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The Great American Cattle Drive: Old West Adventure!

Michael Martin Murphey and fifty cowhands on horseback drove dozens of longhorn cattle right down the main street of Ellsworth, Kansas, as music, festivities and old West excitement took over the town. It was all part of the Great American Cattle Drive event, which began September 28 and ran through September 30 in Ellsworth, Kansas. According to Mark Roehrman, president of the National Drovers Hall of Fame Board of Directors, "We were ecstatic about the results of the weekend. We had great crowds, great enthusiasm and a great event!" Local officials estimated about 6,000 people were on hand to see the cattle arrive in downtown Ellsworth.

Old West enthusiasts from California, Idaho, Indiana, North Carolina and Rhode Island were just a few of the more than fifty drovers who came from all over the United States, to join The Great American Cattle Drive, commemorating Ellsworth's history as an end-of-the-trail railhead cow town. The cowhands herded longhorn cattle by horseback for 26 miles, through the rolling Smoky Hills of central Kansas. Enjoying the solitude and scenic beauty of the open plains, the drovers slept out under the stars after enjoying fireside cowboy songs by Michael Martin Murphey and Fred Hargrove. Drovers rode the range much like their predecessors did when herding cattle to market on the Ellsworth branch of the Chisolm Trail, arriving in downtown Ellsworth with their cattle herd, some 48 hours after the cattle drive began.

The town of Ellsworth itself was transformed for the weekend, into the Wild West boom town that it once was in the 1870's. The Western family festival included the unique shops in Ellsworth, street vendors, family games and entertainment, a medicine show, storytelling and an outhouse race. A live "End of the Trail Cow Camp" featured a genuine chuckwagon dinner, historic characters and Buffalo Soldiers, providing the public with a first hand look at life as it once was in the Kansas frontier. Adding to the cowboy atmosphere, celebrity Johnny Western provided a Friday evening concert, reminiscing about the background of his work, including writing and singing familiar TV Western theme songs, such as *Bonanza* and *The Ballad of Palladin*. Michael Martin Murphey closed out the festive weekend, with an open air, "End of the Trail" concert Saturday evening in Ellsworth. The concert was a crowd-pleaser, as Murphey entertained crowds with many of his popular favorites including his biggest hit song, *Wildfire*.

The Great American Cattle Drive will be held once again in 2007, from September 27 through the 30. According to Roehrman, "Next year's event will celebrate the 140th birthday of Ellsworth and the Chisolm Trail." To celebrate this anniversary, 140 head of longhorns will be herded in the 2007 cattle drive. Roehrman continued, "Many of the 2006 Cattle Drive participants have already signed up for the 2007 Great American Cattle Drive!"

The Great American Cattle Drive is held as a benefit for the National Drover's Hall of Fame, a non-profit group working to raise money to create a National Drover's Hall of Fame museum in Ellsworth.

For more information, go to www.nationaldrovers.com or call 785-472-4670 or email jjcloe@equinepromotions.net.