

LITTLE EXPLORERS CORNER

Exploring Cattle Brands

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Inspired by our *Wonders of the West* exhibit, let's take a closer look at just how cowboys kept track of their cattle!

How do you show that a book or backpack belongs to you? By putting your name on it, right? That way, everyone knows it belongs to you.



The cowboys put the cattle brand into a fire, and then press it against the cows, burning the symbol into their hides.

Ranchers have to do the same thing to prove ownership of their cattle. They put a special identifying mark on their cows with a tool called a "cattle brand." A cattle brand is a long iron rod with a design or symbol on one end that represents their ranch.

No two brands can be identical! Ranchers create their own unique symbol for their cattle. Brands use letters, numbers, common shapes and lines. The

design needs to be simple so it is easy to read. Brands are read from left to right, top to bottom, and outside to inside.

The letters and numbers can be embellished or varied. For example, letters or numbers with "wings" are described as "flying" while those with "feet" are "walking." An upside-down letter or number is "crazy", while one laying on its side is "lazy."



Branding Irons on Display in the Wonders of the West Exhibit from 1850. When the museum is open, visit the exhibit and see if you can "read" the brands.



Circle M



Y CROSS



Can you read the brands above? Which name goes with which brand?

LAZY A WALKING A CRAZY A FLYING A



FLYING U



ROCKING A

Sometimes brands can even be used to make a joke. "Read" the brand below from left to right; what does it say?



DOUBLE H



4 E



Now create your own brand! Grab a pen and paper and design your own brand that represents you or your family or your home. Remember, keep the design simple!

Examples of cattle brands, with the names they symbolize.

Want to learn more? Watch *History of Branding: Irons in the Fire* from the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum (2 min 7 sec) www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImDR67pJyLU