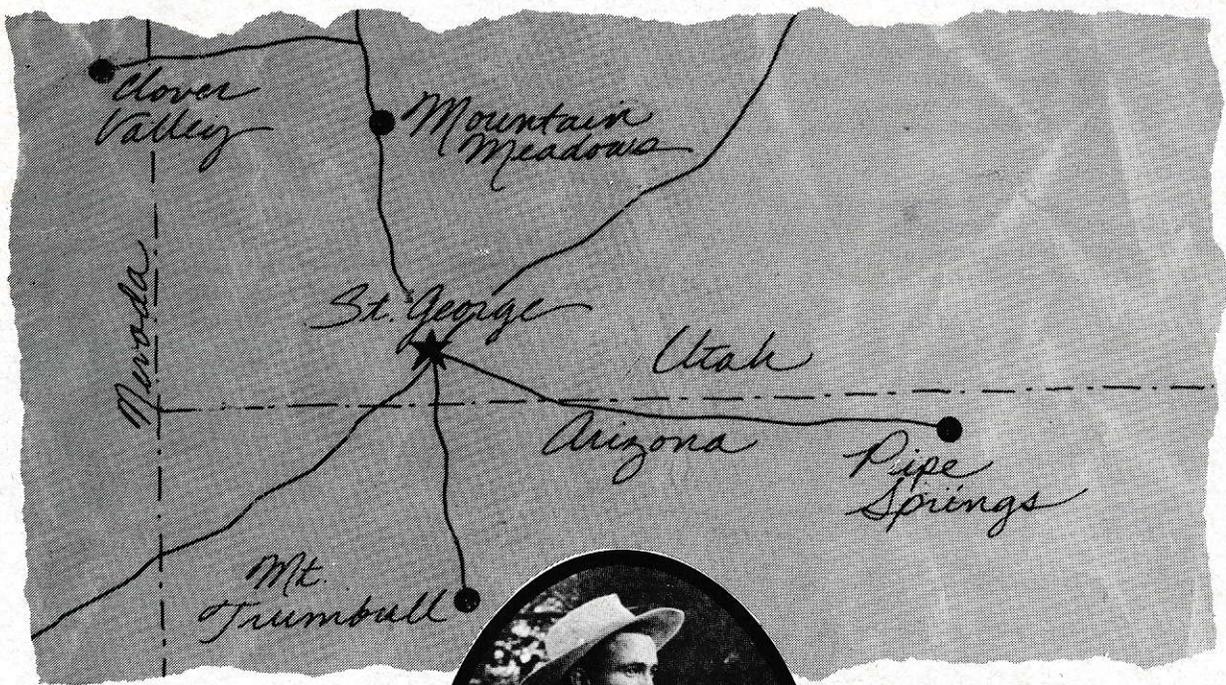

GEORGE H. LYTLE

HE COVERED THE COUNTRY



George H. Lytle, age 20.

By LYMAN HAFEN

Through the south hills comes a horseman. He is slight of frame, with dancing brown eyes, and he sits his tall horse well. Dropping off a ridge, he comes into a sparkling valley called Mountain Meadows, and two young girls dash out the door of a handsome frame house and run to their father who has been away many days. He sees them coming. His dark eyes sparkle.

Now he begins to holler.

"Lutie, I say, Lutie, get me a fresh horse. And Laura, Laura, I say, pack me a lunch."

"Papa where have you been?" one of the young girls asks.

"Pipe Springs," the man says spritely.

"And Papa, where are you going?"

"Clover Valley!"

From the time George Hubbard Lytle started cowboying for his uncle James Andrus on the Arizona Strip in the mid-1880s, right up to the day he died in St. George in 1948, he rarely slowed down. He was up before daylight every day of his life, busily about the task of making a living with livestock.

