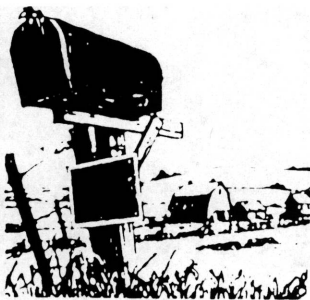


The Heartland Network



Postcards from the Heartland Network



Tallgrass Producers Thank Their Customers

Beaumont, Kansas - In the 1860's and 70's ranchers drove their cattle from the south central United States through the Flint Hills to railheads in Kansas. Their cattle, in prime condition after grazing on the tallgrass prairie, were shipped to Eastern markets with greatly increased value. Tallgrass Prairie Producers Co-op, a group of family ranchers in the historic Flint Hills of Kansas, continues with free range grazing building on modern genetics and forage management.

The Tallgrass Co-op strives to take back control of their market while providing their customers with

a unique taste of the Kansas range. This group of ranchers worked hard over the past two years putting together this partnership between ranchers and customers. A year ago Tallgrass became a legal cooperative and made its first sales. The Tallgrass Co-op extends their hand to the customer in the marketplace. Celebrating their first year, they invited their customers to an afternoon on the prairie at the Ferrell Ranch near Beaumont.

Greeting their customers on horseback and sporting boots and green bandanas under an autumn sun, these tallgrass ranchers walked the

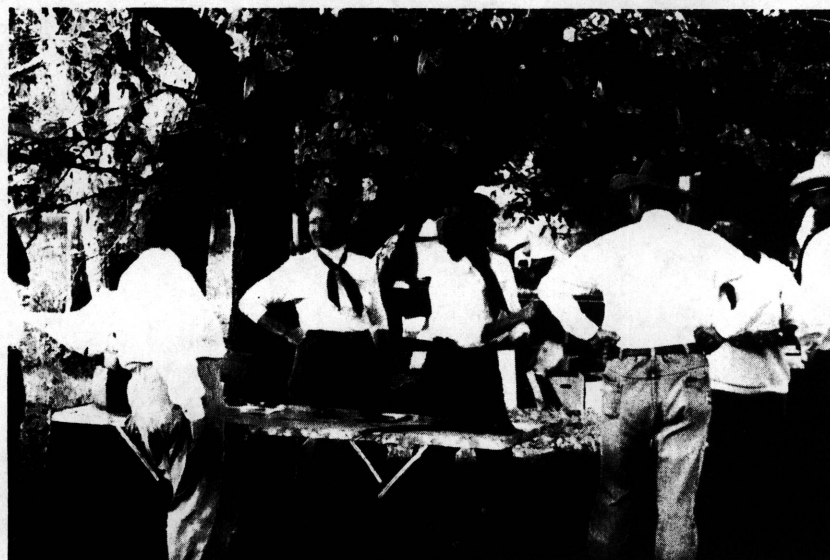
Pete Ferrell, (right) Flint Hills rancher from Beaumont led the group on a tour of Ferrell Ranch.

prairie and talked about the history of the region. Just before sundown, everyone settled down on hay bales and picnic tables and savored grilled filet mignon with all the best trimmings.

Mainstream ag leaders throw the dice and tell producers to get big or get out. Big corporations welcome this challenge by reaching into deep pockets, getting big, buying out the competition, and making sweetheart deals with the big packers.

The Tallgrass Co-op response is to get different. That difference is green, lean cuisine. The Amish as a community raise their own barns. These ranchers are raising a market together. The Tallgrass difference is sitting next to their customers at the dinner table.

This difference is unique. Every member of Tallgrass sweats, breathes and dreams on these Flint Hills. They know the names and faces of their neighbors. Tallgrass customers also know the names and faces of the ranchers who raise their beef. The Tallgrass Co-op strives to return the profits back to Kansas ranchers. It is one real choice in the market. It is our rare chance to have our steak and eat it too!#JJ



Tallgrass Prairie Producer members Shelly Carlson and Annie Wilson (center), finalized plans at Ranch Day. Annie serves as the cluster coordinator.