Wylie Sherwin's Journal

A Cowboy's Life on Crooked Creek

Transcribed and Edited by Russell F. Sherwin

Photo: 1 - Wylie Grant Sherwin with bighorn sheep, about 1950. Jack Richard photo.

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Introduction by Russell F. Sherwin, Wylie's youngest son

April 12, 2008

My Dad, Wylie Grant Sherwin, wrote his life story journal in longhand in four small ruled 6-1/2" x 8-1/2" ledger books. He began in 1952 and his last journal is dated 1960. At the family reunion in 1984, my brother, Ted Sherwin, passed out copies of the ledger books that he had made in a 8-1/2" x 13" format, two ledger pages to one 8-1/2" x 13" page, to all the "kids" that were present, a Herculean task that we all greatly appreciate. Ted also made copies available to some of the Huntington family members.

In order to make it more readable, and more readily reproducible, I have transcribed it, preserving Dad's writing style. I have corrected most of the spelling and punctuation, and have deleted, added or changed a word or two here and there, but have not changed the basic structure or the vernacular, which is accurate for the time. A few words were illegible, or were off the page because of the copying process of the original ledgers. Where I have made attempts to fill in the gaps, guessed at a word, or added material, I have indicated by brackets [] that it is mine, not Dad's. Footnotes, wherever they occur, are mine.

In addition, I have rearranged some of the text. Book 1 is about Dad's early life in Oklahoma and moving to Wyoming and up until he was about 18. Book 2 is stories of people and places that Dad knew during the same period of time. Book 3 is about getting married and starting a family, and Book 4 is a stand-alone story that rightfully (in my opinion) belongs appended to Book 2, so that's what I have done.

Unfortunately, Dad stopped writing without saying anything about leaving the ranch and striking out on his own in 1921 to start The Trail Shop near Yellowstone Park. The journals end at around 1919. My additions at the end fill in this period to the extent I was able to discover it.

Dad was a very smart and capable man, but he was not "book learned." He barely completed the 8th grade and only got a few months of high school. This never bothered him and he was in every way a success in life. When Mom and I would chide him (gently) about his spelling, he would retort, paraphrasing Mark Twain, "It's a mighty poor mind that can only spell a word one way."

Dad wrote this at the Trail Shop, Wapiti, Wyoming, during the early '50s. I left home to seek my own destiny in 1957. Dad and Mom sold the Trail Shop around 1961 and built a new house about 1/8 of a mile east. Dad died in May, 1967. My Mom, Nina Sherwin, lived in the house until about 1990 then moved to Cody. Mom died in September, 1994.

Russ Sherwin

Journal of Wylie Grant Sherwin, February 18, 1953

From Book 1: 1895 to about 1915

Minnesota, Missouri, Oklahoma

I have planned for a long time that someday I would put down in writing some of the pertinent things of my life, so that when I am gone, you children will have them.

I don't know at this time just what will follow or how diligent I will be, but I would like to record some of the incidents that have made life worth living for me. I have had a very full and in all a happy life. We all have our sunshine and our sorrows, but pain and grief only serve to make us more mindful of our many blessings. And as I look back I know that I have had more than my share of really wonderful and interesting experiences. I shall try to write of some of them for you. I will take a page or two to log my early life for you so you will know about where I lived before coming to the Northfork of the Shoshone. Then I plan to go back over the same ground and fill in the incidents as I remember them.

I was born at Browns Valley, Minnesota, Dec. 26, 1895. That I believe is in Traverse County and my folks lived between Big Stone and Traverse Lakes. It was in Big Stone Lake that Dad found the old peace-pipe stem that is over the fire place here. With it were several other pieces, one the rattle and medicine sack which are with it now. I believe it was the year that I was born that Dad found these things. There were several fellows with Dad at the time and articles that they found were divided among them. As I recall him telling about it, these things were tucked up under the eaves of an old log dugout or half-cabin.

I think I must have been about two years old, and my brother George was just a baby, and Lissie was four, when we moved to Missouri. It was down in the Ozarks. We lived there four years and I remember very little about it. I do remember starting school there, and I seem to recall that our house sat quite a way back from the road. There was a lane of maple trees, and one day Lissie and I were going out to get the mail. We were riding bare back on a big long legged horse we called Jim. He had been a trotting race horse in his day but he was gentle. Well, as I remember, we were doing fine until Lissie, who was in front with the reins, unwittingly gave the wrong signal and Jim started to trot. We began to bounce and Lissie pulled on the reins and the harder she pulled the faster he went, for he was trained to trot on a tight rein. I [was] behind with my arms locked around Lissie and both of us bouncing higher and higher every second. It wasn't long until the inevitable happened and we both found ourselves in the dust of the road. I hurt my little finger some way and for years I insisted Jim stepped on it. I must have been about four

years old at this time and I believe that this is the earliest incident of my life which I still remember.

There was one other incident happened while we lived there that I remember and I may have been younger. We had a rain barrel sitting on the uncovered back porch. This function as the name implies was to catch rain water to be used for clothes washing as the well water was very hard. At this particular time it was better than half full of water. I turned a box up by it and was leaning over and admiring my reflection in the water. This, of course, led to leaning farther over to try to get a drink out of it. The box turned over, my heels went up and my head down. I must have been pretty small or pretty acrobatic, for I turned completely over in that barrel of water and came up a-yelling. Mother was just inside the door and affected a quick rescue.

It was here that Jim the youngest of the family was born. As I recall we children were sent over to one of the neighbors for the day and when we returned we had a little baby brother. Mother asked what we should name him and George spoke up. "Name him Jim," he said. Of course he was thinking of the horse I was telling you about. All of us kids liked the idea and backed George up, so Jim it was.

It was in the spring I believe of 1902 that we moved to Oklahoma to a little town called Ralston. It was on the Arkansas River and the Santa Fe railroad had just gone in there. At the time we moved there, there were barely a dozen houses in town, but several times that many tents. There were two livery stables, a blacksmith shop and a half-dozen saloons and a few stores. I don't know just how many. I know we moved into a vacant store building to live in. It was all one room, probably twenty feet wide and sixty long. Dad hung up canvas partitions and made two bedrooms, a kitchen and a living room out of it and there we lived for two or three years.

There was a saloon on one side of us and a pool hall on the other and overhead there were rooms to rent to transients, and there was a back stairs leading up to these rooms which made it real handy because there was one of the livery stables just back of us. In fact our back door looked out into the wagon yard for this stable. A wagon yard was where the people drove in to leave their wagons and put their horses in the livery stable. Here they were charged room and board, and room or stall for their horses. And the wagon yard was surrounded by buildings or high fence and the gate kept locked so that no one could bother things there.

Ralston was just across the river from Osage Territory and The Osage as we called it was Indian reservation. And Ralston [was] one of the supply centers for them. Probably more than half of the town's business was with the Indians. They received quarterly payments from the government and they would trade on credit. Their bills were sent in to the Indian agent and charged to that Indian's account and the agent paid the merchant.

The town was overrun with Indians all the time and some were always getting drunk. It was strictly against the law to sell them liquor, but the town was full of bootleggers. In fact if the bootleggers, gamblers, and horse thieves were run out there wouldn't have

been many people left. It used to be one perpetual Rodeo. There were frequent horse races down Main Street between two cowboys or to settle a private bet. And one time when I was about ten years old, I had a pretty little chestnut sorrel horse I called Midget. I was riding past a saloon when the bartender came out with a lariat in hand and another man with him. “Hey kid,” he said, “Come here.” I rode over and he explained that he had a bet with the other fellow that he could front-foot a horse nine times in ten throws. He offered me a dollar if I would ride at a gallop past him ten times and let him rope my pony by the front feet. This I did and he never missed once. As soon as the rope made a fair catch he slacked so as not to trip my horse. When he was through he thanked me and pitched me the dollar. Several times after that I acted as prop for him always for a dollar and I never knew him to miss a catch.

Indians

I must tell you about some of the Indians I knew, or knew of.

This old store building where we lived wasn't built to share the same wall as the saloon next door and there was about eighteen inches between them. This made a very narrow way from the street to the wagon lot in the rear. Indians used this passage a great deal to go back and forth from their wagons in the lot.

All of the Indians there were blanket Indians and we were quite impressed and fascinated by them. I guess Mother had some trouble with Jim running away for she told him he better not go far or one of the Indians might get him. That did the trick for he always looked in every direction for Indians before he would leave the back door.

It was one hot day in summer and Jim was playing in the shade between the two buildings. The light dimmed and Jim looked up to see an Indian coming into the opening from the wagon lot. He dropped everything, let out a yell and started for the front only to be met head on by another Indian on that end. Then he really did scream. The Indians both gave ground, but Jim wouldn't move for he was sure they had only stepped aside to grab him when he came out. Finally Mother heard the commotion and came to the rescue. By the way, Jim used to go by the name of "Shinky"; that is boy in Osage Indian. Girl is "Shimi Shinky."

It was while we lived here in this old store building that Old Snake Hide died. Snake Hide was an old Indian chief. He was supposed to have been about one hundred and fifteen years old, but who can say. Anyone who ever saw him would not doubt it though. I remember what he looked like quite well. He was very small and dried up and all bent over. I don't suppose he weighed much over a hundred pounds. He walked with a stick and his pipe-stem legs were bowed away out. His head was clipped and he had the familiar scalp lock. Lots of the old Indians then wore it. In summer he wore an old dirty sheet for a blanket, and a pair of leggins[1] made of some sort of blue blanket material. These leggins, worn by all the bucks, were like the chaps and went to the crotch then fastened to a string around the waist. Leggins and blanket were all any of them wore. That and moccasins. In summer they all wore the sheet or light blanket; in winter a heavy blanket, or sometimes two. The squaws dressed the same except they wore short leggins just below the knees and a short skirt usually made from two large bandanas usually red or blue, then the blanket same as the bucks. Papooses were slung in the blanket on their backs or on a board on their backs.

But to get back to Old Snake Hide: He died in a wagon in the lot back of our house. I don't know the cause, maybe old age, and I shall never forget the commotion which followed. I think all of the tribe must have been notified and they all came. The lot was full of Indians. They carried wood from the river bar and built fires in the wagon lot. The mourning started almost at once. Osages hire their mourners. I think there were five, and they started to chant "I-yea, I-yea" and "I-yea-yea," this in unison without much tune, but

[1] Leggings, actually, but always pronounced "leggins".

with rising and falling inflections and with much feeling of sadness, almost as though they were crying. And this went on at our back door for three days and nights without a moment's pause. Sometimes so low you had to listen to hear it and sometimes it amounted to a wail. Then finally it all ceased and they took him home and buried him.