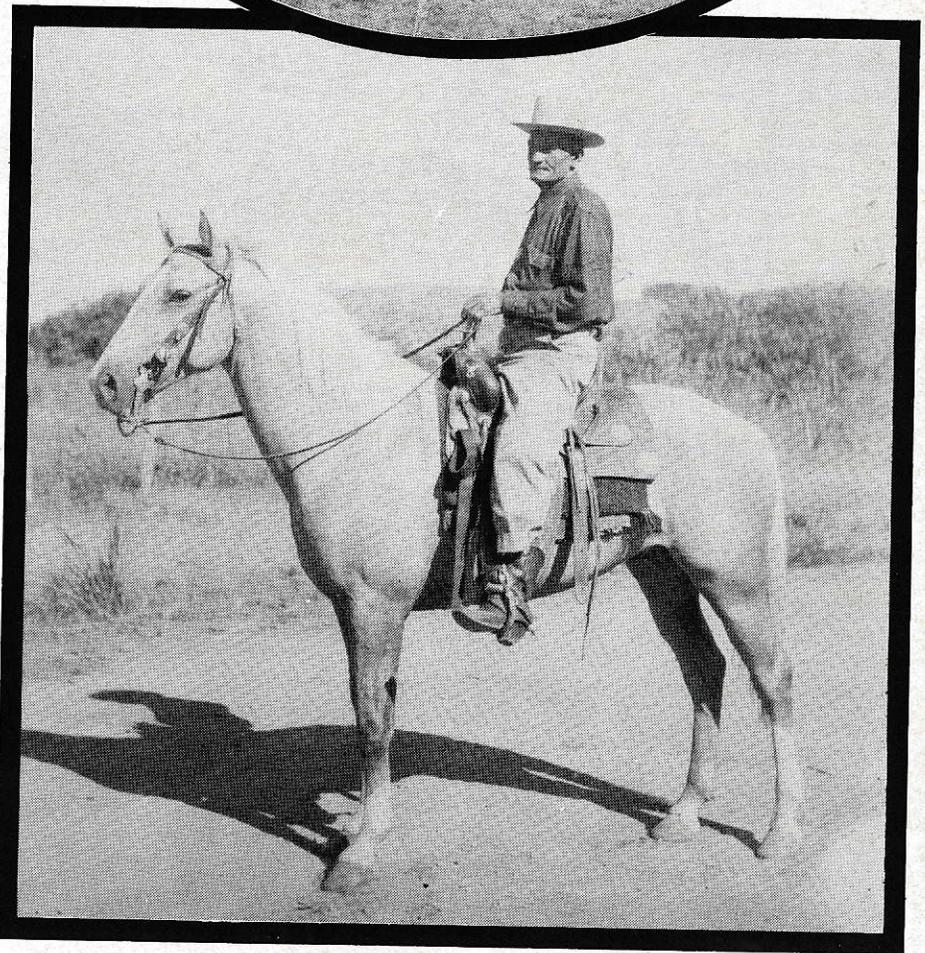
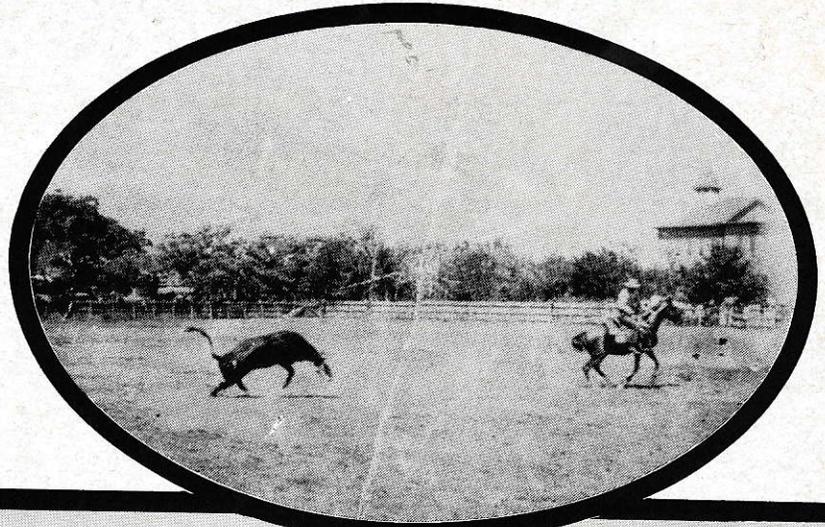
George H. Lytle was an American Original. He started with nothing, worked for his clothes and board, learned a trade, and built himself a little empire. He became possibly the widest ranging cattleman who ever rode these parts, punching cows from the southern reaches of Mt. Trumbull on the Arizona Strip, to the eastern ranges of Pipe Springs and Johnson Valley beyond Kanab, to Mountain Meadows north of St. George, and as far west as Clover Valley, Nevada, and the Tule Desert.

