



of separation



As a young man, **Mark Twain**, author of *Roughing It*, worked as a printer in Philadelphia.



Owen Wister, author of *The Virginian* (actor Joel McCrea pictured), was born in Philadelphia in 1860.



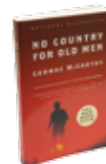
Wister spent time living in **London**, as did Max Brand (one of several pen names of Frederick Schiller Faust).



Max Brand became famous as a writer of Western pulp fiction.



Following his service in the U.S. Navy, **L. Ron Hubbard** also became a prolific pulp writer.



Cormac McCarthy served in the Air Force for four years and went on to become a Pulitzer Prize-winning Western author.

TRAILBLAZER

The Natural

Changing times have meant changing ways for this Colorado rancher.

Seven years ago, rancher Brian Ferris had only a passing acquaintance with the Natural Beef niche market. Defined by the USDA as “minimally processed with no artificial ingredients,” Ferris considered his beef to be as “natural” as the next guy’s.

Then, a drought in 2002 followed by the Mad Cow disease scare in 2003 left Ferris reeling.

“We were devastated,” Ferris recalls, as he surveys his grazing herd of Charolais cattle.

The only bright spot in Ferris’ ranching program was the small sideline of selling quarters and halves of beef to friends and family who wanted an alternative to grocery-store beef. Demand for his “natural” beef was on the rise.

“We didn’t start out to go natural,” Ferris says. “It was what we were already doing.” His clients encouraged him to expand the program, and he co-founded Colorado’s Best Beef (CBB) in 2004 (naturalbeef.com).

The Ferris family has been in the ranching business since the 1930s. His grandfather raised Charolais seed stock near Tie Siding, Wyo. Ferris, 48, has a degree in General Ag from Colorado State University. On about 3,600 acres near Fort Morgan, Colo., Ferris and his wife, Marti (a veterinarian), and two boys, Clint (14) and Blake (11), ride herd over about 275 head of Charolais.

CBB labels its product with the specifics of how their cattle



BRIAN FERRIS RIDES HERD ON HIS NATURAL BEEF RANCH NEAR FORT MORGAN, COLO.

are raised—with no feed antibiotics, steroids, or growth hormones. “We guarantee higher standards than the USDA definition,” Ferris says.

“The real difference in our beef happens once the cattle hit the feed lot. Until then, most beef is just like ours.” At the lot, other cattle receive implants and a feed regimen to maximize weight gain. Ferris’ cattle does not.

Natural and organic beef com-

prise only 1.5 percent of the greater market. Ferris likens his place in the industry to that of a microbrewery in the beer industry; people are willing to pay more for a “designer” product.

Marketing at trade shows and farmers markets and directly to some 30 grocery stores and restaurants means more work for Ferris, but the payoff is worth it. Profits are up, and CBB continues to grow, he says. —*Lisa Schafer*