Indian burial at that time was done on top of the ground. The Osages would take them to the top of the highest hill overlooking their camp and set them up, propping them with rocks. Then by carefully placing rocks so that they did not rest on the body, they made a huge mound covering him up completely. Usually some of his favorite possessions were buried with him. And sometimes even his horse. Then to top it all off they put his favorite delicacy on top of the pile, such as oranges, bananas, or in the case of Snake Hide, a pitcher of lemonade.

And now I must tell you about "John Stink." He died and he was buried just like I have described above. Only being less of a celebrity, he wasn't mourned very long but he was placed on a hill near camp and covered over with rocks. I believe it was close to the little town of Gray Horse. Now the thing that made John Stink's demise unusual was that it didn't last, and the next morning he came walking into camp. Indians are pretty superstitious, and it took a little while for them to get used to having John back among them. I suppose all would have been well if John could have made up his mind either to stay dead or stay alive, but when he died again a few weeks late, he was buried without mourning and the camp was moved forthwith and his teepee burned where it stood. And so when John came back again, which he did, he could find no one, and his teepee was gone up in smoke. He wandered into town and was taken care of by a friendly white man who had heard the story from the Indians. John was suffering from fits, but to the tribe he remained dead [three words undecipherable] and he spent the rest of his days alone in a small shed back of the white man's house.

And there was "Antwine." Old Antwine was huge. He weighed about four hundred pounds. He and his wife were always getting drunk in town, the soberest one driving the team home with the other flat on his back in the wagon. Usually when any of the Indians got drunk, they would run their horses and it didn't matter whether it was a saddle horse or a team. Lots of times they would come down Main Street two abreast, standing up in their wagons, chariot fashion, whipping and yelling for all they were worth while mothers ran for their little ones to get them out of the way.

And so I have seen Antwine leave town lots of times. I saw him leave town on his last ride, his squaw standing up, she had dropped her blanket and was lashing the horses and hollering as loud as she could. Antwine was on his back in the bottom of the wagon bouncing all over the place. As they hit the timber at the edge of town she cut a corner too short and ran over a stump with a back wheel. Antwine was thrown out and his neck was broken.

Then there was "Jimmie and Lizzie." They were pretty good old Indians and they always insisted that us kids call them Aunt Lizzie and Uncle Jimmy. They always traded at the store with Dad. Dad had a hardware and implement store, and in connection, he had a

feed and poultry business. It was Thanksgiving and Dad had a large pen of turkeys in the back. As these turkeys came in Dad picked out a nice fat one for ourselves. He tied a piece of red string around its leg to mark it so he would know it.

That afternoon Aunt Lizzie and Uncle Jimmy came in to buy a turkey. They asked how much and Dad said, "Take your pick for two dollars." They looked them all over -- an Indian is never in a hurry to make up his mind -- and finally they pointed to the one with the red string.
"Me take."
"No," Dad said, "That is mine. Any other one."
"Me take."
Well, Dad finally saw he couldn't talk them out of it so he gave in. He said, "All right, when you are ready to leave town you come around. You can have the one you want." They both grinned and walked away. They were pleased because they had put one over on Dad.

But wait. When they were out of sight Dad caught the turkey and took the string off and put it on another one. Pretty soon they came around with the wagon to get their turkey.
"Which one did you want?" Dad said.
"Me take," pointing to the red string. So everyone got the one they wanted.

Another thing I remember well from those early days in Oklahoma was the Wild West shows we used to have back of the livery stable. These shows were not rodeos. They were just impromptu shows. A bunch of cowboys would decide to put on a show and they did it. There were no chutes, no seats, not even any fences. While the boys were running in some broncs, someone else was gathering up all the wagons they could get and these were formed in a circle back of the livery barn lot. The spectators stood up in the wagons. A bronc was dragged from the coral back of the barn, choked down and haltered, then saddled by blindfolding him first. Then a cowboy would climb aboard and slip the blindfold and the show was on. There were "pony express races," "drop the handkerchief," and the one I liked best was the "hat race." In this, the start line and finish line were about two hundred yards apart. There were usually six or more in the race. After the contestants were all lined up they would ride out mid-way and drop their hats to the ground, then back to the starting line. When the gun was fired the race was on and the object was to pick up your hat as you passed it and of course finish first. And believe me, they didn't slow down for the hat, but seldom missed it.

After each performance that drew a good cheer from the crowd, one of the boys rode around passing the hat. They had free-for-all races and there was much betting. Some of the gamblers got to slipping in race horses against the cow ponies but the boys figured out a way to beat that deal. They changed the start of the race so that you started from the center of a straight track. From there to the usual starting line, turn and race back. The race horses wouldn't turn.

It was while we were still living in the old store building that I took sick. I had what the folks thought was a bad cold and sore throat. I wasn't sick too long and was soon back in

school. It was about a month later that Mother noticed that I couldn't see well and seemed to have trouble controlling my arms and legs. They called a doctor and he told them to get me to a hospital at once. Dad had a brother, Uncle Frank, in Wichita, Kansas, so he took me there as quick as possible. I remember my doctor's name was Doctor Thomas. He said I had "diptherial paralysis" and by that time I was completely paralyzed. I think I was in the hospital about six weeks, and this was over Christmas, and my birthday. Dr. Thomas said fortunately they had caught it in time and I responded to treatment better than most.

It was while here in the hospital that I saw my first automobile. As soon as I began to get better I could hear the most awful noises in the street below: Horns honking and the clatter of the cars going by. I heard this noise for weeks before I was able to be placed where I could see down on the street and see what was going on. Perhaps my curiosity helped to speed my recovery. They told me I was the only child in the hospital that Christmas and I wasn't neglected. I remember that as the most bountiful Christmas I have ever had, and it seems like half of the toys I received were little cars which intrigued me no end.

I guess I missed the most of that year of school but was able to do some work at home and so didn't lose a grade. Dad started a house that spring and by fall we moved in. It was two stories and six rooms. It seemed like a mansion after the place we had been living in. This was a new part of town and away from the noise and the smell of the saloon and livery stable. The town was building fast and just across the street from us was the Baptist Church. In fact there were four churches in that block, one in each corner. We went to the Methodist Church and it was down on the other corner a block away. I remember once, it was summer and the doors were open. I could hear the Baptists across the street singing "Will There Be Any Stars In My Crown" and the Methodists down at the other singing "No Not One, No Not One."

In those days, all of the congregation came by wagon, by buggy, or by horseback from the rural areas. And a great many of the boys came only to ride to church with their girls, but they didn't go in, they stayed outside and cowboyed around until church was out, racing horses and being generally rowdy.

Another thing strikes me rather funny now as I look back! Those were the outlaw days there, and there were two rather notorious brothers, their names were Mat and Percy Williams. They were usually laying low from the law somewhere over in the Indian country, but both had big new homes where their wives lived and these homes were in the same block where the churches were. One [was] in the center of the block facing east and one in the center facing west so that their two big barns in the alley were directly across from each other and just a half a block across the street from our front door.

Every so often, usually about dusk, several very spectacular men on horseback would come dashing down the street. There was always a lot of shooting their guns in the air and real [scary] stuff and everyone knew the Williams boys were back in town. But the Marshal had been called somewhere else. There would be lots of comings and goings in

the alley across the way, and for a night or two both big houses would be all aglow all night. Then they were gone and everyone was much relieved, for while they were there, the town belonged to them.

It was during one of these times that Percy's barn caught fire and from there to Mat's barn and it looked like the whole block would burn. But fortunately there was no wind and it didn't spread any farther. In the morning the brothers were gone. I remember Mat Williams as a rather large or better than average sized blond man, usually drunk, but not beyond his capability, quite quarrelsome and ready to fight. Percy was small and dark and very dapper. Both were great for flash. Black hats, leather vests and pearl handled guns. Neither would probably ever be apprehended on my description of them, but that is the way I remember them.

Boyhood Days

In those days everyone in town had a barn. You had to, because most everyone owned horses. It was the only way to get around. So we had a big barn and Dad always milked several cows, so it was only natural when we had more milk than we wanted, we sold some to the neighbors. The cows had calves and the herd grew, and through the process of evolution Dad found himself in the milk business on the side.

So with eight or ten cows he had to rent a pasture in the summer time. This pasture was usually way more than eight or ten cows could eat, so he took in cows from town to pasture. These cows had to be brought back to town in the evening and to the pasture every morning. This we called the "town herd" and when I was eleven years old, Dad turned this job over to me.

Usually the herd would be about fifty cows belonging one and two in a place all over town. The first few days in spring were pretty rough and I had to have help, for some of the cows didn't want to leave their barns, and they all wanted to fight, and none knew where they were supposed to go. But they learned fast, and within a few days they really worked nice. I would come down a side street and almost without urging each cow would drop out and go to her own home. In the morning they would fall in just as nicely as they fell out at evening.

I had Midget, my little chestnut. He was always fast and rarin' to go and I really enjoyed it. Of course there were lots of times when it would rain and storm and I got soaking wet. Once I made a dash for an old barn. It was pretty rickety and tall. The doors were blown off so I rode inside to escape a terrible wind and rain storm but it creaked and groaned so that I got scared and left. I wasn't a hundred yards away when I heard a crash and looked back. The barn was as flat as it could be.

Two of our close neighbors had cows that were twins. They were young cows, "Guernseys," and in the herd or pasture they always stayed close together. One morning I took the herd out and there was a big gate that went into the pasture, and just inside there was a small tree about the size of a fence post. I always rode ahead and opened the gate then dropped my horse and walked behind the cows until they were all in, closed the gate and went home.

The twins were together in the rear, and as I walked along behind them I had a hold of both their tails. Their owners both took very good care of them and their tails were a long black curl that practically reached the ground. Don't ask me why, but I picked them up and just casually tied them together. About that time one went to the right of the tree and the other to the left.

I always did have trouble telling those two cows apart until then, but not anymore, for Dr. Barber's cow had a short tail and Mrs. Leech's had a kink in it that never came out. I was pretty scared, and I tried to catch the one with the extra tail to untie it but no go. She wasn't taking any chances. And when the two cows came home that night I didn't try to

make up any tale. The cows had all the evidence. I just had to take some pretty rough scolding without a word of defense.