He was a stockman, landowner, husband, father, missionary, banker, county commissioner; but more than anything, he was a cowboy, "always a great cowboy."

He was not born to be a cowboy. His father, John Milton Lytle, had come to St. George with the original pioneers in 1861. He was a horticulturist, a wine maker, and was not a stockman in any sense of the word. But young George was awakened to the lure of the range and fine horseflesh as he sat on his great-grandfather Israel Ivins' fence and admired the well-bred horses that Israel and Anthony Ivins raised.

James Andrus ran the church herd for the Canaan Stock Company on the Strip and that's where George became a cowboy. The boy's formal education had been so meager he never remembered what grade he finished, but, as his daughter Phoebe Lytle Esplin remembers, "He was an excellent speller and a whiz with figures." The family still has possession of a book entitled *Harpers Graded Arithmetics-Second Book in Arithmetic*, copyright 1882 and 1890. On the flyleaf appear these words: "This book is where I got my education by the fire light out on the cattle range at Scutampaw, Utah." Signed, "Geo. H. Lytle."

He was a determined man, says his son Andrew. When he decided to do something, he generally did it. "Like the time he decided he was going to catch a wild mule, and it took him two days and three horses to get it done."



Top, George H. Lytle roping in the Woodward Square. Above, the old cowboy on the famous stallion, Cricket.

Chasing wild horses became a passion for George Lytle, yet he did it more for the economic sense it made than for the recreation. Andy remembers his father always telling him not to chase a bunch of horses unless he saw one he really wanted. "Seems like I was always seeing one I really wanted," says Andy.

George had accumulated a fair herd of

cattle by the time he left on a mission for the LDS church in 1897. He preached the gospel in Kentucky and Tennessee as vehemently as he punched cows, and when he returned home in 1898, he went right back to the Strip and continued building his herd.

One method he used to get ahead was to chase wild horses and bring 20 or 30 head to town at a time. He'd trade the horses to

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people around St. George for calves and gradually his herd increased. "When those cows saw dad coming to town with a herd of horses, they'd start belling because they knew he was coming for their calves," Andy remembers.

At 29, this dark-eyed bachelor could "charm the birds out of the trees," and he rediscovered the petite blue-eyed blonde who had grown up across the street. Rachel Lucinda "Lutie" Pace had always been much younger, seven years younger than George, but now she was grown up and when the two were married on January 4, 1900, they had much more than the proverbial "shoestring" to start out with.

Though he was a devoted husband and father, George was on the range much of his life, traveling this broken country from one end to the other on horseback.

"He always went to bed with a pocket watch and a box of matches lying next to him," Andy says. "Along about three or four in the morning, he'd strike a match, look at his watch and hop up. Then he'd rustle everyone else up and do a day's work before breakfast." Later, when Andy was married and his family lived in Central, he says they had to get up mighty early to have breakfast ready by the time George showed up on his horse from Mountain Meadows, six miles away. "He always said a couple of hours in the morning was worth three in the afternoon," says Andy. "But at 3:00 in the afternoon he'd still be going just as hard."

They'd get up at 4:00 a.m., haul hay, eat breakfast, work cows until lunch, then ride colts, run races, and enjoy themselves during the early afternoon. "I think we had more fun and amusement in those days than we have now," Andy says.

Breakfast on the range, as Andy remembers it, consisted of bacon and biscuits his father made. They'd dip the biscuits in bacon grease and put some sugar on them.

Around 1919, George Lytle sold his holdings on the Arizona Strip to John Findlay and John Kenney. He wanted his family closer to town, and he was disenchanted by the Texans who were coming onto the Strip. By now he had nine children, seven of whom were living, and one more daughter soon to come.

