diamond cowboys' from the *Diamond* brand (#15)
- 38) The 'N Bar N outfit' or 'N Bar N cowboys' from the *N Bar N* brand (#27)
- 39) The 'O X outfit' or 'O X cowboys' from the *O X* brand (#28)
- 40) The 'Star outfit' or 'Star cowboys' from the *Star* brand (#42)
- 41) The 'X I T outfit' or 'X I T cowboys' from the *X I T* brand (#48).

The author has verified that these specific names are recorded in historical literature as being the names of brands that were run in Montana during the open range era (Randolph 1981; Thiessen 1986; Niedringhaus 2010).

4.2.2.3 Ranch names that are derived from cattle brands

The data shows that in Montana, certain ranch names are derived from cattle brands, as illustrated by the following examples contained in Table 2:

- 42) 7 7 7 Ranch, or Triple 7 Ranch (#2)
- 43) 7 Hanging 7 Ranch (#3)
- 44) Phillips Bar Diamond Ranch (#7)
- 45) Bar L C Ranch (#8)
- 46) Taylor's C Bar Z Ranch (#10)
- 47) Circle Ranch (#12)
- 48) Diamond Ranch (#15)
- 49) Stevenson's Diamond Dot Ranch (#17)
- 50) Dragging Y Ranch (#19)
- 51) N Bar N Ranch (#27)
- 52) OX Ranch (#28)
- 53) LE Quarter Circle Ranch (#32)
- 54) Rafter NZ Ranch (#36)
- 55) N Bar Ranch (#40)
- 56) T Diamond Ranch (#43)
- 57) X I T Ranch (#48)

This data correlates with Adam's (1970: xix) general observation that since the early days of the American ranching industry, it has been common practice to name ranches after the brands run on the owners' cattle.

4.2.2.4 Populated place (town) names that are derived from brands

The author has been able to verify the following two instances in Montana where the names of towns have been derived from cattle brands:

- 58) The town of Circle in McCone County, Montana takes its name from the circular-shaped brand known as the *Circle* brand (#12) that was owned by the Mabry Cattle Company, which in 1884 established the Circle Ranch on the Redwater River in Montana (Cheney 1983; Aarstad 2009). The name of the town is catalogued with the U.S. Board of Geographical Names (USBGN) in its Geographical Names Information System (GNIS), with the identity number (ID#) 806926 (GNIS 2015).
- 59) The town of Two Dot in Wheatland County, Montana was named after a local rancher who went by the nickname of 'Two Dot' Wilson; the nickname having been coined from Wilson's *Two Dot* brand (#46) (Cheney 1983; Aarstad; 2009; see §4.2.2.1). Although the name of the town Two Dot does not appear in the GNIS registry, the catalogued names of Two Dot Methodist Church (ID# 1725824), Two Dot School (ID# 1725850) and Two Dot Volunteer Fire Department (ID# 2548903) stand as onomastic reminders of this once-thriving rural Montana community (GNIS 2015).

4.2.2.5 Business names derived from brands

The author's data set contains the following examples in which the names of businesses are known to have been coined from cattle brands:

- 60) Bar 100 (#5) (A. Clark 2014)
- 61) Broken Heart Antiques (#9) (M. McReynolds 2012)

The case of the Bar 100 (60) illustrates how the act of naming can change the meaning, or intended reference, of a particular word (see Ch. 2 §2.3.2). In this interesting instance of word-play in

naming, the word ‘bar’ no longer denotes the bar-shaped symbol contained in the original brand, but instead refers to a drinking establishment.

4.3 The lexical and semantic features of cattle brand names

Cattle brand names are by definition (proper) nouns that are used in noun phrases (NPs). As lexical items, cattle brand names take on several syntactic functions within (English) NPs:

- 62) They can function as heads of NPs all by themselves, as in the utterance of the NP ‘Circle’.
- 63) They can function as heads of NPs together with a specifier, as in the sentence “Tye Phillips runs the Apple”, where the NP consists of ‘the’ as specifier and ‘*Apple*’ as head.
- 64) They can function as modifiers, that is, as adjective phrases (APs) that modify the heads of NPs, as in the name (NP) Bar LC Ranch, where the cattle brand name *Bar L C* (AP) precedes and modifies the head of the NP which is represented by the word ‘Ranch’.
- 65) In some cases, as in ranch names such as Phillips Bar Diamond Ranch and Stevenson’s Diamond Dot Ranch, the brand name (AP) is preceded by an additional modifier (AP) in the form of a personal name (usually a last name).

In examples (62) through (65) above, each cattle brand name has a very specific reference within a very specific context. Although the brand symbols corresponding to each brand name depict definite objects such as circles, apples, numbers and shapes, the names themselves do not denote these objects. For instance, the name ‘Circle’ in example (62) refers to a cattle brand that is shaped like a circle, as opposed to all other possible entities known as ‘circles’. The use of such an utterance would be typical (and grammatically acceptable) at a branding event where different brands are being applied. This practice was common at group brandings during the open range era where the brander would simply call out the name of the brand he wanted, and the iron tender would (hopefully) hand over the correct branding iron (see Ch. 1 §1.5). Similarly, the name ‘Apple’ in example (63) references a particular cattle brand (indicated by the specifier ‘the’) that bears visual resemblance to an apple. The name ‘Bar LC’ in example (64) refers to a cattle brand design containing a bar-shaped symbol together with the letters ‘L’ and ‘C’, which are abbreviations for the name of the Lutheran Church organisation. In each case cited above, one would have to be aware that the lexical items ‘Circle’, ‘Apple’, and ‘Bar LC’ (respectively) refer specifically to cattle brands in order to make sense of the utterances in which these words are used. Even more

specialised knowledge would be required in order to interpret the underlying meaning of the letters ‘L’ and ‘C’ contained in the *Bar L C* brand. The expansion of the literal meanings of cattle brand names is a prime example of what Van Langendonck (2007: 87, 90, 92) refers to as a process of “semantic bleaching” whereby the lexical meanings of names become “secondary connotations” as a result of stronger pragmatic considerations (see Ch. 2 §2.3.1). As illustrated in §4.3, the syntactic behaviour of cattle brand names reinforces the importance of their pragmatically-based meaning. Overall, these features reflect and undergird certain major aspects of the theory of associative meaning in onomastics (Strawson 1950; Searle 1969; Nicolaisen 1978; Basso 1996; Smith 2006; Van Langendonck 2007; see Ch. 2 §2.3.2).

Another syntactic function of cattle brand names is illustrated in the name of the Bar LC Ranch, in which the cattle brand name ‘Bar L C’ is used as a modifier or descriptor for the noun ‘ranch’. In this way, some kind of connection between the cattle brand and the ranch is established, which effectively adds an element of associative meaning to the cattle brand. Similarly, the names Phillips Bar Diamond Ranch and Stevenson’s Diamond Dot Ranch (example (65)), in which the cattle brand names are modified by personal names, signify links between brands, ranches and individuals and/or families. Thus, for instance, the Bar Diamond Ranch and *Bar Diamond* brand is owned by the Phillips family, the Diamond Dot Ranch and *Diamond Dot* brand is owned by the Stevenson family. Again, one would have to possess some degree of contextual knowledge in order to fully understand the meanings that are represented by these types of names. These examples stand in support of Van Langendonck’s (2007: 91) contention that the syntactic behaviour of proper names is “an important formal reflex of [their] pragmatic-semantic characterization.”

The examples discussed here strongly indicate that the lexical meanings of cattle brand names do undergo a process of ‘semantic bleaching’ (Van Langendonck 2007) and that the overriding meaning connotations of these names only become apparent through an understanding of the overall social context within which the names occur, and from which their associative meanings are essentially derived. These contextual considerations, which must be taken into account when attempting to arrive at an understanding of the ‘real’ meanings of cattle brand names, draw attention to the socio-onomastic nature of these onomastic items (see §4.6).

4.4 The semiotic functions of cattle brands

In addition to their appearance as identifying marks on the hides of livestock, cattle brands are also displayed on other types of objects for varying purposes. The semiotic application of cattle brands in Montana applies to both the symbolic and written forms (names) of cattle brands.

4.4.1 Cattle brands as logos

The author has observed that in Montana, cattle brands appear as images or logos on various items of clothing such as hats, shirts and jackets, as well as in business advertisements and stationery products such as letterheads, business cards, address labels, and cheques. The author has verified through personal observation that the following brands contained in data Table 2 are used as logos:

- 66) The *C M R* brand (#11) is used as the corporate logo for the C.M. Russell Museum in Great Falls, Montana.
- 67) The *Diamond Dot* brand (#17) is used as a logo in business advertisements.
- 68) The *Dragging Y* brand (#19) appears as a logo on clothing items (see Figure...below).
- 69) The *House* brand (#23) appears as a logo on clothing items.
- 70) The *Pear* brand (#29) is used as a logo in business advertisements (see Figure...below).
- 71) The *N Bar* brand (#40) is used as a logo in business advertisements (see Figure...below).
- 72) The *Z Slash J* brand (#50) appears as a logo on clothing items.

In an interview with the author, rancher Steve Clark (2013) made the comment that “brands are like business logos; they are the signature of a business.” Clark’s observation highlights the fact that certain brands foster perceptions of corporate as well as product identity, and thus perform the same functions as ‘conventional’ brand names and logos within the broader context of sales and marketing (see Ch. 2 §2.3.2).