Some of the other boys in town who had saddle ponies used to help me sometimes. One was Eddie McGuire. It was Eddie's Dad that owned the livery stable back of where we lived. Eddie had a beautiful all white pony. The help at the stable took care of him and he was washed every day. McGuires had lots of money and Eddie was an only child so he had many things money could buy. His saddle was black and the bridle to match all trimmed in silver. However, he frequently rode "Ted" bareback just like I usually did. We were coming home from the pasture one morning. We let our ponies out, for they liked to run, and we enjoyed it. The lane we were following was narrow and barb wire fences on both sides. Ted shied with Eddie and jumped close to the fence. The wire caught Eddie along the calf of the leg and cut a horrible gash clear to the bone. He could have bled to death but we were only a short way from town. I should have mentioned that Eddie, like all boys then, had on short pants and was barefooted so he had no protection at all.

A bunch of about six of us boys, including [brother] George, Eddie, and several others all on our ponies went for a ride down along the Arkansas River one Sunday. We picked sand [???] along the river. I stood up on my horse and turned a flip flop into the sand. The horses would sink in up above their hooves and it looked soft but I found out it wasn't. I lit on my back and it knocked all the wind out of me. I am sure a rock would be as soft.

We fooled around the river bars a while and someone found a possum in a hollow log. We prodded him out and killed him with a club. Fried possum is supposed to be pretty good, so we decided to fry this one. We skinned him and dressed him as best we knew how and cut him up in pieces. It was pretty windy out there on the bar so we moved over next to the timber and close to a big straw stack. We built a fire and each one got a stick. We stuck a piece of possum on the stick and held it over the fire.

I am sure this wasn't a young possum and I am also sure this wasn't the way to cook possum, but we had great expectations and twelve year old abilities. When the meat was thoroughly charred on the outside we thought it should be done on the inside, though I don't suppose we had allowed more than ten minutes. It would be stretching the truth to say that possum was good. We tried but you couldn't chew it so we gave up and caught our horses and started for home.

We had gone about a mile and climbed to the bench above the bottom, when I looked back and there was the blackest smoke coming up above the trees. I turned sick and I think the rest of the boys did too, for we knew at once what it was. We had forgotten to put out our fire and we had built it too close to the straw pile in the first place. The wind had blown a spark into the straw and we were in a jam for sure. Kid-like, we took off for home like a bunch of scared pups. We didn't say a word to anybody about anything that took place that day. But we didn't eat very well, and as for George and I, Mother thought at first we were sick, then she suspected we had been into some mischief, but we insisted there was nothing wrong.

Next day, Dad called the house from the store and told Mother to send us boys up there. There was a man there that I didn't know. Dad said, "Boys, this is Mr. Thorp. He says some boys who were down on the river bar set fire to his straw pile and burned about ten acres of pasture. He thinks two of the boys were you. How about it?"

We of course admitted we were guilty, and although the pill was bitter, I know we were much relieved that the truth was finally out and the worst over. Mr. Thorp had recognized Eddie by his pony, Ted, and it didn't take him long to find out who we all were.

George and I had saved fourteen dollars to buy a twenty-two. Dad took that to pay our share of the damages. He didn't punish us otherwise, but we didn't need it. We learned a valuable lesson the hard way and I for one never forgot it.

We did get in trouble this time, but for the most part we were pretty good and we had lots of fun roaming the river bottom and hills and creeks. In the fall we sometimes took a team of ponies and the old spring wagon to go gathering nuts. We could get black walnuts galore and the same with hickory nuts. Pecans we had to work harder for because they grow on very tall trees and are much more sought after and were scarce. And I was always very fond of wild persimmons. They weren't good until late fall after frost but when they were just right I'll tell you they were hard to beat.

We lived six miles from where they used to unload the cattle cars to take cattle to the Osage. Lots of cattle were shipped there from West Texas and we sometimes went over to watch them unload. I have seen long horn steers that had to turn their heads sideways to go through a stock car door. They were so scrawny and weak that their heads seemed clear out of proportion and sometimes they would be down in the car. A couple of cowboys would drag one out to the corral, set him on his feet and run for the fence, for they were always ready to fight especially when they were weak, for they felt they were cornered.

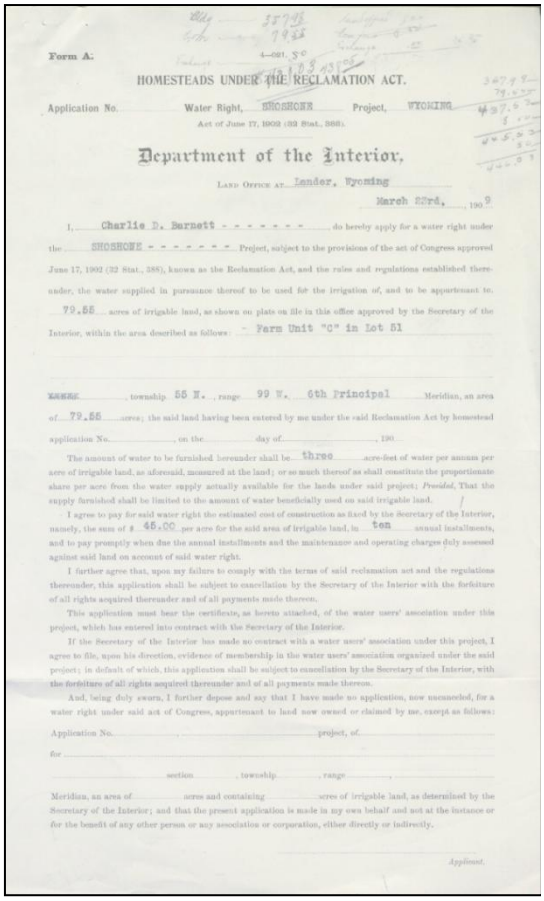
The part of Oklahoma where we lived was considered to be in the tornado zone. We had a cyclone cellar on our lot but we never used it. However if a black cloud came up the neighbors all came a running, day or night. And Mrs. Leach was usually the first.

This cellar was built in an arch of cut sandstone and was entirely below ground level. I am sure it would have supported a railroad train. The only trouble was, during rainy weather in the spring, the water level would rise and sometimes as much as four feet of water would be in there, and once we had a terrific thunder storm in the middle of the night. Dad got up to shut a window and could see lanterns coming from several directions headed for our cave. He knew it was full of water and tried to warn them, but the storm made more noise than he could. And he said none even faltered. He could see them by the light of their lanterns as they went down the steps into water waist deep and there they stayed for over an hour.

One twister did hit our town while we lived there. But it barely skirted the other side from us. On our side it was deathly quiet as far as the wind was concerned but we could hear a rumbling roar like a freight train crossing a bridge. Then it started to hail. The stones came at a slight angle but almost straight down and they were terrific in size. We measured some and they would sit on top of a teacup and weighed 9 ounces. Fortunately they were not thick and probably amounted to about one per square yard. However after the storm we had 13 holes in our roof where stones had come clear through. We had fourteen calves in a small pasture on a vacant block near home and three were killed. One boy just my age and in my grade at school was killed by lightening. But the thing that struck me funny was when there really was a bad storm not a soul rushed for the cave. They all stood in their doors and watched it.

George Sherwin's Business Fails

It was soon after this that the calamity fell on Dad's business. I have explained how all business with the Indians was done through the agent. He decided the validity of a claim and paid it, charging it to that Indian's account and the Indian seldom had any balance left. Usually he was in the hole and the merchants were warned. But suddenly and without previous warning, Dad received notice from the agent that "no debts contracted for by any Indians with anyone not on the reservations would be honored." This "decree" caught Dad with several thousand dollars of Indian accounts. He immediately went to the agent but was told he was too late. This was a scheme thought up and put over by the little towns and trading posts on the reservation, and Dad was not the only one who suffered. Most of the other businesses in town did at least half their business with the Indians.



Form A.

HOMESTEADS UNDER THE RECLAMATION ACT.

Application No. Water Right, SHOSHONE Project, WYOMING

Act of June 17, 1902 (32 Stat., 388).

Department of the Interior.

Land Office at Lander, Wyoming

March 22rd, 190 9

I, Charlie D. Barnett - - - - - - - - do hereby apply for a water right under the SHOSHONE - - - - - - - - Project, subject to the provisions of the act of Congress approved June 17, 1902 (32 Stat., 388), known as the Reclamation Act, and the rules and regulations established thereunder, the water supplied in pursuance thereof to be used for the irrigation of, and to be appurtenant to, 79.86 acres of irrigable land, as shown on plats on file in this office approved by the Secretary of the Interior, within the area described as follows: - Farm Unit "C" in Lot 51

NENE township 55 N., range 99 W., 6th Principal Meridian, an area of 79.86 acres; the said land having been entered by me under the said Reclamation Act by homestead application No. , on the day of , 190 .

The amount of water to be furnished hereunder shall be three acre-feet of water per annum per acre of irrigable land, as aforesaid, measured at the land; or so much thereof as shall constitute the proportionate share per acre from the water supply actually available for the lands under said project: *Provided*, That the supply furnished shall be limited to the amount of water beneficially used on said irrigable land.

I agree to pay for said water right the estimated cost of construction as fixed by the Secretary of the Interior, namely, the sum of $ 46.00 per acre for the said area of irrigable land, in ten annual installments, and to pay promptly when due the annual installments and the maintenance and operating charges duly assessed against said land on account of said water right.

I further agree that, upon my failure to comply with the terms of said reclamation act and the regulations thereunder, this application shall be subject to cancellation by the Secretary of the Interior with the forfeiture of all rights acquired thereunder and of all payments made thereon.

This application must bear the certificate, as hereto attached, of the water users' association under this project, which has entered into contract with the Secretary of the Interior.

If the Secretary of the Interior has made no contract with a water users' association under this project, I agree to file, upon his direction, evidence of membership in the water users' association organized under the said project; in default of which, this application shall be subject to cancellation by the Secretary of the Interior, with the forfeiture of all rights acquired thereunder and of all payments made thereon.

And, being duly sworn, I further depose and say that I have made no application, now unexpended, for a water right under said act of Congress, appurtenant to land now owned or claimed by me, except as follows:

Application No. , project, of , for , section , township , range , Meridian, an area of acres and containing acres of irrigable land, as determined by the Secretary of the Interior; and that the present application is made in my own behalf and not at the instance or for the benefit of any other person or any association or corporation, either directly or indirectly.

Applicant.

Photo: 2 - Copy of Charles Barnett's Homestead application. Note the pencil calculations of fees at the top.