Their first child, Lucinda Augusta, was born in 1900, and died at the age of two years. George P. was born in 1902, Ezra in 1904, Milton and Mildred (twins) in 1907 (Milton died at age four), Lutie in 1909, Andrew in 1911, Anthony in 1914, Phoebe in 1917, and Laura in 1921.

It was in 1919 that George Lytle bought the Mountain Meadows Ranch from H.J. Burgess, about 30 miles northwest of St. George. The family began spending the summers at Mountain Meadows and the winters in St. George. Soon, ranches at Pipe Springs, Arizona, and Clover Valley, Nevada, were purchased. He also had range on the Tule desert, north of Bunkerville, Nevada.

At the same time, George was buying a lot of real estate around St. George. He owned

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ST. GEORGE MAGAZINE



George H. Lytle cattle in 1918.



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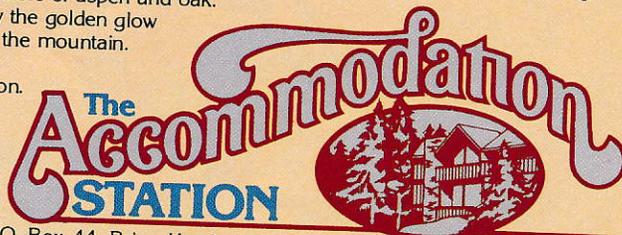
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several blocks which are now part of the heart of St. George, including the block where the National Guard Armory now stands. "He always said, if you invest in real estate, you'll always be even with the world," Andy remembers.

George had precious little time to spend with his holdings in town. With cattle in every direction of St. George, he was in the saddle for weeks at a time, riding a good horse everywhere he went. People who knew him remember him for his uncanny ability to get the best out of a horse. "He always liked a good horse," says Andy. "But he had a knack for making even a bad horse look pretty good." His horses were always travelers, good walkers, yet George was known to go at a trot a lot of the time.

His love for good horseflesh was demonstrated when he bought a royal blooded thoroughbred stallion that had run in the Kentucky Derby. They called the big stud, "Shine," and his colts were well known for many years around this part of the country.

"Dad got a kick out of life," says Andy. "He worked awful hard, but he knew how to enjoy himself. He loved to race horses, and he liked to rope."

The cowboys who rode with him said he could rope anything. He rode on an old saddle with a center-fire cinch and a big metal horn. Because he was on the range so much it was mostly cowboys who were treated to his skill. He roped in few rodeos.

"He roped everything by the hind feet,"

remembers Gray Wilkin, who grew up working for the Lytles. "He'd spoil you to go to work for somebody else because he made things so easy. If he didn't bring a calf to the fire by two hind feet, it was because the critter had kicked one out getting there."

Wilkin remembers George roping and tying a young bull at age 76, just two years before he died. "He really wasn't feeling well at the time," says Wilkin. "But he sure enjoyed doing it."

"The man was always on the move," says Wilkin. "He could ride a horse further and get more out of him than anybody I knew. He was always telling Andy he ought to take a lantern instead of a bedroll."

His youngest daughter, Laura, concurs. "It seems like if there was ever a chance to rest, he'd say, 'Let's do this, or let's do that, while we rest.'"

Though he covered a lot of ground and got a great deal out of his horses, he was good to them. He had enough animals that he could ride two or three different mounts a day. Wilkin remembers that he would gather a bunch of horses and ride them all spring, then turn them out to pasture and ride a different bunch all summer. "He'd ride 'em hard, then let 'em rest," he says.

"He was one with a horse," Wilkin remembers. "He could talk a horse out of doing most anything—even talk him out of bucking." But the cowboy expected a lot out of a horse. "I remember riding with him out at Pipe Springs. We'd be walking along and he'd say, 'I say, Gray, I say, let's rest 'em a while, I say, let's rest 'em a while.' That

meant we were going to gallop for a while."

It turns out that horses were more than just a mode of transportation for George Lytle. Looking back, Andy figures they had a lot to do with his father's financial success. "When steers were selling for 5 cents a pound, he was getting \$100 or \$200 for a horse."

