



*Cowboy Camp During Roundup*  
oil on canvas, 1886, courtesy Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas

## THE CATTLE ROUNDUPS

The roundups were a key part of the open range days in Central Montana. *Cowboy Camp During the Roundup* pictures Utica and the cowboys during the 1886 roundup. Judith Basin cowboys could recognize every man and horse in this painting.

As the cattle owned by many ranchers grazed in common over the unfenced prairie, the roundups were necessary to brand the new calves in the spring as well as to separate the sale cows out in the fall. The first roundup in the Judith Basin was held in the fall of 1882 in Utica. The Judith pool was bounded by the Little Belt and Snowy Mountains to the south and Arrow Creek and Spring Creek to the north.

The roundups were big social events as well as opportunities for cowboys to demonstrate their skills with roping, riding and swapping yarns.

As fences were strung and homesteads proved up, the need for big community roundups faded. Community roundups still occur every fall in the Highwood Mountains as ranchers move their cows off the National Forest.