Desperate circumstances call for desperate measures, so Dad turned his accounts with the Indians over to two young fellows and gave them a percent for collection. You see, an Indian, like a minor could not be held responsible, and none were ever known to volunteer to pay, or even pay under pressure. So these boys used their own system. They simply took an Indian's bill to him, read it to him if they could find him, usually he didn't understand and if he did he still said "no money." The next step was for one to try to explain to the Indian that he had to pay while the other looked for whatever the Indian owed for. Maybe a saddle, a harness, or a spring wagon. If they found it they took it. If not, they took something else and made a fast getaway. Of course Dad only knew that the boys recovered some of his goods. The details were theirs. And in this way he was able to recover only a small part of his loss and without the Indians' business his business could not survive. So we sold everything and moved to The Bighorn Basin in Wyoming.

I have spoken of the store as belonging to Dad. I think it did, at least principally. Mother's brother, Uncle Charley [Barnett], was associated with Dad, but I don't think he owned any interest in the business. It was called "The Sherwin Hardware and Implement

Co." Uncle Charley had been manual training instructor at an Indian school in New Mexico and understood Indians somewhat, so was quite valuable to Dad in the beginning.

When the business went by the board, Uncle Charley started out to look for a location where he could use his homestead right. He went to Oregon, and then to Powell, Wyoming, and then back to Oklahoma to report to his family and Dad, for of course Dad wanted to move somewhere too. He came back with such glowing reports of Wyoming and the wonderful country that was being opened up there that it didn't take long to sell Wyoming to the rest. Dad had used his homestead rights in Minnesota, but he still wanted a ranch. The immediate plans were for Uncle Charley to take a homestead. Dad would farm it and Uncle Charley would work at his trade as carpenter. But I am getting too far ahead here. I must tell you about our trip to Wyoming.

To Wyoming, April 10, 1909

It took quite a lot of doing, this getting ready to leave. There was the wrecked business to dispose of, our house, and most of the live stock and other personal property. We knew, of course, that we were going to a new country, where a large tract of land under the Powell Canal[2] was being offered for homestead. Settlers were advised to bring as much of their equipment as they could, for the cost of equipping and at the same time building a place to live and breaking new land was more than many could stand. So it was decided that we would ship a car load of things.

An "emigrant car" as they were called, was the largest size [railroad] box car, and one was ordered for the first week in April. This was in Nineteen-nine. When it came it was placed on a siding and we were given ten days to load and make ready. Because we would have no house to come to, it was decided that Mother and Aunt Mona [Barnett], and Jim and Lissie, and Aunt Mona's baby, Dorothy, would take the train as soon as the emigrant car arrived. They would go to Minnesota and stay with relatives until Dad, Uncle Charley and George and I had time to get to the homestead and provide some sort of place to live. Then too they would be out of the house while we were moving things to the car.

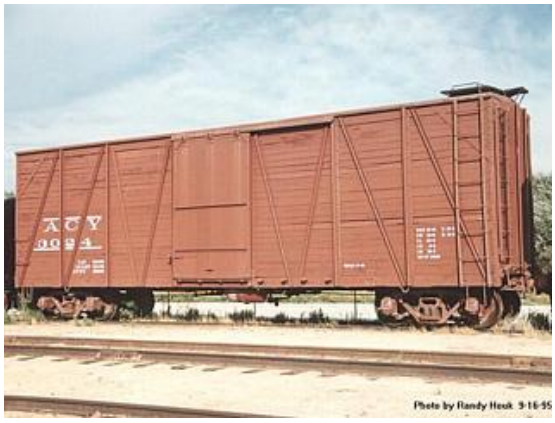


Photo: 3 - An early 1900s boxcar or "Emigrant Car".

The depot was about a half-mile from our home and the only thing we had to move with was a small team of mules, "Beck" and "Judy," and a spring wagon. By the time we paid our debts we had precious little left so we could not afford to hire the hauling done by a dray, however the neighbors were all very good and lots of the men lent a hand and we were frequently asked to a neighbors to eat.

It is surprising how much one can pack into a car like that. There was the furniture for both families, a walking plow, a harrow cultivator and several other pieces of machinery. We took enough barb wire which we had in the store to fence 80 acres. We also took several spools of hog wire, for we were taking four half-grown pigs with us, and a milk cow and her calf, one saddle horse, and the mules and spring wagons. There was also several thousand feet of lumber to build some sort of place to live. And we had to take hay and grain to feed our stock. We had three barrels of water for we didn't know when

[2] The Powell Canal was part of a huge irrigation project made possible by the building of the Shoshone Dam and reservoir, now called Buffalo Bill Dam and reservoir, west of Cody. It had just been completed in 1909. A marvelous book about the building of the dam and the irrigation canals it spawned has been written by Beryl Gail Churchill called Challenging the Canyon: A Family Man Builds a Dam. It is available from the Buffalo Bill Museum of Natural History in Cody, Wyoming.

we could get water for the stock. And there were several dozen chickens. I don't suppose I have thought of near all but it will give you some idea of what such a move was like.

With an emigrant car, the railroad co. issues one pass. This allows one person to ride in the car in order to look after stock and otherwise take care of his belongings. It was our plan to load the car, then Dad and us boys would take the passenger train and come on through, and Uncle Charley would accompany the car. But we found out it would take from one week to ten days for the car to come through. In the mean time we had no place to stay at either end, so we started to work on a plan to come with the car too. The agent at the depot was a good friend and he said he didn't think we would have any trouble so long as we kept out of sight while passing through stations. At any rate it seemed worth a try.

In one corner of the car we placed all of the bed springs and on top we placed all but one mattress. Then we put the old wardrobe at the foot and the fourth wall was boxes and furniture. The sewing machine was in this wall I remember well, for I'll bet I bumped my head on that a hundred times. Finally we put an old trunk on top of the wardrobe in such a way that it could be slid over our entrance hole. This just in case someone got nosy. The one mattress we left out was Uncle Charley's bed and it could be in plain sight.

We had lots of fun loading the car, and as for George and I, it was truly an adventure story come true. We were the envy of all our friends, for we were going to Wyoming, where there were mountains and clear streams, neither one to be found in the Arkansas River bottom. It wasn't any secret that we were going to be stowaways, and that made it all the better.

Finally we had everything loaded. The last of course [were] the pigs, the cow and chickens, and finally the mules and Nigger, the saddle horse we were taking. Nigger was the one Dad chose to bring instead of Midget because he was larger and Dad thought he could be used to help with the farming, although until then he had never been worked. I really felt bad about having to leave my favorite pony, but that was the only "fly in my ointment" and in my excitement I didn't find time to grieve very much.

I don't remember the exact date when Uncle Charley gave the agent the word that we were ready. I believe it was the tenth of April. We were to be picked up about eight in the evening and George and I never, or practically never, left the car from noon on. We knew trains were usually late but it would be just our luck to have this one early and we were taking no chances.

About four o'clock Dad gave us a couple of dollars and told us to go up town and buy some lunch stuff to have to nibble on. He left the selection to us and he didn't need to tell us to hurry back. We fairly flew and were soon back with crackers, cheese, baloney and the like; a big sack full.

But we reckoned without our good neighbors. About seven o'clock here they came. There must have been fifty of them come to say goodbye. Lots of the kids we knew and

all of the near neighbors and Mrs. Leach, I suspicion, was the leader. After much hand shaking and goodbyes all around, they left and I am sure there must have been something in all our eyes, for only then did we notice the big box just inside the car door. I tell you now and I learned it then, you haven't lost so much if you keep your friends. The box was about the size of a trunk and inside there was just about everything that you can think of that is good to eat. There were cakes, cookies, pies, and bread, fried chicken and baked ham. There was jelly and jam and canned fruit. Well, there was all and more than four of us could eat in over a week. What better way, how more thoughtfully, could they have sped us on our way and wished us a happy journey. And now with the cow to provide us with milk we would live well we knew. We're off!

It was beginning to get dark and we were due to be picked up soon, so Dad told us boys we better crawl in. What with all the excitement and running that day we were plenty tired and ready to comply. We climbed up and over and down into our hole and I felt something like a gopher. It was dark as pitch in our den, and as flash lights were unknown to us, and Dad was afraid to let us take a lantern down there, we had to undress and crawl in in the dark.

We heard a train thunder by, and then the brakes began to squeal and the couplings clank and finally it stopped. There was quite a little snorting around and we were sitting up in bed wondering if this was our train, when suddenly we needn't wonder any more. Bang! They really hit us, and my head flew back and wow! Did I ever bump my head on that sewing machine! It seemed like our car shot backward about ten feet then jerked just as hard forward. It takes several of these jerks before all the slack is taken up in the train and we roll smoothly. Then we move from the siding to the main track and finally we are rolling along smoothly. That is, as smoothly as a freight ever rides.

Ralston was about one hundred miles south of Arkansas City, Kansas, and it was about midnight when we pulled in there. George and I were sleeping soundly when the train stopped and I guess it was the lack of motion and the sudden quiet that woke us up, but it wasn't quiet long. We heard voices and someone said "How many bums you got in there?"

"Why, none," said Uncle Charley. "Come on now, we know you do have," said the strange voice. It was the "brakey" [brakeman] and he swung himself and lantern up into the car. Dad tried to hide behind a bale of hay but it was no good. "Well now," said the brakey, "here is one, how many more?" We boys shook in our boots. Well anyway we shook with fright for we didn't have any idea what he would do. But we soon found out, for he soon had tracked us straight to our den and swung his lantern down and peered in. "Well now, isn't this cozy," he said. "Come on out kids." And we did. When he finally got us all together he told Uncle Charley that passenger fare for the three of us would be charged against the car. Then he made us get out.

We knew that the car had to lay over there until after eight the next morning in order to have the live stock inspected, the pigs for Cholera, and the cow for ticks. So Dad tried to get the man to allow us to stay where we were until morning, but nothing doing. He took

great delight in kicking us out that night. It seems that Dad must have been a bit careless and some depot agent along the line somewhere had noticed more than one person in our car and had reported it ahead.

Well anyway there we were stumbling across the switch yard in a strange city at midnight, just like real railroad bums. And to all purposes I guess that is what we were. We finally came to some dimly lighted streets and finally a cheap hotel. It didn't look too good but we didn't want to go any farther. Anyway, we certainly couldn't have gone to a good hotel, for we had no luggage and were dressed in overalls; they wouldn't have let us in the lobby.

We slept here until about six the next morning, then we found a place to get some breakfast and wandered down to the stock yards. We knew that the car was due there sometime, so we hung around. Of course the train and crew that had brought the car this far had gone on and we would be picked up by another. That was our one chance. Maybe the one crew wouldn't leave any word for the next one to watch out for us.