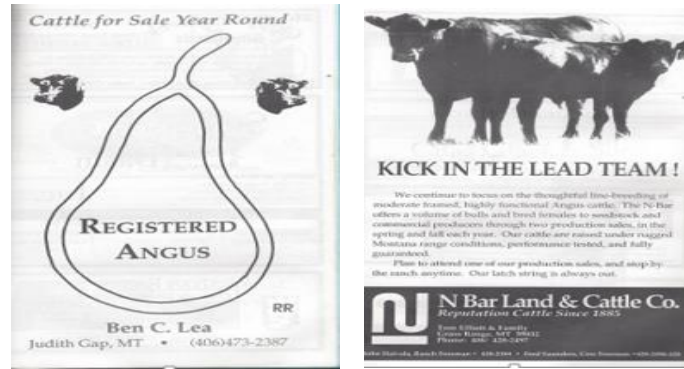


Figure 12: Business advertisements containing *Pear* (left) and *N Bar* (right) brands images (MDOL 2003)



Figure 13: Cowboy wearing a jacket sporting the *Dragging Y* brand as logo for the Dragging Y Cattle Company (Working Ranch Magazine 2008).

4.4.2 Cattle brands displayed on ranch signposts

A further semiotic application of cattle brands is their appearance on ranch signposts. Although typically erected on private property, ranch signposts are usually highly visible to the public eye from the roadside. Through personal observation, the author has confirmed that the following brands contained in the data sample appear on ranch signposts:

- 73) *7 Hanging 7* brand (#3)
- 74) *Diamond 7* brand (#16)

- 75) *E 6* brand (#22)
- 76) *N Bar* brand (#40)
- 77) *T Diamond* brand (#43) (See Figure 14 below)

The appearance of cattle brand symbols and names on ranch signposts establishes connections between brands and the physical landscape. In this way, certain brands become associated with particular geographical areas (Descheemaeker 2012; Clark 2013). This important feature of cattle brands will be further addressed in §4.6.



Figure 14: Eldon Foster's *T Diamond* Ranch signposts showing the *T Diamond* brand symbol and brand name.

4.4.3 Cattle brands displayed on maps

One particularly interesting semiotic application of brands is their appearance on some historical geographical maps of The State of Montana. In the days of the open range during the late 1800s (see Ch. 1 §1.6), there was a tendency for some cattle outfits to consistently run their herds in certain parts of the region; hence their brands would become associated with those particular areas of land. Despite that fact that no individuals or entities were afforded any real legal rights of possession or title to open range land, cattle brands were used on maps to publicly and almost officially demarcate certain areas as being the 'domain' of certain cattle outfits. Osgood (1970: 182-83) explains this state of affairs as follows:

In the early days of the cattle range, the custom of priority...was enough to meet the situation...the early laws of states and territories...recognized the fact that by

grazing a certain area, the stock grower was in a way gaining a kind of prescriptive right...[thus]...because the Diamond J...[brand]...cattle were accustomed to range along a certain creek, that area came to be known as the Diamond J range...the idea that a certain area might become the accustomed range to be held against all comers on the basis of priority was developed to its greatest extent during the boom period. Cattlemen, hurrying into the regions of eastern Montana and central Wyoming, set up “claims” to certain areas in the same manner that the miners had done.

Randolph (1981: 13) mentions in his memoirs that he once came across “a huge government plat [that] showed...great stretches of land...marked with the *Antler* brand, a sort of shallow “U” with hooks at either end.” The map in Figure 15 below illustrates how the range areas of various cattle outfits operating in the State of Montana during the open range era were reflected in the cartography of the region through the use of brand symbols. The following brands contained in Table 2 are visible on the map:

- 78) 7 7 7 brand (#2)
- 79) *Diamond* brand (#15)
- 80) *N Bar* brand (#40)
- 81) *N Bar N* brand (#27)
- 82) *OX* brand (#28)
- 83) *Star* brand (#42)
- 84) *Turkey Track* brand (#45)
- 85) *X I T* brand (#48)

The author has determined that these same brands are listed in *The Stockgrowers’ Directory of Brands and Marks for the State of Montana 1872-1900* (Van Dersal & Connor 1900), which corroborates the information on the map.

Whilst cattle brands no longer appear on official maps of Montana, people’s associations of cattle brands with the physical landscape are still evident today. The appearance of brands on ranch signposts is one manifestation of these connections (see §4.3.2). However, signposts are not the only triggers of such connotations. In an e-mail to the author, Audrey Clark (2013) shared the following example: “I associate brands with where the livestock belongs property-wise around our

ground; for example, the *HE* brand belongs on Milton [Stilson's] ground because Stilsons own the brand. Like when I picture each brand, each person's property (leased or owned) comes to mind too." Similarly, Doug Miller (2012) noted that "sometimes brands become associated with ranches and places...the brand stays with the land, like the *N Bar* [brand]. The N Bar ranch has been sold how many times but the brand has stayed with the land." In a conversation with the author on 1 July 2013, rancher Melinda Pester mentioned that some ranchers will sell their brands with their property so that the brand "can stay with the land". There are also instances where a certain brand becomes associated with more than one location, such as when a brand moves with the owner from one place to another, or when cattle bearing one particular brand are run in different areas (Descheemaeker 2012; J. Jensen 2012).

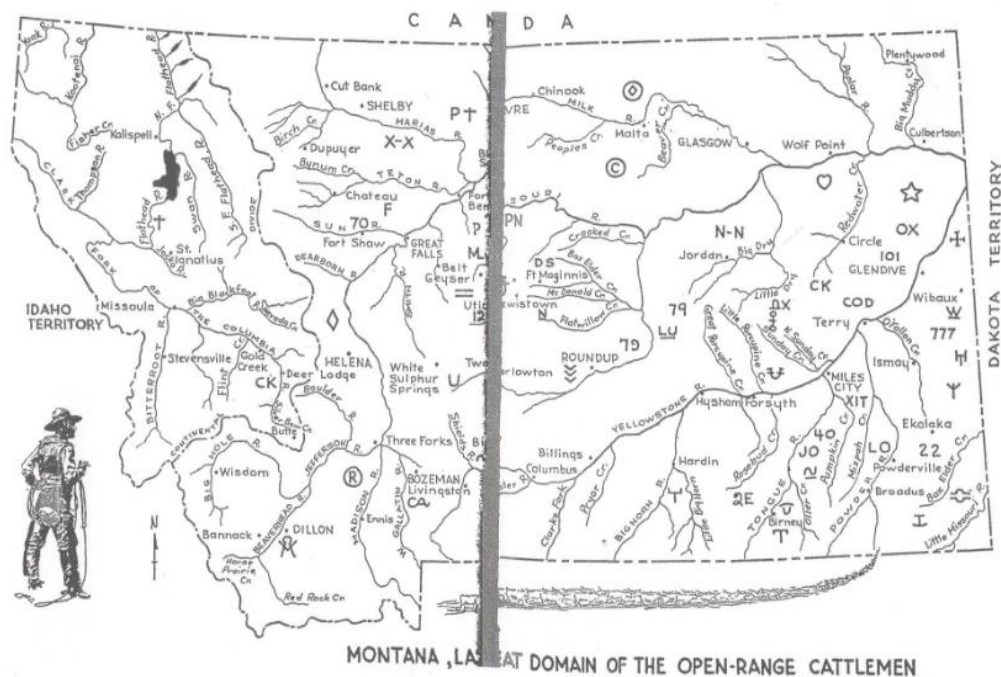


Figure 15: "Montana, last great domain of the open-range cattlemen." Map showing brands associated with specific geographical locations in Montana during the late 1800s (Thiessen 1986: n.p.).

4.4.4 Cattle brands displayed for miscellaneous decorative purposes

The author has observed that in Montana, brands are used for a variety of decorative purposes in many diverse locations in both public and private spaces, for example:

- 86) At the ranch where the author used to board her horse, the ranch owner's family brand, the *Diamond 7* (#16) appears on the welcome sign at the main entrance to the property, and is also engraved on several of the paving stones on the driveway.
- 87) The *Bar L C* brand name (#8) is painted on the side of the barn at the Bar L C Ranch (Berg 2014, see Figure 14).
- 88) The N Bar Ranch near Grass Range in Central Montana has the *N Bar* brand (#40) is painted on the roof of one of the buildings so that it is visible from the air (Milburn 2012, pers. interview, 16 June).
- 89) The *Pear* brand (#29) is painted on the side of the barn located at 'Ben's Place' which is part of the Clark Ranch in Judith Gap, Montana (see Figure 14).

Aside from the abovementioned examples contained in Table 2, the author has observed that cattle brands appear on many other sundry items including housewares, home furnishings, personal stationery, jewellery, purses, wallets, wedding novelties and vehicle licence plates. For instance, the Oxen Yoke Inn, a popular bar and restaurant located in the small rural town of Utica in Central Montana, has a large collection of cattle brands displayed on its interior walls. Each year in June, the owners of this establishment invite people to bring their branding irons and burn their brands onto wooden plaques. This has become a popular tradition which, as illustrated by the photograph in Figure 14 below, provides some interesting viewing material for Oxen Yoke patrons! Another case in point is that of the Central Montana Cattlewomen's Association which a few years ago produced sets of paper napkins (serviettes) and placemats imprinted with various Central Montana brands and their owners' names.

