

THE WHITE BUFFALO

It was in search of the buffalo that J. Wright Mooar, his brother John, and their party of hunters first camped on the banks of Deep Creek in the year 1876. Those hunters were hardy men, aged beyond their youthful years by blizzards and sandstorms, stampedes and sneak attacks. They took their place in the history of the nation and Scurry County – coming after the Indian, the missionary, the explorer and the trader - and clearing the way for the cowman and settler.

No one knows how many buffalo roamed over North America before the white man came. The best estimates range from 60 to 75 million head. As late as 1830, after the hunters began their kills, there were 40 million. By 1883, less than one thousand head of buffalo were left in the United States.

The buffalos were the Indian's most important commodity. He ate its meat, fresh and dried; he used its hide for clothing, blankets, robes and for making tepees. He used the bones as tools, the sinew as thread, and the stomach as a water container. When the buffalo were gone, the Indian had little choice but to retreat to the reservations.

J. Wright Mooar claimed to have shot 22,000 head himself. Buffalo hunting was a business and an adventure. He believed that the

slaughter was necessary for the civilization of the West.

When in his early twenties, Mooar saved enough money chopping wood to outfit three wagons and assemble his own hunting and skinning crew. At first only the meat was sold. But

after J. Wright sent some hides to his older brother, John W., in New York, John found a market for the hides. This became a lucrative business, and by 1872 John had joined his brother in Dodge City, Kansas. J Wright continued to do the hunting, while John transacted the marketing of the hides and meat.

But it was October 7, 1876 that became a day to remember... About ten o'clock that morning, the Mooar outfit pitched camp on the banks of Deep Creek (approximately 10 miles northwest of the present Snyder Townsite). Mooar rode off to scout the country. It was almost sunset, as he headed back for camp, that he saw it! Against the horizon was a gleaming white creature, grazing contentedly in the midst of a small herd of buffalos. Having killed one in Kansas, Wright immediately knew it to a rare Albino, the first he had seen in Texas.

Mooar hurried to camp where his men were about to eat supper. He needed some help. Time was short and night was coming on. He

couldn't wait until morning – the beast might be gone. (It was customary to make the kills before midday, in order that the skinners would have time to do their work before nightfall). Mooar called to Dan Dowd to get out his skinning knives and come with him!

The two men slipped down the bank of the creek and moved cautiously toward the herd. When they got within shooting range, Wright and Dan crawled out of the creek bed and crouched in the grass. Wright rested his left elbow on the ground, using his hand as a prop for the heavy rifle. He took aim – fired - and the white animal fell. Wright had his trophy!

But the firing stampeded the herd. They thundered toward Dan and Wright. Quickly, Wright shot three more buffalos. The herd turned away just in time to miss the two men.

Because of J. Wright, Scurry County lays claim to the killing of the White Buffalo as one among only seven in the United States. The hid Mooar took that day was tanned and kept, and he showed it to visitors as long as he lived. Today, his granddaughter, Julia May McDonnell Hays, displays the hide in a glass case at her ranch home– not far from the site of the shooting.

The entire adventure lasted only a few minutes, but the memory of it remained with Dan and Wright the rest of their lives. It reaches out

to all today who stop and see the replica of the
White Buffalo on the Snyder Square.

Come see all of our “White Buffalo”
souvenir’s in our lobby.