We finally spotted our car and sat on the fence while the inspector went over the stock with Uncle Charley. Really, all he did was ask a few questions, glance at the pigs and the cow, and give Uncle Charley a clean bill of health for them, collect his dollar and go his way. And by the way, we lost all the pigs with Cholera within two weeks of that day.

There was a train making up in the yards and as soon as the inspector was gone, we watched our chance and slipped into the car. We ducked out of sight and held our breaths until we were rolling again. This experience taught us a lesson and we were seldom out in the car door in daylight from then on. The weather was wonderful, and how we would like to have sat in the door and enjoyed the country side. Instead we stayed well back and went into hiding at each stop.

We came by Alliance, Nebraska, And Billings, Montana. This brought us through Sheridan, [Wyo.] and it was there that we got our first glimpse of mountains with snow on them. It was quite a thrill but not what I had expected. They didn't seem high enough. Of course they were but we didn't know it. I said we came by Billings, Montana, but that isn't quite right, for the railroad at that time forked at Taluka and came through Pryor gap. That road has long been abandoned and torn up.

It was at Taluka that we left our car and brought tickets and rode in the passenger coach the rest of the way in. This coach was pulled by the same train and was little better than a caboose, but we were glad to sit on a cushion and look out the window. It was evening when we pulled into Powell, [Wyoming]. We unloaded the mules and the horse and the cow in order to turn them loose in the pens there. They had been tied up so long and except for the cow, none of them had laid down once. Besides that, they had to fight the motion of the car all the time. They must have been awfully tired, for we had been on the road seven nights, and this would be our eighth night in the car.

It took most of the morning next day to unload the wagon and reassemble it, unload the logs and make a temporary pen for [the cattle] there at the yards, and then load the wagon with the most essential and immediate needed things to take to the homestead. It was only three miles [south], but we had only time to make one trip and set up camp. It was sundown when we finally reached the claim. It was eighty acres, marked by a few new laths with some figures on them. Just that and nothing more. The roads were marked by laths on either side but there had been precious little travel over them and they had had no work except there was a bridge or culvert where they crossed a ditch or lateral. There was one of these bridges across a ditch for a way to Uncle Charley's claim. We crossed this bridge and pulled a little to one side and there we stopped.

George and I had been wild with excitement all the way from the train car. We had seen hundreds of prairie dogs and had killed our first Wyoming rattlesnake. We picked up two buffalo skulls and an old elk horn. But now as we finally came to a stop our spirits sagged just a little.

Of course we knew it was a new place. We knew there wasn't a house, sure we knew all of that, but we hadn't realized that there simply wasn't anything. We had come from a place where there were rivers and creeks and lots of trees. Yes, and people. But here there simply wasn't a thing except the ground we stood on. We had to take a shovel and rake and clear the ground of cactus before we could even set up a tent. We had dropped just below a bench before entering the claim and from here we couldn't see a single house or tent or a tree or even a fence post.

Talk about a dry camp. This really was one. We had brought a barrel of water from Powell with us, but we had the stock to take care of too. But then, we had watered everything before we started out and they would have to wait until morning for more.

I have never forgotten that first night. We were all starved to death for a good hot meal but we didn't get it that night. It took too long to get things set up and besides there simply wasn't anything to burn. Dad had homesteaded in Minnesota and he had burned buffalo chips there, but it was too late now to go hunting them, so finally we had a bowl of bread and milk and tumbled into bed.

The weeks that followed were busy ones. We all worked from dawn to dark, but to George and I it was quite an experience, although there was little time to play or explore around. Sometimes we would go rabbit hunting and rattlesnake hunting. We had no gun, but we would see a rabbit go into a rock pile and sometimes we could see a bit of him back there. By taking a stick that was split on the end we would twist his fur and pull him out. In this way we were able to add a little fresh meat to our otherwise pretty slim diet.

I was made chief cook and I didn't mind. I always rather liked cooking. But that was not all I was supposed to do. That spring I was introduced to a walking plow, something that until then neither Nigger, the saddle horse, nor I had ever had to cope with. The mules, of course, were wise. I worked the three abreast with Nigger on the right. He would go pretty good as long as we were going straight but when we came to the end and had to turn a corner, the tugs would bump his heels and he would start to kick. He came around the corner kicking every time. Then as soon as he got back in the furrow he was all right.

We plowed and planted about thirty acres that spring and did we ever have a time when it came to irrigating it. Of course none of us knew a thing about handling water. The government had a man who was supposed to come around and help you get started. But he was a busy fellow and I don't recall that he ever got out to our place.

Us boys had great fun though, parading around in the mud. We had no boots and we first tried it barefoot but there were too many cactus in the mud so we wore old shoes or overshoes. We had great sport drowning out prairie dogs, rattlers and kangaroo mice.

George and I had a pickle bottle full of rattles from snakes we had killed. Once I saw a rattler just going into a hole in soft dirt under a cactus [hump]. I was too late to get him with a rock so I stamped down on the dirt and his tail was still out of the hole. I held him there while I got my knife out and clipped his rattles, I wanted them for my collection, and when I took my foot up, out poked his head. He had turned back along beside himself. I suppose that was the nearest I ever came to being bitten by one and certainly the most foolish thing anyone could think of.

There were two near tragedies among the homesteaders that spring where snakes were concerned. One was a man who cut a snake's head off with a shovel then picked the head up to see the fangs. He was bitten in the thumb, and although he had a pretty bad hand he didn't die. The other was one of the neighbors. He was walking down a ditch. He had on boots. There was a rattler on the ditch bank which was just about boot top high. It struck and its fangs caught in the fellow's pants just above the boots. It couldn't get loose and that poor guy tromped down a half-acre of wheat in what was probably the most original and unrehearsed snake dance of all times before he finally shook it loose.

By the last of May we had the shell of a three room house up and had built a cistern. The cistern was filled from the ditch and there was a pump on a sort of back porch. This was a

wonderful thing, for up until then someone had to either haul water from Powell or the nearest ditch which had water. This took lots of time and took the team from the field.

Aunt Mona and Mother, Lissie and Jim, came the last week in May. Mother got there in time to bake a birthday cake for George. His birthday is the thirtieth of May. In Oklahoma he always wanted “Strawberry Short Cake” but in Wyoming it was chocolate. By midsummer there were quite a few neighbors all around us. We had “Peppers” on the east of us and “Flowers” on the west.

I have mentioned Powell several times so I should explain that Powell was little to brag about then. There was [the] Pratt and Main store, a post office, a blacksmith shop, a well, used by all the homesteaders until they could make other arrangements, and there were about a half-dozen government houses and of course a depot.

We Move Again – Crooked Creek

'Our venture in farming that summer fell far short of being enough for two families to live on, so that fall Dad started looking for a place of his own. It couldn't cost much and had to be bought with nothing down. It was about this time that we met Roy Huntington. He had two ranches in Crooked Creek: his home place, which was a pretty good ranch, and another place adjoining which was badly run down or shall I say, undeveloped. This place had possibilities, but few improvements and was just a shade better than homesteading. There was a very small two-room cabin made of slabs and the wind could blow straight through.

Well, Dad made a deal for this place, and we moved over there about the first of October of 1909. Winter was coming on and we really were ill prepared. We hustled around and banked the cabin and doped and chinked cracks. We hauled wood from the hills nearby. We set up the tent and managed to find a few boards to make a frame for it. And we put a stove in it too.

Crooked Creek, you see, is some thirty-five miles from Powell, and in the foothills of the Pryor Mountains and close to the Bighorn River and Canyon. Here at least we had a stream, and there were trees, and in the hills there was plenty of firewood to be had. And believe me we needed plenty to keep warm, for in that place it really got cold. Before spring we had experienced thirty below and the colder it got the harder the wind blew. It never snowed quietly and when a storm was over (they usually lasted three days) there was always hard old snow banks as high as the brush along the creek but no snow left anywhere on the fields. It would drift in through a key hole or a crack and some mornings there would be a pile a foot deep by the door inside. Of course all fires went out and it was as cold inside as out, unless someone stayed up to keep fire. This we often did when the storm was bad enough. Us boys slept in the tent. It was just a step from the house door and we usually started a fire to go to bed by, but in the morning we threw back the frozen covers, grabbed our clothes and jumped into the house. Several times that winter George and I frosted our toes or our ears or nose, just between bed and the house.

We started to school rather late that fall because we were pretty busy getting settled in our new place. We had to walk about two miles. Our school house was a one room log cabin about fourteen by twenty. It was daubed with mud and had split poles on the roof, covered with a foot of dirt. There was cactus planted on the roof to keep the dirt from blowing off. The floor was hewed logs and if you ever dropped a pencil it went in a crack. These cracks eventually filled up with dirt, for the logs were laid on the ground. Our blackboards were three boards nailed to the log wall and painted black. For desks, we had none, so each family supplied their own. There were four of us and we had a table about five feet square Dad had made from some box boards, and two benches. The others were equipped about the same. Each family provided its own books and there was not a new one in school and no two alike. For the most part they were old books that the parents had used.

Our teacher that year was Bess Winchel. She was a pretty hard boiled cowgirl type, about twenty-five, and she rode a pretty spiffy horse. She stayed with Roy Huntingtons. Believe me, she didn't put up with any monkey business and we didn't try any either.

There were seventeen kids in school that winter. There were four of us, and Harry Huntington, then Burt and Ted and Mildred Huntington, Edwin King, Nettie Weaver, Jim and George Legg, and five kids from the Teeples family. Their Dad had the distinction of being the first white child born in Wyoming. He was born at Fort Bridger, I think, in the 1840s. His name was George Teeples, but he was more generally known as Starky. I don't know where that came from.

Most of the kids in school were old for being in grade school because they hadn't had the opportunity to go like kids do today. I think Jim Legg was twenty-two and his brother George was about twenty, Edwin King was eighteen and Nettie was, I think, the same, but we were all, including myself, in the seventh grade. Jim usually only came a few months in mid-winter when he was out of a job.

Most of the kids came from two to five miles to school and they all had ponies except us. We lived closer and had to walk, and boy, was it ever cold sometimes. Our route was east and west and the wind blew from the north. There was no shelter or any place to get warm except at Roy Huntington's, and when we got there we were nearly home. Once in a while if the weather was too bad, Dad or Roy would come with a team for us.

Of course we all brought lunch, and we had a shelf behind the door where we left such things as canned fruit or jelly or pickles. Each of us had a cup and plate and silver we left there also. Frequently, by prearrangement, the girls would bring the makings for stew or bean soup or scrambled eggs and it would be a common affair, sort of pot luck lunch, cooked on the old box stove in the center of the room. Or sometimes on cold days we made cocoa. Oh, it was rough but we had lots of fun too. The boys in school were expected to keep the wood pile up. We spent lots of Saturdays hauling and cutting wood. The district paid the teacher sixty dollars a month, and that was the extent of their help. From there on we were on our own.