In Montana, the MDOL allows for certain brands to be registered for ornamental purposes only. In such cases, the regular registration fee is paid, but the selected brands are prohibited from being placed on livestock. The *C M R* (#11) and *V E T O* (#47) brands are examples of ornamental brands. As mentioned in §4.2.1, the *C M R* brand represents the initials and corresponding artist's mark of Montana's most beloved cowboy artist, Charles Marion Russell, and the brand is used as

the logo for the C.M. Russell Museum located in Great Falls, Montana (see §4.3). The *V E T O* brand is registered to Governor Brian Schweitzer in Lewis and Clark County, Montana (brand ID number 255193) (MDOL 2015; see §4.2.1.6).

As a result of their semiotic applications, cattle brands become connected to an array of elements in their surrounding socio-cultural environment. These associations infuse cattle brands with a great deal of contextual meaning. For example, the use of cattle brand symbols and cattle brand names as logos establishes links between cattle brands, people and businesses. Similarly, the placement of cattle brand symbols and names on ranch signposts forges ties between cattle brands, places, people and even animals, such as breeds of cattle. The use of cattle brand symbols on maps also creates associations between cattle brands and certain geographical areas. It is crucial to point out, however, that a measure of contextual knowledge is required in order to identify and understand the meanings which are derived in this manner. For instance, the appearance of cattle brand symbols on a map may not make sense to a person who is unfamiliar with cattle brand symbols and/or is unaware of the historical underpinnings of these cartographic marks (see §4.4.3). In the same way, a person would need to be aware of the association between a particular cattle brand and a certain individual, family or business in order to fully appreciate the significance of the brand's appearance on a ranch signpost or article of clothing. It is thus evident that the contextual meanings of cattle brands are simultaneously derived from their onomastic as well as semiotic characteristics and functions.



Figure 16: Miscellaneous decorative displays of cattle brands (from top to bottom, left to right); cattle brands on display at the Oxen Yoke Inn, Utica, Montana (photograph by author); *Pear* brand on barn (photograph by author); *Bar L C* brand on barn (photograph by Roger Berg); commemorative quilt showing “Pioneer Brands of Powell County” (The Montana Standard, 2013); front and back of a commemorative sweatshirt, showing Montana cattle brands (photographs by author).

4.5 The socio-cultural meanings and functions of cattle brands

It is clear from the discussion thus far that alongside their primary practical use as marks of livestock identification, cattle brands perform various other functions through which they acquire a great deal of meaning and significance within their surrounding socio-cultural environment. These are socially-defined roles which are based on the ways in which cattle brands become associated with different elements of this contextual backdrop. The meaning of cattle brands is therefore not determined on the basis of formal linguistic features, but rather by language-external factors that have strong pragmatic, social and cultural underpinnings.

4.5.1 Cattle brands as symbols of reputation and quality

The data indicates that in certain cases, a particular cattle brand will come to be associated with a certain breed and (usually) quality of cattle, for example:

- 90) Vestal (1981: 219) relates how in the late 1960s, the *S Bar Diamond* brand (#41) came to represent an “almost pure” Shorthorn strain of cattle that sold as “reputation stock in feeder circles”.
- 91) Descheemaeker (2012) told the author that her husband’s grandfather, Charles Descheemaeker “had a world-renowned Hereford operation so when people talk about the *E6* brand [#22] and see it in certain locations they equate that with the Descheemaker Hereford bulls that were popular in the [nineteen] sixties and seventies.”
- 92) Milburn (2012) related to the author that “the *N Bar* [brand #40] had a reputation for raising good registered Angus cattle” and that “the bloodlines and the breeding are associated with the brand.”
- 93) Helen Miller (2012) related the following to the author: “My parents had the [*Diamond 7*] brand [#16] for a long time. They were among the first people in the [Lewistown] area to raise registered Angus cows...in the 1940s.”
- 94) In an e-mail to the author on 25 September 2013, Audrey Clark explained that she associates the Simmental breed with the *E B* brand (#20, belonging to E. Butcher), based on the fact that she and her husband have purchased a number of *EB* Simmental bulls and have been very satisfied with the quality of calves that they produce.

These examples also indicate that certain brands come to house an ‘ethical’ quality which is built on reputation and a strong sense of integrity. This intangible feature of brands is very much characteristic of ‘the cowboy way’ in terms of which virtues such as trust, loyalty, honesty, reliability and hard work have always been held in high esteem. In the days of the open range, cowboys would ‘ride for the brand’ and thus demonstrate their pride in working for a particular ranch and being associated with its brand (Descheemaker 2012; Milburn 2012; W. Phillips 2012). Today, this cultural concept is still reflected in the pride of owning a good brand as well as in owning or working for a reputable cattle operation (Foster 2012; Stulc 2013).

4.5.2 Cattle brands as elements of history and heritage

The author has observed that in Montana, cattle brands are prominent aspects of personal and family heritage. The following narratives support this point. With the exception of Vestal’s (1981) account, which is taken from historical literature, all of the texts comprise excerpts from the author’s personal interviews and conversations with the brand owners. Except for the quote contained in (102) below, each example refers to a particular cattle brand contained in the author’s data set in Table 2 above.

95) Vestal (1981: 218-219) (#14, 41):

There is a certain magic in old brands for it conjures up visions of cattle drives, and camp fires, and lights in the bunkhouse window, and the brand my dad used all his ranching days, the *Circle D*...belonged, originally, to my granddad, Octave Lucier. There is no way of knowing the number of cattle and horses that carried the brand, but the number must have been great for the brand has been handed down from one generation to the next, probably making it one of the oldest brands in continuous family ownership in the state. The brand my mother used on her cattle must be about 70 years old. It included the initial of her first name, Stella. The brand, *S Bar Diamond*, is still in use on the herd of cattle she and my dad built ... in the thirties.

- 96) Descheemaeker (2012) (#22): “The *E6* brand was started by Dennis [Descheemaeker’s] great grandfather in Carbon County.”
- 97) Foster (2012) (#43):
Our [*T Diamond*] brand...in that position [RR] goes back a long time...it was [first] recorded to Phil Sanders, [my] Grandma Ellie’s uncle. From the time he had it till now it’s been in the family lineage. It’s a two-iron brand which is extremely difficult to get now. That one goes on extremely well, it’s a great brand to read and a great working brand. Because it’s been in the family that long it has a different value to me than if I just bought [a brand]...it’s such a subtle part of our heritage. It’s just there.
- 98) McReynolds (2012) (#24, 25):
My Mom and Dad made a deal with us kids that if we milked the cow we would get a calf. When I was nine years old I got a steer and then the next year I got a heifer and I got to pick my own brand. I chose *L Hanging E Bar*...it is just like my Dad’s which is the *M Hanging E Bar*. Mine just has an ‘L’ instead of an ‘M’.
- 99) H. Miller (2012) (#16, 38):
My parents had the [*Diamond 7*] brand for a long time. They were among the first people in the [Lewistown] area to raise registered Angus cows...the brand was given to [my son] Rick by his grandpa because he was the oldest grandson. My Dad’s other brand was the *Reverse R Bar H*...but [Rick] must have let that one go. The brands speak to how this ranch is important to our family and they continue in our family and all that sort of thing...brands have a lot of meaning. I kind of go “Oooh” when I find out that Rick let go of the *Reverse R Bar H*... I want to say to myself, that was my Mom and Dad’s brand.
- 100) Fourteen year old Hayden Jensen (2012) (#50), in response to the author’s question as to whether he thinks he will keep using his family’s brand or get a new one, replied that “I

would probably keep the family brand and just run that one...that's the brand that I've always grown up with, that I've always seen."

- 101) In an interview with the author on 26 May, 2012, members of the Phillips family, who are ranchers in the Lewistown area, described how their two brands are extremely important parts of their family's heritage. It was explained to the author that the *Apple* brand (#4) in LH position has been part of the family since the 1970s when Robert Phillips obtained it. Robert has now passed this brand on to his grandson, Tye Phillips, who uses it on his ranch (named the Phillips 5 Ranch, since Tye is a fifth generation rancher in the family). Tye's mother, Susan Phillips, had the following to say about her attachment to the *Apple* brand: "I like to see that *Apple* brand on Tye's calves. It's a neat thing to know that [Bob] used it and now Tye is using it." In addition, Wes Phillips (Tye's father) has used the *Bar Diamond* brand (#7) on his cattle for more than forty years. According to Wes, "a brand is a source of pride and thanksgiving...it's a blessing...part of our heritage...working with the generations a brand becomes intrinsic in that sense; [it] becomes part of you".
- 102) Wood (2012: 10): "My family's tradition...has been to give each grandchild a heifer calf for their second birthday. Carson's heifer calf was branded with his Daddy's brand in June and is officially his today. Don't you love tradition?"
- 103) Clark (2013) (#31):
The *Quarter Circle Lazy T* was my folks' [brand]...they had a ranch in Sweetgrass County by Melville, Montana...and then when they didn't have cattle any longer they gave the brand to me for us to use...I'm proud to be using my folks' brand...it's like there's a part of them with us...it goes back to when I was little...I have good memories associated with that.
- 104) In some cases, family disputes have erupted over brands. For instance, in a conversation with the author on October 17, 2013, Lynn McMillan, related to the author how he has tried unsuccessfully for years to obtain his family's brand from his late father's widow. According McMillan, the brand — *Circle 4* (#13) — was one of the first brands to be legally registered in the State of Montana. The author determined that the brand appears on page number 276 in *The Stockgrowers' Directory of Brands and Marks for the State of Montana 1872-1900*

(Van Dersal & Connor (1900), which verifies that it is indeed an early Montana brand. McMillan's father used the brand for many years and when he died it was left to his surviving spouse. McMillan told the author that the only thing he wanted from his father's estate was the brand, because he sees it as part of his family's history and heritage and wants to make sure it remains in the family. His father's widow, however, refuses to part with the brand, and this has caused a great deal of ill-will in the family.

