

A History of The Chisholm Trail

In the post Civil War era of America there was an abundance of cattle in Texas that were largely useless to the ranchers in that there was a significant oversupply rendering them worthless. On the other hand there was a high demand in the North and East. Ranchers therefore saw an opening to make a profit by shipping their cattle from Texas to Kansas where the railhead would move the cattle to markets.

Jesse Chisholm a Scot-Cherokee trader saw an opportunity to move these cattle by establishing an overland route which still today bears his name. So it was that the Chisholm Trail was born being a matter of necessity.

Much like the history of the real Chisholm Trail there was a perceived necessity here in Australia to establish an annual event that would meet the needs of Cowboy Action Shooters across the nation and indeed international borders as well. A minority of more fortunate CAS participants had been able to travel to the biggest match on earth End of Trail the world championships of CAS shooting in the USA but alas this was not a reality for many due to the costs involved. Where to from here became the question.

Unlike moving cattle to the markets on the Chisholm Trail it was not feasible to bring End of Trail to Australia so the next best option was to create an event resembling as close as reasonably possible to that hallowed event.

Virgil Earp (SASS#4299) hatched a plan to create this event naming it Chisholm Trail. The objectives were not only to create stages and scenarios similar to those in the USA but to create an atmosphere of Old West social gatherings. A step back in time one might say where for just a short time we could all leave the trials and tribulations of everyday life behind and go back to a time where life was a little slower and more courteous.

The first Chisholm Trail event was held at Mareeba home of the Northfield Cowboys. Virgil and Frank James (SASS# 11797) between them built a complete town including the much revered Pilkington Hotel a two story building in the centre of Northfield the town. A few major events later and Chisholm was emerging as being "*The Shooters Event*" not to be rivalled by any other in Australia. The rest may be history as they say but no it certainly was not to be the case. By now Chisholm Trail had taken the Australian SSAA National Championships of CAS into the fold and the time had come to move the event to the SSAA complex at Western Creek near Millmerran in Queensland.

A call to the tools and Billy The Kid and Barb Wire burned a trail to Western Creek where they braved the elements for months at a time building the town. Finally Billy had created his dream of a destination as he put it and now the rest certainly was western history The years saw a growing number of CAS shooters make the annual pilgrimage to Chisholm Trail.

Over time Chisholm Trail and Western Creek the town took on a life of their own especially when the SASS Australian Regional Championships were awarded to Chisholm Trail.

The legend continues today and the original philosophy that Chisholm Trail would be the "*shooters event*" still exists. It is not the Nationals or the Regional that makes Chisholm Trail what it is but rather the fact that Chisholm Trail is just that - Chisholm Trail. The annual pilgrimage of folks brings Western Creek to life for just a week or so when shots ring out regularly, the raucous laughter of the cowboys can be heard and the beauty of the ladies with their parasols and fine dresses parade the streets daily. The setting of the sun on the last day again plunges Main Street into an eerie ghost townlike state for yet another year until the ladies in all their finery and the swaggering cowboys and youngsters again emerge on Main Street bringing back to life an era lost in today's 21st century.