The second year we were there, I believe was the most fun in school. There was the same bunch of kids, but our teacher was Miss Robinson. She was an Eastern girl, between 25 and thirty, good looking and enthusiastic about the west, and full of fun. She could take a joke and was the butt of many.

That winter I had set some coyote traps and by going a little out of my way I could tend them on my way to or from school. And so it happened one morning that I found a coyote in a trap. It was perhaps a half mile from school and if I stopped to kill it and skin it I would be late. So I left it and went on. I told Miss Robinson and asked for permission to go back and take care of my catch. "Of course," she said, "by all means go and take care of the poor thing. Don't make it suffer any longer than necessary." I asked if Jim might go with me and she gave her permission to that also.

Well now, on the way over there we got to thinking, "Miss Robinson had never seen a live coyote." We started figuring how we could bring this one in alive and show it to her. I had a piece of sash cord on my belt that I used to carry books with, and we figured with this it could be done. And it was done.

We found a stick [with] a forked end. With this, Jim held the coyote's head pinned to the ground while I tied all four feet together with the sash cord. We left the trap on and by putting the stick through his tied legs, we carried him between us back to school. Very much alive.

It was first recess when we got back and the kids were mostly outside playing. We let Mr. Coyote down on the step and the kids all ran up to see it. The coyote started to struggle and the kids made a lot of racket. The teacher came to the door to see what was going on and just as she opened the door the coyote got the rope loose and dodged into the school house. Miss Robinson screamed and jumped to the top of a table. The poor coyote tried to find a place to hide and finally crawled behind the wood box. We picked him out and with the trap, drug him outside. And so the teacher got to see her first live coyote.

One time she was pronouncing spelling words to a class and Ted Huntington was playing with something that was causing a disturbance in the back of the room. Miss Robinson walked back there, holding a spelling book in one hand and still giving out words. She simply held out her hand for whatever Ted was playing with, not looking at him at all, but at her class. Ted had a muskrat tail. It was cold and slick and he obediently dropped it in her hand. That was almost too much for her and she screamed, then collapsed and cried but it wasn't long till she was all right and could see the funny side of it.

Miss Robinson, like Miss Winchel, stayed at Roy Huntington's place. Roy was a great kidder and loved to play practical jokes on any one, but like most practical jokers, it wasn't funny if the joke was on him.

Roy had a big young fellow by the name of Gene Horsell working for him that winter. Gene was as green as they came, for he was fresh from the Isle of Guernsey and everything was new to him. But he was by no means a fool. Roy took great delight in jibing Gene just to get a good laugh and Gene took it all in good fun, though I know he must have smarted terribly sometimes because he admired Miss Robinson and could hardly enjoy being made a fool of all the time.

Roy had some venison that someone had given him. They had some for dinner and when Gene asked what it was, Roy said it was coyote, and he stuck to it. Gene didn't enjoy his meal very much and it wasn't until the meat was all used up that Roy finally told him what it was. I think it was then that Gene probably resolved to get even somehow, and he did eventually.

That Christmas, the Huntingtons and the teacher went to Powell to attend the holidays. They were gone a week. They left Gene there along with Jim Legg to put up ice while they were gone. We all hauled our ice from the Bighorn and packed it in sawdust to last

all summer. The boys were to batch while the folk were gone and when Roy was giving Gene his parting instructions he said, “I guess you boys will find enough to eat, but I am sorry we don’t have any fresh meat to leave you.” Then as a parting jibe at Gene he said, “Maybe you or Jim could get a coyote while we are gone.” And he winked at teacher and laughed. Of course ever since he had pulled that one on Gene, venison had always been coyote.

Jim and Gene had to go right through our yard on the way to and from the river and one day as they were going home with a load of ice, I was there in the yard skinning a coyote I had caught. They stopped and Gene said, “What you going to do with the carcass?” “Nothing,” I said, “Just throw it in the brush somewhere.” “Can I have it?” “Sure,” I said, “What you want it for?” “Going to catch a skunk,” said Gene. And so I gave it to him.

The Huntingtons came home that weekend and Gene was expecting them, for they had said they would be home then, and dinner was all ready. Gene was a good cook and he had made a meat pie, for which the English are famous. The Huntingtons were delighted but curious about the meat, but when they asked, Gene winked and said, “It’s coyote.” Everyone laughed and took another helping. They were all very loud in their praise for Gene’s cooking but Roy still wasn’t satisfied about the meat. He said, “It’s good but I don’t think it’s venison.” To which Gene said, “I said it was coyote.” “Oh yes, coyote,” said Roy, “But it doesn’t taste like coyote.” “Well it is,” said Gene, and he took Roy around the corner of the house and showed him what was left of the carcass hanging on the wall back there.

Roy’s jaw dropped open and he said, “You mean ..?” and pointed at the meat. “Sure,” said Gene. Roy turned and rushed into the house. “My god,” he said, “That crazy guy has poisoned all of us. That really was coyote he made that pie of.” Then he turned and ran outside again and all that good English meat pie came up.

Aunt Mattie and the teacher were a little taken aback, but were good sports and saw the joke and the justice in it. But the next morning Roy handed Gene his check. And Gene smiled as he walked to the bunk house to get his things. He had stayed long enough to get even anyway.

First Job -- Sheepherding

I took my first job away from home in the spring of 1910. We were hard up and although there was plenty to do on our own place, we had to have cash. It was about the first of April I saddled my horse and started to make the rounds of the ranches within thirty or forty miles. I went first up past Frannie and Warren [Wyoming] and so on around the Pryor Mts. I was gone five days but found no jobs. So next I started south, over to the "Stinking Water" or Shoshone [River], and the first place I stopped I got a job.

That was with Walt Eckles. He had a band of sheep and was just starting to lamb. This was only about ten miles from home, but it could have been a hundred, for I could not get home until the job was over, and that would be at least six weeks. Of course I did go home before starting to work because I had to let the folks know and get some clothes.

I shall always remember that job in detail for I felt like a colt must feel when it is taken from the open range and broke to ride. Up until now I had helped quite a lot, I know, but actually I had worked like a boy, and for the most part I had been pretty free to play, to explore and to do much as I pleased. But now I was a man among men. At least I was supposed to do as much work although my pay was less. I received forty-five dollars a month and board, and I was on the job 24 hours a day without relief.

As the lambs were about twenty-four hours old, they and their mothers were put into a band called the lamb band. There were about a hundred in this band when it was turned over to me and it was my duty to herd them. I had to take them to the hills to feed and at least once a day return to the river for water and to pick up an additional thirty, forty or fifty ewes. Of course the lambs couldn't travel [very] far so I was seldom more than two or three miles from the ranch. I usually came in to water about noon and while the sheep were laying around in the shade, I would slip in to our wagon and get myself some dinner. This was my only hot meal. I carried cold things for the rest. After eating I would ride back in the hills to move my bed to where I expected to bed the sheep that night. By this time the sheep would start to feed and I would wind up at my bed about dark, sleep with my sheep and do the same thing over the next day.

The sheep required very close watching for there were lots of coyotes and if a ewe dropped from the bunch she would almost surely loose her lamb that night. As soon as dark came the coyotes would start to howl and they were on all sides for they are always attracted by the smell of lambing. I usually would build a big sage brush fire to help scare them away and Mr. Eckles gave me a forty-five six-shooter to carry. I would shoot this sometimes when they seemed to be too close. It helped to silence them anyway.

My band grew at a rather rapid rate and it was fun to watch the lambs. They grow so fast and they are so cute. During the day they all would bunch up on a knoll somewhere, or if cold, on the sunny side of a hill, while the ewes fed.

I was given an old dog that was almost my age. He was stone deaf but the smartest animal I have ever known. In the first place, he had never seen me before and he had to

be directed entirely by hand signals. A herder by the name of Murphy had been using him and he turned him over to me. Prince was his name, and while Murphy gave me the signals by which Prince worked, the old dog stood there, ears cocked and looked from one of us to the other. Then Murphy left, merely motioning Prince to me and I patted the front of my leg to draw him to me. I patted his head and he looked once or twice toward Murphy but never tried to follow.

The sheep could be spread out so that it was half a mile across the band. The east side, we'll say, were straying out of sight. Prince is watching me all the time and I merely wave my right arm in a circular motion, around that side of the band, or my left if it is the other side. If I want him to go quite a ways, I raise my arm higher; if it is sheep close by that need turning back, I motion with my arm lower down and mostly with my hand, and off he goes. When he has completed that command he stops and looks back for more instructions. And he can be sent on, called back or told to lay down where he is. Or he can be brought straight back, cutting through the bunch. And any time he is driving ewes and lambs, he always watches for the lambs. If we were moving, he would go back over the ground we had covered every little while. He would cover this ground like a bird dog looking for birds, searching behind every sage brush for lambs that might have gotten tired and laid down.

If he found one he jumped at it giving a sharp bark. The lamb would be startled into jumping up and running for the herd. But sometimes they went the wrong direction. Prince had a remedy. He simply ran over the lamb, knocking it down and when it got up it would usually take a new direction. If necessary he would do this several times but if all attempts failed to turn the lamb in the right direction he merely held it down while I came after it. And all this work he did without being told.

When lambing was over, I had to take the whole bunch down the lane to the river bridge and cross over to the south side. By this time the fields were all green and they were not fenced sheep tight. At one place I had to follow a lane where there were green fields on both sides. I expected to have a lot of trouble there, but Prince took care of everything. He went up one side, back around the rear and up the other. He did this so well and he was rough enough on any sheep that dared go through the fence that we had no trouble at all.

The first morning I started to work for Walt, I got quite a shock. I had rolled my bed out on some hay in the barn where I had stabled my horse. It seems there was a Nephew of Walt's, a man about twenty-five, who had stayed there that night also. I was a complete stranger to everyone and no one paid much attention to me. There were four or five other fellows working there but at that time I didn't know one from the other. I was awake but still in my bed when the Nephew came into the barn that morning. He said in a lusty voice, "Hello, you son of a bitch! How did you sleep?"
And I said, in a weak voice, "Oh, fine, thanks."
Gad, I thought that fellow would die laughing. He hadn't seen me and his salutation had been for his horse. He said to me, "You don't care what people call you, do you?"