The examples cited above indicate that sentimental attachments to family cattle brands can be extremely strong. As Merritt (2010:5) has rightly observed, "brands are possessions, and often have a family value that can't be measured by the cost of registration or rerecord fees." It is thus quite common for people to keep their cattle brand registrations current even if they are no longer using the brands, so that the brands can remain in the family (Descheemaeker 2012, D. Miller 2012).

In Ch.1 §1.8 it was explained that all livestock brands used in Montana must be registered with the Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL). Registered brands are recorded in brand books along with "a variety of information of both the individual who registered the brand and the brand itself...a typical registration includes a sketch of the brand, the name of the person or business who registered the brand, that person's town or country of residence, the type of animal for which it is registered and the brand's placement on the animal" (Porsild & Miller 2002: 81). Since brand registrations must be renewed every ten years, it is possible to trace the history of any particular brand retroactively through each preceding brand book publication that covers a specific decade. Thus, as pointed out by Porsild & Miller (2002: 81) "the brand books can prove invaluable to genealogists looking to locate people who might not appear in city directories, homestead records, or land registers." Other details that can be traced through the brand books include the range areas and types of animals raised by particular ranches, as well as changes in ranch and brand ownership (Porsild & Miller 2002: 81). In a test of this process, the author determined that the *House* brand (#23) dates back to the period 1872-1900. The brand appears on page number 196 in *The Stockgrowers' Directory of Brands and Marks for the State of Montana 1872-1900* (Van Dersal & Connor 1900), where it is listed as being registered to an Adolph Odenwald in Cottonwood, Fergus County, Montana, for cattle in right rib (RR) position (Van Dersal & Connor 1900: 196). Today, this same brand (for cattle, RR) is owned by Charles Yaeger from Lewistown in Fergus County,

Montana, which is situated only a few miles from Cottonwood (MDOL 2015). The author was not able to verify how many times the *House* brand changed hands before it was acquired by Yaeger.

Beyond their role as important elements of family history and heritage, cattle brands also feature prominently in the collective historical and heritage landscape in Montana. Historical publications as well as oral narratives collected by the author support the notion that certain Montana cattle brands are associated with particular time periods, significant events, and even historical figureheads. For example:

- 105) The map of Montana territory in Figure 15, which displays cattle brands as markers of the range areas of various cattle outfits during the open range era, clearly links the specific brands shown on the map to this historical time period (see §4.3.3).
- 106) Wolfenstine (1970: 27) notes that United States President, Theodore Roosevelt, began using the *Triangle* (#44), *Elkhorn* (#21) and *Maltese Cross* (#26) brands on his Montana cattle ranch in 1883, and that these brands were among the first to be registered with the State's newly-established Board of Livestock Commissioners in 1884. The *Maltese Cross* brand appears on the map in Figure 15 on the far right-hand side.
- 107) The name of the N Bar Ranch and its brand (#40) features prominently in written historical accounts of the Central Montana region (Osgood 1970; Randolph 1981; Thiessen 1986; Grosskopf & Newby 1991). The ranch began its operations in the area at the outset of Montana's cattle boom in the late 1800s, and its original headquarters on the Flatwillow Creek in Montana still exist and function today. The historical value of the brand rests in the fact that the N Bar Ranch has "withstood droughts, grasshoppers, depressions, wars and anti-meat movements" (Goggins 1991: v) and has played a prominent role in the history of Montana's cattle ranching industry. In an interview with the author on 16 June, 2012, Tim Milburn, whose grandfather, Jack Milburn, managed the N Bar Ranch during the 1940s, testified to the fact that in 1942 his grandfather "got the highest price in the nation for his steer calves and that put him and the N Bar on the map."
- 108) Niedringhaus's (2010) account of the history of the N Bar N Ranch, the *N Bar N* brand's listing in Van Dersal & Connor (1900: 123), and its appearance on the map in Figure 15 indicate that the *N Bar N* (# 27) is an early Montana brand that is linked to the origins of the State's beef industry and the open range era.

- 109) Vestal (1981: 218-221) emphasises the personal and historical associations of her parents' brands, the *Circle D* (#14) and the *S Bar Diamond* (#41) (see §4.2.1) in the following narrative:

The brand my dad used all his ranching days, the *Circle D*, was one of the oldest brands in the state of Montana. You will find this brand listed in the book of brands used in the state before the year 1900...My folks were forced to sell the entire original herd during the depression days of the thirties, with the exception of one shorthorn cross cow which was kept for milk...during those years my folks would get about ten head of dairy calves each year...from this nucleus, a rebuilding process was begun...the *S Bar Diamond* went a long way in the years after the Great Depression, and it did so on the hides of cattle bred and raised by two very astute stockmen, my dad and my mother...when Mom and Dad left this rough old world, a part of Montana's history went with them.

In addition to the examples given above, the following brands contained in the author's data set (Table 2) are listed in (Van Dersal & Connor 1900). These brands undoubtedly possess some historical value in that they can be traced back to the beginnings of Montana's cattle industry, which was a defining period in the history of the State (Wolfenstine 1970, see Ch. 1§1.6):

- 110) 7 7 7 (#2) (Van Dersal & Connor 1900: 64, 116, 155, 386)
111) *Apple* (#4) (Van Dersal & Connor 1900: 16, 17, 113, 141)
112) *Circle 4* (#13) (Van Dersal & Connor 1900: 276)
113) *Circle* (#12) (Van Dersal & Connor 1900:159)
114) *Diamond* (#15) (Van Dersal & Connor 1900: 113, 114, 153, 200, 232, 246, 258, 268, 272, 273, 276, 383)
115) *Diamond Dot* (#17) (Van Dersal & Connor 1900: 121, 211, 257, 260, 296)
116) *OX* (#28) (Van Dersal & Connor 1900: 7, 143, 215)
117) *Pear* (#29) (Van Dersal & Connor 1900: 197, 385)
118) *Pipe* (#30) (Van Dersal & Connor [1900] 1974: 3, 204)

- 119) *Star* (#42) (Van Dersal & Connor [1900] 1974: 11, 106, 255, 274)
- 120) *Turkey Track* (#45) (Van Dersal & Connor [1900] 1974:163)
- 121) *Two Dot* (#46) (Van Dersal & Connor [1900] 1974:305)
- 122) *X I T* (#48) (Van Dersal & Connor [1900] 1974:115)

By virtue of their historic origins, cattle brands are inextricably linked to another iconic cultural image of the American West – the cowboy. In his book, *Cowboy Ethics*, Owen (2004) quotes a poem written by cowboy poet Red Stegall, which eloquently speaks to the connection between man and brand. In Owen’s words, the poem “tells of the Waggoner Ranch and a leathery, hard-bitten old cowpoke named Jake who is schooling “the new kid” in the unwritten laws of the range.” The poem, titled “Ride for the Brand”, reads as follows (Owen (2004: 52) :

Son, a man’s brand is his own special mark,
It says “This is mine. Leave it alone.”
You hire out to a man, you ride for his brand
And protect it like it was your own.

He said, Mister Waggoner come out here in 1903,
This country was sagebrush, mesquite trees and sand.
He carved this ranch out of blood, sweat and guts,
So be proud that you ride for his brand.

Although Stegall’s poem is not a uniquely ‘Montana’ example, it undeniably speaks to the cowboy tradition that has played such a momentous role in shaping the State’s cultural profile. The fact that cattle brands feature in the literary arts provides further evidence of their overall cultural significance.

A fairly recent and very interesting instance of cultural expression through cattle brands is found in the case of the ornamental *V E T O* brand (#47) which is owned by the former Governor of the State, Brian Schweitzer (see §4.4.4). The story behind the origins of the *V E T O* brand is particularly intriguing, if not somewhat humorous (depending on one’s political orientation). In 2011, the former Governor of the State of Montana, Brian Schweitzer (himself a rancher) drew

much media attention by publicly vetoing several bills using a branding iron that bore the word 'VETO'. The incident is described by Johnson (2011) as follows:

In vintage political theater in front of Montana's Capitol, Gov. Brian Schweitzer wielded three red-hot branding irons to burn "VETO" messages on some Republican bills Wednesday as a large crowd cheered him on.

Schweitzer emblazoned his "VETO" brand on seven paper bills attached to planks of wood that already had the bill numbers burned on them. The planks were hung on a display board. The worse the bill in his eyes, the larger the branding iron he used. The bill papers would catch fire as the branding iron went through it to sear the wooden planks.

The Governor's *VETO* brand not only conveyed a political message but also made the statement that Montana is still cattle and cowboy country; a symbolic as well as linguistic testimony to the State's history and cultural heritage. The value of cattle brands as cultural and heritage symbols is profoundly expressed in the following statement by Kelton (2002: x):

From the ornate brands of the early Spanish cowmen to the simpler and more utilitarian irons used today, each has a story worth telling. Each reminds us of an open-handed way of life that seems to be slipping from our grasp. It is a way of life that still has much to teach us about individual freedom and the entrepreneurial spirit exemplified by those enterprising cattlemen who were our forebears. It is a legacy we should not let go.