"He had a keen business sense," says Andy. "He was always thinking ahead, planning and figuring."

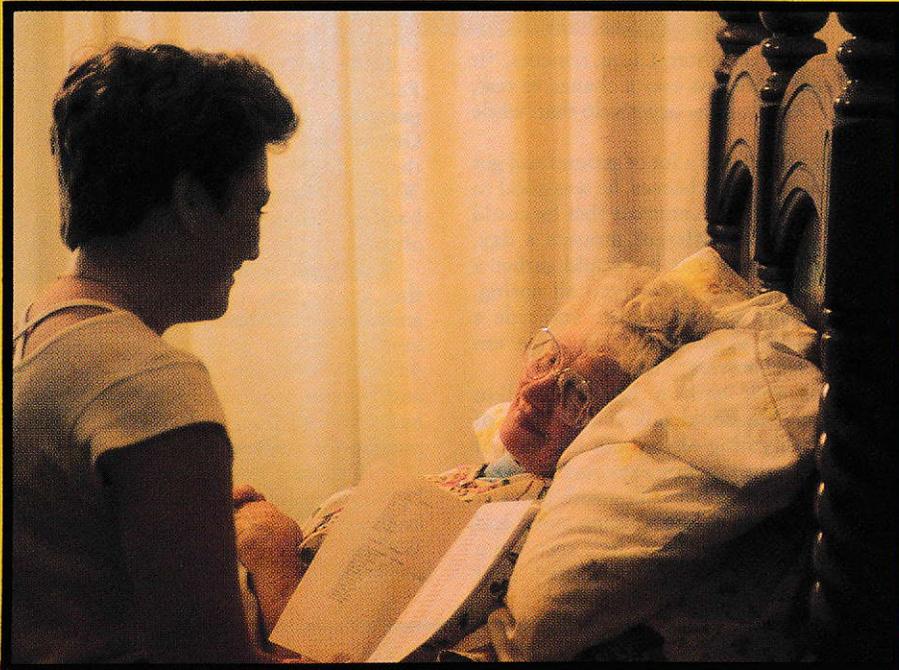
The man also had a sense of civic responsibility. He served on the Washington County Commission for several years, something he worked hard at and was very proud of.

Andy remembers being out at Bunker Peak with his father and some other cowboys gathering cattle. It was mid-afternoon and George had a county commission meeting that night. He rode his horse to town, some 30 miles, attended this meeting, and was back at Bunker Peak by 3:00 the next afternoon.

A goer and a doer, George Lytle also had the ability to infect other people with ambition. "He could get you to moving," says Andy, no doubt remembering those 4:00 a.m. wake-up calls. "He worked hard, and people around him worked hard—he had a way of popping those black eyes and putting the freshness back in you."

And there's no question that George H. Lytle was a humanitarian as well. "I never knew a more hospitable person," says Gray Wilkin. "There was always a bed and something to eat for anyone coming by the

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ranch, and that was a lot of people because Mountain Meadows was right on the main road, and a midway point between a lot of places."

Cowboys could trust him with their cattle, too. "He worried about other people's cattle as much as his own" says Andy. "When other cattle came onto the place, he'd take care of them until he could take them back, or until somebody came for them."

"He was a dignified man," says Laura. "Yet loved to joke and was capable of a good, hearty laugh. He also loved music."

Though he was not a great singer himself, he sang to his children and grandchildren, and liked to join in with others. When he was on the strip, there was a young cowboy from a neighboring outfit named Bert Price who had a fine voice. There was an old telephone line across the range, so Bert would sing, and the boys on the other end of the line would huddle about the receiver to listen.

It seems that this hard-riding, savvy cowboy is remembered best by his family for his love of life, his ability to enjoy what he did, and his constant love and concern for his wife and children. "He was a great cowboy," says Laura. "But to me he was, above all, a family man."

By the time George Lytle passed away in 1948, he had gained the recognition, respect, and friendship of cowboys, businessmen, government officials and people all across the territory. He was liked by everyone. But that is quite understandable. He was a cowboy's cowboy. ■