After I finished that job, which, by the way, was my only experience herding sheep, I went back home. Roy Huntington had some colts he wanted broken, and I wanted another saddle horse, so I made a deal to break three for him and take one for my work. I was a pretty good hand with colts, though I never did claim to be a rodeo rider. I also helped neighbors hay that summer and turned my wages in to the family to help buy groceries.

Journal of Wylie Grant Sherwin

From Book 2: Stories of early settlers and acquaintances

G. W. Barry

Over north of us fifteen or twenty miles was the "Dry Head" country. This was a rather large area of country lying between the Pryor Mountains and the Bighorn Canyon. It is probably twenty miles long by half that wide and surrounded by very rough country. There were perhaps a dozen ranches in the Dry Head and a great many of the ranchers there had a rather interesting past, leading up to the time they took refuge in this hole in the wall. Not the least illustrious of these was G. W. Barry[3].

First I should tell you that there were really only two ways into the Dry Head. One from the south where we lived, and this was the roughest sort of a trail. It could be negotiated by horseback, or four horses sometimes pulled a light spring wagon over it. But the spring wagon idea wasn't so good; you were apt to get pitched out on your head or if a neck yoke didn't hold you could wind up in a canyon.

At one place this trail went up a narrow canyon and there was a pair of pole barns there to keep horses from straying in or out. And so this was always referred to as The Barn. About the only other way into the Dry Head was from the north and here you had to cross the Dry Head Creek which was the north boundary so to speak.

You crossed this creek at a point where it had just left the upper canyon coming from the Pryors and was about to enter another canyon going to the Bighorn Canyon. At this point was the Phelps ranch and you passed through their yard between the house and barn.

Charlie Phelps was half-breed Crow Indian, and this was Reservation north from here. I'll tell you more about the Phelps family later, but now I started to tell you of one episode connected with Barry.

G. W. as he was often referred to had a pretty bad reputation. He was not a Westerner in the true sense. He was from New York City. He wore the eastern version of western clothes. Usually when horseback "he rode good horses," he wore black English riding boots, buck skin pants that were fringed down the legs, a flat crown, broad brim, black Stetson and always a six-shooter. And G. W. was a strikingly handsome man in a villainous sort of way. He was well over six feet tall, raven black hair, a short cropped

[3] Dad spells this name "Berry", but I'm sure it's Barry because all of the place names in the area and on the maps are spelled that way.

black mustache and countenance that was seldom cracked by a smile. He was known to have a vicious disposition and made no attempts at friendship with anyone. He treated most people he came in contact with like dirt under his feet and he got away with it.

Photo: 4 - Barry's Landing in 2008, one of the few crossings in the Bighorn Canyon, meaning a ford that you could drive cattle and horses across. Now it's flooded by the Yellowtail Dam in Montana. There's a boat launch ramp just out of sight on the right.

The Barry family consisted of G. W. and Mrs. Barry and a stepson, Claude St John. They had a nice little ranch down in a canyon which dropped on down to the Bighorn Canyon. They lived in a long, low, rambling log house of about ten rooms, furnished with very expensive eastern furniture and electric lights from their own light plant, at a time when few western towns and no other ranchers could boast as much.

The Barrys were served by several women servants and at least one man, none of whom the natives ever met. That is, the Barrys made it a point never to let them go anywhere or step out of place when someone was there. These servants were always from New York, and if discharged were returned to New York. And rumor had it that they were paid with a check on a New York bank that didn't exist.

Oh, he was quite a guy. He had about a hundred well-bred horses, none of which he was ever known to sell. No cattle, and no apparent means of livelihood. How did he do it? Well, we didn't know, but we had some clues.

Barry was a very well educated man; some said a lawyer, and he could be very charming and convincing when he chose. When he first came west, it was as the promoter/manager of a dredging co. organized for the purpose of dredging gold from the Bighorn River in the Bighorn Canyon. This canyon is forty-five miles long, as much as three thousand feet deep, with an average depth of, say, fifteen hundred feet, and Barry's place was about halfway, at a point where the canyon reached its lowest wall[4].

Barry came west alone. He had this large barge built. It was built of the finest of materials, even hard wood floors, and it was equipped to the last degree. And when it was done he liked it so well he had two more built. One was equipped with a fine electric light plant and the living quarters were furnished with expensive Eastern furniture. But there was one thing no one could understand. There was no dredging equipment. After about two years building time these barges were finally launched and floated down the

[4] There's a place on current maps called Barry's Landing. I assume this is near where the ranch was.

Bighorn into the canyon and tied up at as close a place in the canyon as possible to where Barry's ranch later was. There were few people living in that part of the country at that time and Barry saw to it that no one came snooping around. He filed on his claim and a fine house was built. The frame was from logs cut on the ground. Then one day during high water the barges broke loose and were wrecked and completely lost. Or so Barry reported to his backers. The safe containing the payroll was, of course, lost also. For this crew of men had not been engaged in building a house, they were building a mining camp and dredging for gold.

I can't vouch for these details for I'll admit Barry preceded me by several years and that part is as told to me. It was about fourteen miles over the Dry Head Trail from our place to Barrys. There were a great many stories afloat about Barry and his various dealings with help and with others who chanced to cross him, but there was one which concerned me most for I played a small part in it.

At this particular time, G. W. had a young fellow by the name of "Harry Barry" working for him. Harry was no relation, the name was a coincidence. Harry was a very nice young fellow, well educated and very sociable. About twenty five I suppose. He, like all the Barry household, was from New York and the only one I ever knew who managed to break Barry's hold on him and stay in the West. And this is his story in part – the part I happen to know of.

Harry had finished college. He wanted to come west. He answered an ad in a New York paper and that is how it all began. He wound up as sort of valet for G. W. Harry stayed two years and never got to know a single person outside the Barry household. He was pleasant and efficient and G. W. grew to like him a lot. He was probably more of a companion than Barry had known for many years. So he valued Harry highly.

One day G. W. was thrown from a horse and his arm was broken. It was a bad break near the shoulder. Claude was not at the ranch at the time and it was necessary to send someone for a doctor. Harry had become a pretty good horseman and so he was sent for the doctor. He had never been over the trail south, but he couldn't miss it until he got to Crooked Creek anyway. And there he could inquire the way to Lovell, the nearest doctor, about 15 miles.

And so it was that he [came riding into Roy Huntington's place] one day. His horse was all a-lather. Roy met him for he felt something was wrong. It was eleven miles from there to Lovell and Roy knew Harry's horse would never make the complete round trip back to the ranch, so he had Harry come in for a cup of coffee and a bite to eat while they caught him a fresh horse. The Huntingtons were very hospitable and assured Harry that they would have a bite for him and the doctor on the return trip, and they did.

Harry and Roy seemed to take an immediate liking to each other and it was Harry's first outside contact with anyone in the West. This was very early spring for Barry's horse had fallen on the ice when he got his arm broken. It was some time [later] in July, when Harry decided to leave Barry. He had tried to collect the money due him without saying he was

leaving, for he, like everyone else, knew the wrath that would fall on him if he should make such an announcement, so when he finally decided he could not get his pay, he, like the Arab, "folded his tent and silently slipped away."

He turned up at Roy's place, that being the only person he knew, outside the Barry place and west of New York City. He didn't have a cent and only the clothes on his back and a very small bundle. Barry sent Claude in pursuit, and of course he found Harry, but Harry refused to go back to the ranch. Whereupon Barry sent word that if either Harry or Roy ever showed up in the Dry Head he would shoot them, one or both, on sight, and they both knew this was no idle threat. The only thing was they both knew that the chances of meeting G. W. on the trail or anywhere except on his own ranch were slight indeed, for except for an occasional trip to Billings, say once a year, he practically never left the ranch.

So later that summer when Roy heard of some of his horses that had been seen in the Dry Head over North of Barry's, he took Harry and started to go after them. Jim Wasson[5] lived on the next creek North of Barry's. He was a friend of Huntingtons, in fact he had told Roy of these horses. Roy was pretty uneasy about going over there but they planned to leave home late and they would pass the Barry ranch after dark thus avoiding even the remotest chance of meeting G. W. They would stay at Wasson's and return the next night.

And so it was about nine o'clock at night and they were well past Barry's. It was pitch dark and a terrific rain had started. Roy and Harry were plodding up the trail to a slight rise, and just down the other side was the Wasson place. They were all humped up in their slickers when suddenly Roy's horse, a sorrel stallion, threw up his head and then nickered. The men heard horse's shoes ring on the rocks of the trail ahead. Harry spoke first: "Someone is coming."

Then they waited. Two men on horseback rode up. They pulled up, but it was so dark and raining so hard that Harry and Roy could not make out anyone they knew. Roy said, "Shostaday," a Crow word meaning "where are you going?"

Not another word was spoken but a forty-five barked in the night and a bullet whizzed past Roy's ear. Prince, the stallion, whirled and made tracks away from there, but it was so dark that Harry and Roy got separated. Several more shots were fired in the dark but none came close to Roy. He left the trail and circled around and finally back to near where the shooting took place but he could not find Harry. He was afraid to call for he didn't know where his assailants had gone. And so after waiting in silence for a while, Roy decided to make his way over to Wasson's. He dared not follow the trail or too close to it for fear someone would be watching for him. So he cut over the ridge and there below him he could see Wasson's light. It had quit storming by now and the clouds were breaking away and it was easier to see. Roy started for the light but when it was still several hundred yards away, he came to a fence. He knew the gate and trail had to be

[5] The Wasson Ranch later became the Carolyn Lockhart Ranch, and is preserved as a historical ranch in the Bighorn Canyon.

somewhere to his left so keeping the fence posts in sight he followed along for perhaps a half mile and finally ahead he saw the tall posts and the overhead bar marking the gate.

But then he stopped, for if anyone was going to lay for him, this would be the place. Roy held his breath and listened. Not a sound. He waited and listened and still he heard nothing, yet he was so sure they would wait to waylay him here that he dared not approach the gate. The light at Wasson's went out and Roy knew they had gone to bed.

Photo: 5 - The restored and perserved Carolyn Lockhart Ranch, formerly the Wasson Ranch, in 2008.

Finally, Roy looked at his horse, and Prince was standing quietly, practically asleep, and Roy suddenly realized that there couldn't be any other horses near or Prince would know it. So if there was no horse, no man either, and with this reasoning he approached the gate, opened it and went through without incident.

It was midnight when Roy woke Jim [Wasson] and told him what had happened. They talked it over and decided they better ride out to look for Harry. Jim slung his thirty-thirty rifle on his horse and they took off. Roy said, "I'd have been here two hours sooner if I hadn't been afraid they were laying for me at the gate." Then he told Jim how he had come over the hill and hit the fence near the house, following it back to the gate and waiting there. And in spite of the tension of the moment, Jim threw back his head and laughed and laughed. "Hell," he said, "There isn't any wire on that fence. I tore it off and rolled it up a year ago."