4.6 The socio-onomastic significance of American cattle brands

The data presented in this chapter reveals the rich and multi-dimensional nature of the contextual meaning of American cattle brands, and indicates the powerful role played by names and naming conventions in the construction and expression of this meaning. The examples discussed above highlight two interesting and important onomastic phenomena which appear to be characteristic of cattle brands (see §4.2). Firstly, there exists a measure of interplay between cattle brand names, cattle brand symbols and other types of names including personal names, ranch names and business names which creates associations between cattle brands, people and other entities; and secondly,

the connections between cattle brands and various elements in their socio-cultural surrounds become sources of meaning that are infused into the brands and their names. It is posited that these onomastic relationships are what characterise the socio-onomastic significance of American cattle brands.

By virtue of the often rich and diverse layers of meaning that become attached to them, cattle brands take on various socially-based functions that stretch far beyond their practical use as marks of animal identification (see §4.5). The author's data shows, for example, that cattle brands serve as symbols of family history and heritage. Numerous brands that are currently in use today have been passed down from generation to generation within families, and are cherished parts of family legacies. The incorporation of initials of personal names into brand design is an important naming strategy through which links between cattle brands, individuals and families are forged. Vestal's (1981) account of the legacy surrounding the *S Bar Diamond* brand (#41) in her family's history is one case in point (see §4.2.1.1; §4.5.2). As evidenced in the examples contained in §4.2.2.3 and §4.4, the use of personal names in conjunction with cattle brand names in the naming of ranches such as Phillips Bar Diamond Ranch and Stevenson's Diamond Dot Ranch is another naming phenomenon that establishes and maintains links between cattle brands and families. It is essential to note, however, that cattle brands with seemingly arbitrary designs, that is, which do not display obvious onomastic connections, can acquire a great deal of sentimental value. This is the case with the *Apple* and *Bar Diamond* brands (#4, #7) which, as explained to the author in an interview, have come to form inseparable components of the history and heritage of the Phillips family (W. & S. Phillips 2012; §4.5.2). The statement made by Foster (2012) in an interview with the author provides further first-hand testimony as to the personal heritage value of cattle brands (see §4.5.2 # 97). Also of interest is the fact that associations between cattle brands and families can be solidified on the basis of other semiotic uses of cattle brands such as the placement of cattle brand symbols and names on private ranch signposts, as is evidenced in the example of the *T-Diamond* brand (#43) (§4.3, see Figure 14). The heritage and sentimental value of cattle brands is a recurring theme in local social discourse, and is reflected in the data through the detailed narratives obtained from the author's various sources (see §4.5.2). Speaking succinctly to this issue, Foster (2012) has remarked that "I am going to be the last Foster to use [the *T Diamond* brand]...but I know my sons will not let it go even if they don't use it going forward."

The data show that in addition to being cherished aspects of family history and heritage, cattle brands are also important components of the wider socio-historical and cultural heritage landscape in Montana. Once again, names are found to be key role-players in this function of cattle brands. The *N Bar N* brand (#27) is a good example of how a brand and its name can take on personal as well as social significance. As pointed out in §4.2.1.1, the *N Bar N* brand took its design and name from the first initial of the last name of its original owners, Frank and William Niedringhaus. The brand originated in 1885 during the early days of Montana's beef industry as the brand of the Niedringhaus Home Land and Cattle Company, and gained prestige through the fact that the company became one of the largest cattle producers operating in Central Montana during this time-frame. The *N Bar N* brand name is still well-known in the region today and was recently featured in an article published by a leading historical publication (Niedringhaus 2010).

The case of the *S Bar Diamond* brand (#41) comprises another good example of the onomastic relationships of cattle brands and the ways in which social meaning becomes attached to them. As related by Vestal (1981), the *S Bar Diamond* brand design and name contains the initial of her mother's first name, Stella (see §4.2.1.1). In addition to emphasising the importance of the *S Bar Diamond* brand in her family's history and heritage (see §4.5, example (95)), Vestal (1981: 218-219) extends the significance of the brand into a wider cultural arena in which social history and heritage is brought into focus:

There is a certain magic in old brands for it conjures up visions of cattle drives, and camp fires, and lights in the bunkhouse window... the puff of smoke from a calf being branded brings back so many memories...the dust, the milling, bawling cattle, my dad carrying the hot branding iron, my mom putting the hot fragrant food on the table for the hungry cowboys...sights and sounds and smells, and the branding iron in the gleaming coals of the flickering fire, all memories of these two dearly beloved early ranchers, Stell [sic] and Henry, Mom and Dad.

This poignant statement supports the argument put forward by heritage practitioners that people “ascribe symbolic meaning to...things which differ from their obvious and practical meanings” on the basis of “actions and imaginations” (Byrne 2008: 152,155). The correlations between Vestal's (1981) account above and the following statement by Byrne (2008: 155) are very clear:

“People who move through a [physical and/or cultural] landscape...inevitably encounter traces of themselves there. These are not physical traces, like old bicycles and discarded toys, left behind by their younger selves. They also encounter associations. Recollections and emotions are triggered by the sight of traces in the form of objects; they are also triggered by the sight, smell and feel of familiar places...heritage practice has come to acknowledge the importance of ‘intangible heritage’ and hence to recognise the importance of memory.”

It is clear that the onomastic relationships displayed by cattle brands are not limited to connections between brands and personal names, but as shown by the data, also include links to place names (see §4.2.1.2, §4.2.2.4), ranch names (see §4.2.2.3), names of entities such as organizations (see §4.2.1.3, §4.2.2.5), and names of common objects (see §4.2.1.4). With regards to the construction of ideas pertaining to cultural heritage, the ties between cattle brands, places and place names are particularly significant. Two cases in point are those of the Montana towns of Circle and Two Dot, which were named after the *Circle* and *Two Dot* brands (see §4.2.2.4). The naming of human settlements in Montana after cattle brands lends support to the argument that certain entities acquire ‘psychosocial salience’ through naming (Van Langendonck 2007: 89) and implies that brands are important elements in the lives of the local populace (Kadmon 2000: 4). The practice also supports the notion that toponyms often carry historical and cultural meanings that may be based on their lexical content and/or their associative meanings (Basso 1996; Kadmon 2000; Raper 2012).

The naming of ranches after cattle brands, as discussed in §4.2.2.3, strengthens and expands upon this position. The author has observed that it is customary throughout the State of Montana to name ranches after cattle brands (Adams 1970: xix), and given the large number of ranches that exist throughout the State, their names feature prominently in the local micro-topology. (Although base numbers are not available to conduct a full statistical analysis, it is worth noting that 14 or 28% of the 50 brands contained in the author’s data set form the basis for ranch names). It is worth noting that the syntactic structure of the noun phrases (NPs) comprising ranch names that include the names of cattle brands shows a tendency for the noun ‘ranch’ to be preceded by a cattle brand name acting as an adjective or descriptor (see §4.4). This onomastic phenomenon points to the importance not only of cattle brands but also to the activity of ranching itself, within Montana’s

local socio-cultural context. The affinity that ranchers have with their land is illustrated in the following comments made by A. Clark (2013):

I think about the ancestors that ranched [here] before us first...then our family and the roots we have established for ourselves [here]...I always think of the land (and ranching also because they go hand-in-hand) with pride and a sense of accomplishment. We are so blessed to be able to live the life we do. It is an extremely hard life, but if you're looking for rewards other than monetary, it is also extremely rewarding. Land is precious. If you're lucky enough to own a ranch you'd better do everything possible to hang onto it. Once it's sold, the odds are that you will never be able to buy it back. We really have literally poured our blood, sweat, and tears into the land to build the Clark Ranch.

Clark's statement poignantly highlights the inseparable connections between people, the land, and animals in the activity of ranching, out of which a livelihood is derived. Her statement also expresses a strong impression of identity, not only in a personal sense, but also at a wider social and cultural level. Culturally, the State of Montana is still very much defined in terms of its hardy and resilient cowboy and cattle ranching heritage, in which brands have played a central role ever since the first cattle and cowboys came to the region. The story behind the creation of the former Montana State Governor Brian Schweitzer's *V E T O* brand (see §4.6), is a prime example of the cultural iconicity of cattle brands. Although Schweitzer's actions may be considered by some as 'theatrical', this incident superbly illustrates how cattle brands exist and function as culturally "significant symbols" of Montana's cattle and cowboy heritage and cultural identity (Geertz 1983: 363). It might also be argued that, in this particular case at least, cattle brands (as cultural icons) represent an "identity myth" (Holt 2004: 2) in which the 'rough and tough' cowboy image is strategically and "charismatically" employed to make a powerful statement of political and cultural identity (Holt 2004: 2, 3). In overall terms, the author's data staunchly undergirds Holt's (2004) contention that cultural icons are representative symbols of what people in a particular socio-cultural setting hold to be significant and meaningful, and are thus by definition signifiers of cultural heritage and identity (see Ch. 2 §2.3.4) .

Further along these lines, the data presented in this chapter shows that the system of cattle brands as a whole possesses a number of essential characteristics that are attributed to recognisable and definable cultural semiotic systems. For instance, individual cattle brand symbols and names can be taken to represent Hodge and Kress's (1988) notion of 'messages', which are the smallest semiotic forms (see Ch. 2 §2.3.5). If the primary practical function of cattle brands to identify and designate ownership of the animals on which the brands appear, it follows that at the most basic and discernible level, the intended purpose of the use of any particular brand is to convey the message that legal ownership of an animal and the brand by a certain person or entity can be proven. Brand books, which contain lists of all the brands used in a particular region alongside their owners' names (see Ch. 1 §1.5), comprise a good example of how groups of brands make up a larger text in which legal ownership of brands is publicly asserted. This text is situated within a wider social discourse in which brands were and still are recognised and accepted as designators of livestock identification and ownership. Furthermore, the messages and texts that are created and passed around within this particular sphere of discourse reflect certain norms and values, or "ideological content" (Hodge & Kress 1988) that are defining features of the surrounding culture in which the discourse is embedded. Thus, the text contained in brand books exists and is interpreted within a cultural context that honours the tradition of livestock branding and acknowledges the validity of brands as marks of legal ownership of animals. At a deeper level, this text is connected to other elements of cultural discourse such as the history and heritage of Montana's cattlemen and the associated iconic images of cattle, horses, cowboys and of course brands.

