With a New Preface by the Author

With this study the cattle guard joins the sod house, the windmill, and barbed wire as a symbol of range country on the American Great Plains. A U.S. folk innovation now in use throughout the world, the cattle guard functions as both a gate and a fence: it keeps livestock from crossing, but allows automobiles and people to cross freely. The author blends traditional history and folklore to trace the origins of the cattle guard and to describe how, in true folk fashion, the device in its simplest form—wooden poles or logs spaced parallel over a pit in the roadway—was reinvented and adapted throughout livestock country.

“Hoy has provided a broad history of the development of the cattle guard and its effect on rural life in the Great Plains.” —Great Plains Quarterly

“Hoy has written a readable book on a previously neglected topic of agricultural/plains history. The definitive work on this subject.”—Nebraska History

“Hoy tells the story in meticulous detail, with style and rural humor.”—Arizona Highways

“This well-written volume reflects both the author’s extensive research conducted in the United States and England and personal fascination with the topic.”—Arizona and the West

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