



Penned by Lantern Light

This column will spotlight members of the Western Wordsmiths Chapter of the International Western Music Association. It will highlight an invited poet guest with possible short biographical information of his/her works. If a member of the Western Wordsmiths Chapter and if interested in submitting one piece of original work for publication, please contact the Western Wordsmiths chapter president.

THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE

By Mag Mawhinney

*History was made in the pioneer days
By men on a perilous quest—
To seek out their fortunes on cattle drives
Destined for Canada's west.*

*They stumbled through piles of buffalo bones,
Driving shorthorns in from the east
And plodded over desolate landscapes,
Unforgiving to man or beast.*

*They sold powerful horses and breeding stock
To settlers met on the trails
And brought cattle to feed all the hungry,
Moving one step ahead of the rails.*

*Some followed the miners, with hopeful dreams,
To the north on the Cariboo Trail,
Though the dangers endured were endless,
Their spirits would always prevail.*

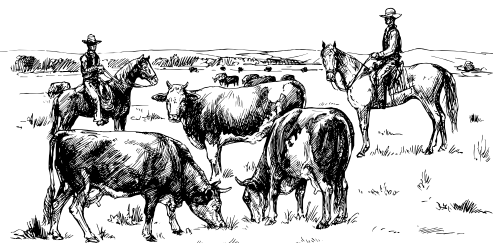
*There were deaths by outlaws, rivers, and storms
And animals prowling the night
And they suffered the cold on high plateaus,
Knowing only the colour of white.*

*In the Cariboo and the Chilcotin,
When the land was free of barbed wire,
They raised beef on low-lying meadows
Where the swamp grass pushed through the mire.*

*And in the Thompson-Nicola valleys,
Where the bunchgrass has always grown,
They built some of the biggest ranches
That this country has ever known.*

*Like adventurous men from across the seas,
Setting out to explore new lands,
They tapped the wealth of the wilderness
And shaped it with the strength of their hands.*

*The trails blazed by pioneer cowboys
Will be followed for evermore
And now empty saddles are reminders of
All those who have gone before.*



ABOUT MAG MAWHINNEY

Mag Mawhinney is an award-winning poet and songwriter who has been a featured performer at every major cowboy festival and other events in Western Canada and the US. She was named the Academy of Western Artists Cowgirl Poet of the Year in 2012, and in 2013, her poetry book, "Western Spirit," won the Cowboy Poetry Book of the Year from the International Western Music Association. The book includes a music CD in which eight musicians from Canada and the US sing melodies they've composed for her lyrics. Mag also enjoys writing prose, having been published internationally in numerous magazines, anthologies, newspapers and web sites.