A particularly noteworthy instance of how clusters of cattle brands function as semiotic texts is illustrated in Figure 15, which shows how the range areas of various cattle ranching outfits that operated in Montana during the open range era were indicated on official maps by the brands (symbols) belonging to these entities. It is posited here that such maps represented texts that communicated messages of cattle brand ownership as well as of unofficial but locally-accepted prescriptive rights to land (see §4.4.3). Again, these texts formed part of a larger discourse that was situated in a cultural environment which was very much defined by Montana's cattle industry and the acceptable practices and customs of the major social 'players' during that time period. It is interesting to note how changes in social processes are reflected in changes to the texts that have been produced within the semiotic system of cattle brands. For example, cattle brands no longer

appear on official State maps, but are instead displayed on private ranch signposts as illustrated in Figure 14 with the *T Diamond* brand example. This change reflects significant shifts in the social order, including government regulations and legal processes, which came about when the open range gave way to private land ownership and the large cattle outfits were replaced (for the most part) with smaller family-oriented ranching operations. Naming conventions played a crucial part in realising these shifts. The practice of naming ranches after cattle brands in particular signified the acceptance of a changing social and socio-economic order in Montana, and simultaneously, perhaps, as means of preserving the memory of a much-revered way of life that appeared to be slowly fading into the pages of history. In this sense, ranches that carry the names of cattle brands serve not only as powerful onomastic reminders of a bygone era, but also as linguistic symbols of a rich and colourful cultural heritage that is being perpetuated in the present.

The discussion here indicates that the identified socio-cultural meanings and functions of American cattle brands are based on underlying social motivations which are manifested through diverse onomastic strategies. The associations that are established between cattle brands and different elements in their socio-cultural surrounds on the basis of these onomastic trends infuse cattle brands with various dimensions of extra-linguistic meaning which in turn reflect underlying socio-cultural concerns, beliefs and values. On this premise, it is contended that American cattle brands are important socio-onomastic phenomena that play a vital role in expressing concepts of social and cultural identity.

4.7 Summary

The data presented in this chapter shows that cattle brands are highly conspicuous elements throughout the State of Montana's physical landscape, visible not only on the hides of cattle, but also on other parts of the physical landscape such as signposts, decorative items, clothing, advertisements. Cattle brands also feature in public registries and local folk literature, and have even been used in the State's political arena. Alongside their distinctive aesthetic features as symbols, cattle brands are also prominent onomastic components which comprise a unique aspect of the region's linguistic composition. The author's examination of the data reveals that in addition to standing as names in their own right, that is, as names of cattle brands, these onomastic entities display multi-dimensional relationships with other types of names. On the one hand, cattle brand

symbols and names are found to originate from personal, place and business names as well as from names of common objects, whilst on the other hand, cattle brand names form the basis for names of people, places, ranches, businesses, and even abstract concepts. These interrelated onomastic connections represent underlying associations between cattle brands and other elements in their rich and colourful socio-cultural surrounds which in turn reflect latent social motivations and concerns. The multi-faceted nature of the contextual meanings that are carried and conveyed by cattle brands provide some fascinating insights into the history, culture and social structure of communities and families in the region.

The discussion here has shown that cattle brand names are key components in the naming conventions used in the State of Montana, and this onomastic phenomenon reveals how deeply cattle brands are embedded within the local socio-culture. The prominence of cattle brand names in the region's onomasticon shows that cattle brands are important aspects of Montana's history and cultural heritage and that people take them very seriously. The stories and anecdotes which become attached to cattle brands reinforce this idea and draw attention to the ways in which cattle brands trigger memories of people, places and events that are deemed important in the lives of individuals, families and communities. By virtue of this mnemonic function, cattle brand names and symbols have become repositories of local knowledge and form part of the ethno-historical record (both oral and written) in the State of Montana. Furthermore, through their on-going practical relevance in contemporary day-to-day cattle ranching activities, cattle brands continue to play a particularly powerful role in the continuity of heritage in Montana. Thus, in addition to being significant components of the surrounding culture, cattle brands play a reflexive role in establishing, maintaining and expressing cultural values as well as concepts of cultural identity. On this basis, cattle brands are considered to form part of a larger semiotic system in which they function as socio-onomastic texts of cultural identity.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the overall conclusions of the research that has been presented in this thesis. In §5.2 the results of the study are summarised and related to the primary goals of the project (see Ch. 1 §1.3). The relevance and contributions of the thesis to theoretical perspectives in several disciplines including onomastics, heritage studies, cultural identity studies and social semiotics are set out in §5.3. In §5.4 the author explains how the research serves the interests of the local community in which it was carried out. The limitations of the study and the author's recommendations for further research are identified and discussed in §5.5. Some concluding thoughts are expressed in §5.6.

5.2 Summary of the research findings

One of the primary assumptions made in this thesis is that the system of American cattle brands is essentially a linguistic one which comprises symbols and corresponding names. Cattle brand symbols are used as permanent marks of identification that are placed on the hides of livestock, whilst cattle brand names provide essential written and oral references for their symbolic counterparts. Although they have different linguistic forms and functions, these two components are inseparable from one another in the sense that a speaker cannot verbally reference a cattle brand symbol without using its name, and conversely, a listener needs to know what cattle brand symbol is being referred to when a specific cattle brand name is uttered.

The main purpose of this thesis has been to investigate and explain the ways in which American cattle brands acquire meaning within the context of their socio-cultural surrounds and to determine the nature and significance of such meaning. The research presented here has determined that although cattle brands display a lack of linguistic meaning, or semantic content, they possess various dimensions of extra-linguistic meaning which reflect associations between cattle brands and diverse elements in their socio-cultural surrounds. The symbiotic relationship between cattle brand symbols and cattle brand names implies that these contextually-based meanings are shared by both constituents (see Ch. 4 §4.5).

The current study clearly demonstrates that onomastic strategies play a powerful role in establishing the contextual or associative meanings of cattle brands. In this regard, two main naming conventions have been identified. The first process entails the use of various types of names (including parts of names) as the basis for the visual designs of cattle brand symbols, examples of which were given in Ch. 4 §4.2.1 The *N Bar N* cattle brand design (#27), for instance, incorporates the first letter of the last name of the brand's original owners, the brothers Niedringhaus. One aspect of the connotative or contextual meaning carried by this particular cattle brand is established through the association of the brand symbol (consisting of two 'N' letters with a bar sign between them) with the name 'Niedringhaus'. Historical narratives indicate that this design signifies the close relationship between the two siblings in their jointly-owned cattle business (Niedringhaus 2010; see Ch. 4 §4.2.1).

In the second naming approach identified in the study, the names of cattle brands are adopted as other kinds of names (see Ch. 4 §4.2.2). The Niedringhaus brothers, for example, named their cattle ranch the N Bar N Ranch after their *N Bar N* cattle brand (Niedringhaus 2010). The N Bar N Ranch gained notoriety as one of the largest cattle operations in Central Montana during the late 1880s, and its name thus carries some historical significance in Montana. The meaning associations that have been described in relation to the *N Bar N* cattle brand are naturally tied to the brand symbol as well as the brand and ranch names; a factor which emphasizes the point made earlier that the contextual meanings of cattle brands are attached to both of their linguistic forms.

The research indicates that cattle brand (language) users purposefully employ the identified naming strategies to create associations between cattle brands and various elements in their socio-cultural environment. It is contended that these connections not only ascribe meaning to cattle brands but also indicate how deeply cattle brands are embedded within their socio-cultural surrounds. The study has shown, for instance, how the narratives which become attached to cattle brands by virtue of onomastic associations trigger memories of people, places and events that are deemed important in the lives of the individuals, families and groups of people who are connected to the brands. It is argued that on the basis of these connections, cattle brands become infused with diverse aspects of socio-cultural meaning which are then reflected and projected back into their surroundings during the course of everyday life. Such meanings are reflected in the onomastic characteristics of cattle brands (that is, the names of cattle brands) as well as in the striking onomastic interplay that takes

place between the system of cattle brands as a whole (names and symbols) and other types of names (see Ch. 4 §4.2).

According to Searle (1998: 154), “a very special characteristic of language [is] symbolization. Humans have the capacity to use one object to stand for, represent, express, or symbolize something else.” This thesis provides conclusive evidence that in addition to their application as physical marks of identification on the hides of livestock, cattle brands are powerful cultural symbols which signify and express individual as well as group ideas about history, heritage and cultural identity in the State of Montana (see Ch. 4.5). It is proposed that cultural symbolism of cattle brands is a social construct which is established through the onomastic dimensions and relationships that are displayed by cattle brands within their overall socio-cultural context. Thus, in the final analysis, it is concluded that American cattle brands are worthy of consideration as socio-onomastic phenomena, and that the results of the research testify to their value and significance in this regard (see Ch. 2 §2.6).

5.3 Theoretical relevance and contributions of the study

To the best of the author’s knowledge, this thesis represents the first scholarly endeavour to examine the socio-cultural meanings of American cattle brands from an onomastic perspective. The author has identified the onomastic characteristics as well as onomastic associations of cattle brands and has used these components as the starting point for further investigation and analysis (see Ch. 1 §1.2). As stated in §5.2 above, this thesis is rendered as a study in socio-onomastics, since its focus is on exploring the ways in which cattle brands acquire meaning from their socio-cultural context and how such meaning relates to and/or is influenced by onomastic factors. On this basis, the current study makes several noteworthy contributions to onomastics theory and research.

It is asserted in this thesis that the written and oral forms of cattle brands are proper names. The fact that this is the first study to recognize and focus on this aspect of cattle brands shows that cattle brand names have not yet received any attention in onomastics research. The present work therefore expands existing typologies of proper names, such as the one proposed by Van Langendonck (2007), and adds to general discussions concerning the attributes, functions and meanings of various types of names (see Ch. 2 §2.3.1).

This study has ascertained that cattle brand names carry and convey various dimensions of extra-linguistic meaning on the basis of their underlying connections with different elements in their surrounding socio-cultural context (see Ch. 4 §4.6). This finding aligns with the theory of associative meaning in onomastics, which addresses the ways in which various types of names acquire different aspects of context-driven extra-linguistic or connotative meaning (see Ch. 2 §2.3.2). By identifying and explaining the various facets of contextual meaning displayed by cattle brand names, this research demonstrates the applicability and versatility of associative meaning theory in studies concerning the non-linguistic meanings of different categories of names. The fact that the contextual meanings of cattle brand names are extended to their corresponding symbols indicates that the current research stands to expand the theory of associative meaning by suggesting that the approach may have some applicability beyond the study of names to other linguistic forms including, for instance, certain types of sign systems (such as cattle brands) in which meaning is opaque (see Ch. 2 §2.3.2).

The study has further determined that the contextual meanings of cattle brand names have a social basis; that is to say, these meanings are assigned by cattle brand (language) users and are based on underlying social motivations which reflect concerns with social factors such as history, heritage and cultural identity (see Ch. 4 §4.5, §4.6). Through its emphasis on accounting for social and cultural influences in exploring the meanings and functions of cattle brand names, the study makes a fresh contribution to the field of socio-onomastics. It also illustrates the value of the current approach in research which aims to arrive at socially and culturally-relevant interpretations of onomastic meaning through understanding the context in which such meaning is negotiated (see Ch. 2 §2.4).

The research demonstrates that the system of cattle brands as a synchronic whole (that is, cattle brand names and cattle brand symbols) possesses onomastic features and, in addition, displays a range of socially-constructed associations with other types of names within socio-cultural context (see Ch. 4 §4.2). On this basis, it is contended here that socio-onomastic research should not only be concerned with establishing how names derive meaning from their surrounding social context, but that it should also consider the entire range of complex and oftentimes reflexive relationships that exist between names and various social forces and attempt to explain the significance of these

associations (see Ch. 2 §2.4). This argument adds a new dimension to existing ideas about the scope of socio-onomastics research and thus builds onto current socio-onomastic theory.

With its emphasis on the social foundations of the contextual meanings of cattle brands, the research presented in this thesis extends beyond the boundaries of onomastics and intersects with several other disciplines in the social sciences. In this way, the current study draws attention to the interdisciplinary nature of onomastics research as a whole (see Ch. 2 §2.4) and highlights the potential for names studies to make significant contributions to other fields of social science research. The study has shown, for instance, that cattle brands are prominent tokens of personal and group heritage in Montana's cattle ranching communities, based on underlying social views concerning personal as well as cultural heritage (see Ch. 4 §4.5.2). By pointing out the socially-determined role of cattle brands as heritage symbols, this thesis supports Byrne's (2008) argument that heritage is a social construct as well as a form of social action which reflects people's perceptions as to what constitutes 'heritage'. Furthermore, the study indicates that different forms of language, including names and signs, can carry significant heritage value. Since language does not appear to have received a great deal of consideration in heritage studies, this thesis offers an important contribution to the field (see Ch. 2. §2.3.3). With its emphasis on the heritage value of cattle brands, this research also stands to enrich the existing body of literature pertaining to the history and cultural heritage of the American West.

The current research puts forward the argument that social perceptions of heritage are inseparable from social views about cultural identity (see Ch. 2 §2.3.4) and has demonstrated that cattle brands are employed as symbols of cultural identity in Montana. It is argued that the heritage as well as cultural symbolism of cattle brands is strongly manifested through onomastic strategies which incorporate the use of cattle brand names in the naming of other entities. On this basis, the study lends support to the notion that names are identity texts (Joseph 2004) and brings new insights to existing discussions as to how different types of names function in this way and what social forces contribute to this phenomenon.

The study has shown that cattle brand symbols as well as cattle brand names represent and express concepts of cultural heritage and identity. This phenomenon has been accounted for by referring to theoretical principles in the field of social semiotics, which is concerned with investigating how

various (linguistic) sign systems reflect patterns of socio-cultural behaviour (Crystal 1997: 403) as well as ideas about “the meanings and values which make up a culture” (Hodge & Kress 1988: 6). It is contended in this thesis that the system of cattle brands as a whole (names and symbols) represents a semiotic text which comprises various ‘messages’ concerning social perceptions of cultural identity. This text is seen to form part of a larger discourse which revolves around shared ideas about which elements of the surrounding social and cultural context define group conceptualisations of identity (see Ch. 2 §2.3.5; Ch. 4 §4.6). On the basis of these considerations, the current research reveals the nature and functions of the social semiotic system that is represented by the system of cattle brands, and thus sheds further light on how semiotic systems manifest and operate in certain socio-cultural contexts.

Along with its theoretical pertinence, this study has attracted the attention of other names scholars as a result of several conference papers that the author has presented concerning this research. In this regard, the author is very pleased to mention that she has been invited to speak on the topic of cattle brands by giving the plenary address at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Names (CSSN) to be held in Calgary, Alberta in May, 2016. (As with the State of Montana in the United States, the Province of Alberta, Canada is considered to be a “cattle and cowboy” region, and the city of Calgary is home to the world-famous Calgary Stampede which is held in the summer of every year.) This development clearly demonstrates the relevance of the current research in the field of onomastics and the potential for the study to make a significant and original contribution to the field.

5.4 How the study serves local interests

The author has experienced a high level of friendly collaboration between herself and people belonging to the local community in which the current research was carried out. Local ranchers unreservedly and enthusiastically shared their stories, views and opinions about cattle brands with the author in interviews as well as informal conversations (see Ch. 3 §3.3.3.1). The eagerness of informants to participate in the study is a strong indicator that cattle brands are important elements in the lives of ranching families and communities. What is particularly interesting, however, is the fact that it was admitted by some participants that cattle brands are so much a part of everyday life that they are often taken for granted. Several people thus complimented the author for conducting

the research and for reminding them about the social value of cattle brands with respect to local history, heritage and cultural expression (Foster 2012; McReynolds 2012; Milburn 2012; Phillips 2012).

As well as being willing participants in the study, several people have demonstrated a keen interest in the research itself and have expressed their desire to receive a copy of the thesis once it has been completed and printed (Foster 2012; Milburn 2012; Phillips 2012). It has also been recommended that the author write a book based on the current study (Miller 2012). This quality of feedback from local community members indicates that the author's research is deemed to be relevant and valuable within the local context. Since the study has shown that cattle brands are crucial components of family/social history and heritage, this thesis stands to make a new and noteworthy contribution to existing historical and heritage narratives of the Central Montana region.

5.5 Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research

Basso (1996: 111) has remarked that “from time to time, when luck is on their side, ethnographers stumble onto culturally given ideas whose striking novelty and evident scope seem to cry out for thoughtful consideration beyond their accustomed boundaries.” Paradoxically, the “novelty” of a hitherto unexplored cultural phenomenon sometimes presents the ethnographer with so much “scope” that his or her initial research must be limited to one or two prominent aspects of the subject in question. The positive side of this situation is that it produces abundant opportunities for further research. Such has been the case with this thesis, which represents an inaugural study of the socio-onomastic dimensions of American cattle brands.

The research presented here does have some constraints. One limiting factor is the case study approach that is one of the defining aspects of the methodological framework (see Ch. 3 §3.2.2). Although this method enabled the author to obtain rich data by conducting the study in a localised geographical region and social setting in which cattle brands are a part of everyday life and with which the author was very familiar, the approach naturally restricted the range and volume of data that were collected.

Data collection was also hampered to some extent by a number of practical issues. It was pointed out in Ch. 3 §3.4.2, for instance, that the busy schedules of cattle ranchers presented the author with

some difficulties when it came to scheduling appointments for personal interviews. This situation was exacerbated by the author's own time constraints due to her full time employment status. Unpredictable and oftentimes harsh weather conditions in Central Montana further narrowed the author's window of opportunity to conduct interviews. Thus, in ideal circumstances, additional data could have been collected through more interviews, but the practicalities mentioned here played a role in undermining such feasibility.

Overall, the ethnographic (qualitative) research methods utilised by the author yielded deep and original insights into the socio-onomastic dimensions and overall cultural significance of American cattle brands (see Ch. 3 §3.2.2). The author is aware, however, that some measure of quantitative analysis may have enhanced the study by supplementing the results of the qualitative work. For instance, it might have been interesting to obtain statistical data to indicate the frequency of occurrence of ranch names that are based on the names of cattle brands compared to ranch names that are derived from other types of names. However, the absence of reliable base numbers combined with time constraints made such an endeavour in the current research virtually impossible.

As pointed out earlier, one of the advantages of breaking new ground in a particular area of research is that the preliminary investigation points the way for further exploration of the subject in question. The current study indicates several possible directions for additional research into the socio-onomastic features of American cattle brands. It was mentioned above that the case study approach taken in this thesis limits the geographical reach of the study to the Central Montana region of the United States. Comparative studies of cattle brands found in other American States such as Wyoming and Texas, as well as in other cattle-producing nations such as Canada, Australia, Argentina and South Africa could therefore complement this thesis by establishing whether or not cattle brands found in these localities display the same socio-onomastic tendencies and socio-cultural significance as the cattle brands used in Montana.

During the course of consulting historical literature, the author noted that mention was made by several sources of the existence of Native American livestock brands (Wolfenstine 1970; Randolph 1981; Porsild & Miller 2002). Native American cattle brands represent a fascinating, untouched area of research which could include, for instance, determining the similarities and differences in

design between these and ‘Western’ American cattle brands such as those examined in the current study. Such research could also incorporate some inquiry into whether Native American cattle brands possess onomastic components, and if so what the nature of those features might be and how they might compare to the onomastic features of the “cowboy” cattle brands that have been the focus of this thesis.

The names of ranches in Montana (and perhaps the other regions mentioned above) may be a further avenue of research to stem from the current undertaking. For example, a corpus-based study of ranch names could form the basis of a quantitative analysis to determine the frequency of ranch names derived from cattle brands compared to ranch names derived from other types of names and/or entities. It would be interesting to see if the results of such a study support the data analysis in this thesis, which indicates that there seems to be a general tendency in Montana to name ranches after cattle brands. Since this onomastic practice appears to reflect the socio-cultural importance of cattle brands in the region (see Ch. 4 §4.6), a quantitative corpus-based study of Montana ranch names may thus also determine if onomastic strategies reveal other cultural symbols in the region.

Another possibility for further research is the construction of a formal typology of North American cattle brand designs. A diachronic approach to such an undertaking could provide some fascinating insights into the historical development of the language of cattle brands in the United States.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the overall conclusions of the current research in American cattle brands with reference to its findings (§5.2); the theoretical relevance and contributions of the thesis (§5.3); the interest and value of the study in local context, that is, with respect to the local community in which the research was conducted (§5.4); the limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research (§5.5).

In line with the ethnographic approach taken in this research (see Ch. 3 §3.2.2), the author has chosen to draw this thesis to a close with some local wisdom about the true meanings of cattle brands. In an interview with the author on 6 September, 2012, Helen Miller, a seasoned rancher from the Lewistown area, remarked that “[cattle] brands have a certain romance to them. They have

a lot of meaning for people other than just putting them on the cattle and saying the cattle are yours”.

This concise and poignant statement underscores the central tenet of this thesis, which is that American cattle brands have functions and meanings that go far beyond their practical uses as marks of animal identification and proof of ownership, and that these extended features are reflections as well as expressions of the overall socio-cultural environment in which cattle brands are deeply embedded.

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




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





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APPENDIX 1: Table 3 - Master Data Table of Montana Cattle Brands

Brand #	Brand Symbol	Brand Name	Design Type	Onomastic Connections		Semiotic associations of cattle brands	Information Source		
				Incorporated in brand design	Derived from brand		Primary	Secondary	Additional
1		3 Lazy S	2/A+N	personal name - 'Smith'			Informal conversation	Recorded interview	Author's observation
2		777	3/N	unknown - numeric	ranch name - '777 Ranch' group name - '777 Outfit'	open range map	Historical literature	Open range map (Figure 15)	
3		7 Hanging 7	2/N	unknown - numeric	ranch name - '7 Hanging 7 Ranch'	ranch signpost	Business document	Author's observation	
4		Apple	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'apple'			Recorded interview		
5	No Available Image	Bar 100	unknown	unknown - numeric	business name - 'Bar 100'	business sign	Informal conversation		
6		Bar Box H	3/P+A	personal name - 'Hamilton'			Informal conversation	Personal correspondence	
7		Bar Diamond	2/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'diamond'	ranch name - 'Phillips Bar Diamond Ranch'	personal decorative use	Recorded interview		
8		Bar L C	3/P+A	organization name - 'Lutheran Church'	ranch name - 'Bar LC Ranch'	barn	Business document	Personal correspondence	
9		Broken Heart	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'heart'	business name - 'Broken Heart Antiques'	business sign	Recorded interview		
10		C Bar Z	3/P+A	unknown	ranch name - 'Taylor's C Bar Z Ranch'		Business document		
11		C M R	3/A	personal name - 'Charles Marion Russell'		museum logo	MDOL Brand Book		
12		Circle	1/P	common name - 'circle'	geographic name - 'Circle' ranch name - 'Circle Ranch'		Historical literature	Local literature	
13		Circle 4	2/P+N	unknown but refers to common name - 'circle'			Informal conversation		

14		Circle D	2/P+A	unknown but refers to common name - 'circle'			Historical literature	Local literature	
15		Diamond	1/P	common name - 'diamond'	ranch name - 'Diamond Ranch' group name - 'Diamond Outfit'	open range map	Historical literature	Open range map (Figure 15)	
16		Diamond 7	2/P+N	unknown but refers to common name - 'diamond'		ranch signpost, personal decorative use, Angus cattle breed	Recorded interview	Author's observation	
17		Diamond Dot	2/P	unknown but refers to common names - 'diamond', 'dot'	ranch name - 'Stevenson's Diamond Dot Ranch'	advertising material	Informal conversation	Author's observation	
18		Diamond H Diamond	3/P+A	personal name 'Hamilton'			Informal conversation	Personal correspondence	
19		Dragging Y	1/A	unknown	ranch name - 'Dragging Y Ranch'	logo on clothing	Magazine article		
20		E B	2/A	personal name - 'Emmet Butcher'		Simmental cattle breed	Personal correspondence		
21		Elkhorn	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'elk horn'			Historical literature		
22		Hanging E 6	2/A+N	unknown		ranch signpost, Hereford Cattle Breed	Recorded interview	Author's observation	
23		House	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'house'		logo on clothing	Informal conversation		
24		L Hanging E Bar	3/A+P	personal name - 'Leda'			Recorded interview		
25	No Image Available	M Hanging E Bar	3/A+P	personal name - 'Montgomery'			Recorded interview		
26		Maltese Cross	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'Maltese cross'			Historical literature		
27		N Bar N	3/A+P	personal name - 'Niedringhaus'	ranch name - 'N Bar N Ranch' personal nickname - 'N Bar N Kid' group name - 'N Bar N Cowboys'	open range map	Magazine article	Books	Open range map (Figure 15)
28		O X	2/A	unknown	ranch name - 'OX Ranch' group name 'OX Outfit'	open range map	Historical literature	Open range map (Figure 15)	
29		Pear	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'pear'		barn, advertising material	Personal correspondence	Author's observation	
30		Pipe	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'pipe'			Personal correspondence		

31		Quarter Circle Lazy T	2/P+A	unknown		personal decorative use	Informal conversation	Recorded interview	Author's observation
32		Quarter Circle Reverse L E	3/A+P	personal name - 'Edward Leininger'	ranch name - 'LE Quarter Circle Ranch'		Informal conversation	Personal correspondence	
33		Quarter Circle S P	3/P+A	personal name - 'Sam Phillips'			Recorded interview		
34		R B Bar	3/A+P	personal name - 'Ross Butcher'			MDOL Brand Book		
35		R P Quarter Circle	3/A+P	personal name - 'Robert Phillips'			Recorded interview		
36		Rafter N Z	3/P+A	geographical name - 'New Zealand'	ranch name - 'Rafter NZ Ranch'		Business document		
37		Reverse C Bar Heart	3/A+P	personal name - 'Carol'			Author's brand		
38		Reverse R Bar H	3/A+P	unknown			Recorded interview		
39		Reverse R N Connected	2/A	personal name - 'Randolph'			Historical literature		
40		Running N Bar	2/A+P	personal name - 'Newman'	ranch name - 'N Bar Ranch'	ranch signpost, roof top, advertising materials, Angus cattle breed	Recorded interview	Open range map (Figure 15)	Historical literature
41		S Bar Diamond	3/A+P	personal name - 'Stella'			Historical literature		
42		Star	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'star'	group name - 'Star outfit'	open range map	Historical literature	Open range map (Figure 15)	
43		T Diamond	2/A+P	unknown but refers to common name - 'diamond'	ranch name - 'T Diamond Ranch'	ranch signpost	Recorded interview		
44		Triangle	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'triangle'			Historical literature		
45		Turkey Track	1/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'turkey track'		open range map	Historical literature	Open range map (Figure 15)	
46		Two Dot	2/P	unknown but refers to common name - 'dot'	geographic name - 'Two Dot' personal nickname - 'Two Dot'		Historical literature		
47		V E T O	4/A	common name - 'veto'		political action	News media		

48	XIT	X I T	3/A	(?) geographical name - 'Texas'	ranch name - 'XIT Ranch' group name - 'XIT Cowboys'	open range map (Figure 15)	Magazine article	Open range map (Figure 15)	
49	Y	Y	1/A	personal name - 'Yaeger'			Informal conversation		
50	Z/J	Z Slash J	3/A+P	unknown		logo on clothing	Recorded interview		