"But the gate," said Roy, "Why was it closed if there wasn't any fence there?"

"Well," said Jim, "I never figured that gate would stop any man or beast if the fence was down, so I just never bothered to do anything about it."

Jim and Roy rode back to the top of the ridge. They hollered several times and rode further back along the trail, but they couldn't find Harry or hear a sound of any kind so they went back to await daylight. Next morning they were out early. They returned to the scene of the shooting, but the rain had so completely blotted out the tracks that they couldn't tell where Harry might have gone.

There was a ranch about five miles back on the trail toward Crooked Creek, so they decided to ride back there and see if Harry had turned up, and that is where they found him. When the shooting started, Harry's horse had bolted the same as had Roy's but he swung west where Roy had circled the other way. Harry soon found himself in very rough going. It was very rocky and a sort of canyon and his shod horse made quite a clatter on the rocks, and it was at him that the later shots were fired. He said he was pursued for several hundred yards and finally he found himself hemmed in, so he hastily left his horse and climbed out on foot. He knew his directions but was reluctant to leave without his horse. But after waiting around for a while, he finally decided to try to get out of there on foot.

After getting together Roy and Harry decided to return home, Harry on a borrowed horse and saddle. When they got back to the barn they found Harry's horse but no saddle. And this is where I came into the story. When Roy got home he came to see me to see if I would go after the horses he had started for, and incidentally to see if I could find the saddle Harry had been riding. It was a brand new Hamley saddle.

I started out the next day. Roy had told me how to identify the place where the skirmish took place, and Harry had told me as best he could where he had been forced to quit his horse. In daylight and with their stories to help me, it wasn't difficult to find the little canyon where Harry had got trapped. I tied up my horse and scouted around. The hard rain had brought quite a bit of water down this coulee but it was dry again now. I probably spent the better part of an hour there searching for the saddle. I felt sure they wouldn't take it with them, for it would be too hard to carry, and I could tell by the lack of fresh tracks that no one had been there since that night.

I had finally given up though and started back to my horse when I spotted it. Apparently they had caught Harry's horse soon after he left him and they had stripped him of his saddle and bridle, but it wasn't enough [just] to set Harry afoot, which is the ultimate humiliation in the West, they cut the saddle and bridle all to pieces with a sharp knife. Then they threw it in the bottom of the coulee and the stream that was running there that night, [and] covered it with rocks and mud. I dug it out and hunted around for the Navajo blanket which I knew he had, but that I never found. I took the remains of Harry's outfit over to Wasson's and went on for the horses. I stayed with Jim that night and [returned home] next day.

Roy swore out a warrant for Barry's arrest and he was brought to trial. I was called as a witness to testify about the saddle. The trial was held in Red Lodge, Montana, and lasted for several days, ending in acquittal, which was inevitable, for neither Harry nor Roy

could possibly identify their assailant. They didn't speak, and it was too dark to see, and Barry was too smart to be trapped into any sort of admission.

In the fourteen years that I lived in that part of Wyoming, I had occasion to go over into the Dry Head Country many times, and I came to know many of the people very well. I had some very interesting experiences there and heard first hand of some of the early episodes that helped to make this one of the most notorious sections of the country.

The Dry Head was just over the line in Montana and we were very close to the line in Wyoming. Ranchers in that section had to go north to Billings, [Montana] for supplies or come by our place and on to Lovell, [Wyoming]. Lovell was somewhat closer for most of them, but the trail was so much worse that most of the heavy supplies were brought from Billings although it was some 20 or 30 miles farther. Then too, most of the cattle were taken that way to reach [the] railroad because of easier traveling and better grazing.

Photo: 6 - The Raymond Post Office in 2008. The right half is the original Post Office. The left half has been added and the entire cabin is now a residence.

In the Dry Head, there was a Post Office. In fact, it was at Barry's place, although it was established some time after the episode of "The Night in the Rain." This Post Office was called Hillsborough and the mail was carried from Kane, Wyoming past our place and was said to be the only Star Route in the United States where the mail changed hands in the middle of the road. You see, we had a Post Office called Raymond, and the mail was carried from Kane by spring wagon. Then Hillsborough was established and that mail was carried from Raymond by another carrier and by pack horse, for the trail was too bad for a rig and that would require four horses, where one saddle horse and one pack horse could usually handle the job. Well, later, Raymond was discontinued and the people [were] served by [mail] sacks dropped at their boxes, but the two-carrier system continued by rig to a certain point and there transferred to pack horse. If there was more than the horse could carry, the balance was piled on a flat rock and covered with a canvas to be taken next time. The mail went on Tuesdays and Saturdays, first class first and parcels next.

I recall one incident in connection with this system that was rather interesting. Lemmie Claymore was the Dry Head carrier and Fred Basset on our end. One of the ranchers on the north end wanted a thousand pounds of oats. He went out to Kane and bought them, then he asked Lemmie what he would charge to pack them in. Lemmie would have to take five extra horses at 200 lbs each, but he offered to pack them for $2.50 a hundred. However, Parcel Post was only a little over a dollar a hundred. So the rancher thought he would be cute and save some money and make Lemmie carry his oats without him getting a penny. So the oats were sacked in seventy pound bags, stamped and mailed. But the joke was on the other fellow, for Lemmie, by contract, was only required to furnish two pack horses, and as the oats were all mailed at one time, and in December, when there was a heavy Christmas mail, Lemmie never found it 'convenient' to bring very many [at one time]. But the mice and the range stock had a wonderful time.

One time I had occasion to go over in that country looking for some horses. It was mid-winter and too long a trip for one day. Night came and I stopped at a homesteader's place. I was made welcome and asked to sit up and have supper with them. The wife was half Indian and I had heard stories about the way they lived, but I had no choice. The food looked good and I was hungry and I ate a hearty meal. I was a little worried about the meat. It didn't look like venison and I knew it wasn't beef. It was nice and tender, for it was the chops from some animal. It was very light color and fine grain and, I must say, sweet. But you know, you like to know, but you don't like to ask, especially when you are sort of bashful and young. We had the same meat again for breakfast. Then I thanked my hosts and went to the corral and shed to get my horse and saddle. I had put my saddle on a pile of hay under a shed that was fenced away from the corral and there I found the source of the meat we had had for supper and breakfast.

It was a colt. I suppose the mare had had her colt there in the corral some days earlier and it had never gotten up, but froze to death where it dropped. It must have been frozen stiff when it was found for it hadn't been skinned or dressed. They were simply cutting across the carcass, skin, entrails and all, then cleaning each piece as they cut it. Oh well. It didn't hurt me and it was an experience anyway. In my life I have eaten lots of different kinds of meat including porcupine, rock dog, bear and even mountain lion. I suppose I was destined to eat horse meat some time anyway.

Charley Phelps

I must tell you about the Phelps family. They lived on Dry Head Creek and Charley Phelps was half Crow Indian. He was a well educated Indian, and his wife was white, although you frequently heard it said [that] Charley was the whiter of the two. But be that as it may, they were both wonderful hosts and sponsors for me of the most memorable times of my young life.

The Phelps family consisted of about five children as I recall. There was Emma, a very lovely breed[6] girl who at this time was about seventeen. There was little Sissie, about nine, and Bud, who was probably twelve and a devil if there ever was one. And Frank, who was about my age, then Fred, the oldest. Mrs. Phelps, being white, had spent years getting Frank released from the tribe and declared a competent Indian. In this way the family could secure title to all the land allotted to each one, and in other words, get a complete settlement from the government, and henceforth they would become as white people but taking with them a vast amount of Indian land. Each child was, I believe, allowed one section[7]. Thus in all, they had some six sections in and around the home ranch, all wonderful grassland or better still, tillable land.

So they built a fine house on Dry Head Creek. It was full basement and two stories above ground. Twelve rooms in all. Two fireplaces and equipped with water and electricity; their own plant, of course. It was really quite a house for those times in that part of the country. And they built a big, big barn with a full loft. I think it was about thirty by sixty feet. It was in this barn that poor little Sissie met her death. Her Dad had bought some oats [and] there was a bin full of loose oats and perhaps a ton in sacks that had been piled on the loose ones. The loose oats were taken out to use for feed through a hole in the side of the bin near the bottom. Apparently, the sacked oats were braced against the wall and the loose grain had been undermined so there was quite a space there, and Bud and Sissie crawled in. Then the disturbance caused the sacks to collapse. Bud was able to escape after some little time, but by the time help could arrive, it was too late for Sissie.

In the new house, the boys had two rooms of the upstairs and the rooms across the hall hadn't been finished yet. The family had a private teacher for there were no schools near, and Emma and the teacher used the room which was below the unfinished [room] opposite Bud's. Bud had discovered a hole in the ceiling of the girls' room, for there was no floor in the room above. This Bud decided would be a chance to spy on the girls. It was dark up there and a light below. The light showed through the hole. Bud made his way by crawling on the rafters or joists. He stayed until the lights went out and the girls were in bed but when he started to return he slipped off the joist and fell clear through the ceiling, landing on the girls in bed below. And that was that.

[6] Breed is a contraction of half-breed, both somewhat derogatory but commonly used terms meaning a mixed race person, part white, part Indian.
[7] A section of land is 640 acres or 1 square mile.

The Big Dance

The Big Dance, that is what I want to tell you about. The Phelps threw a real party. The dance was held in the loft of the new barn. You see, they had just completed the big house and the barn, and Charley had got his final papers, and the dance was by way of a celebration of these events. And it is worthy of note that although Phelps's lived on the reservation and were part Indian, there wasn't even a breed Indian at the dance. People were invited from thirty or forty miles around. It was March 31, 1912, and there were one hundred and two people [who] came. And there were one hundred horses in the corral, for every soul had come on horseback except Mickey Hammond and his wife. Mickey wasn't much of a horseman, neither was his wife, and they had two small children, which, by the way, were the only children there. There was music from the outside and of course there was some very good local music.

It was thirty-five miles from our place, so everyone going from our creek planned to go the day before, and most of them stayed with someone they knew in the Dry Head that night, and the next day. Dad and Mother stayed with the Clint Hough family for they were great friends of theirs. Mildred and I stayed with the Wassons, for they had two girls, Alma and June, about our ages. It was only about 15 miles from Wasson's on to the party, but we started early and were there by three o'clock in the afternoon. The weather was fine and warm and the grass was getting green and pretty, and there were a few brave wild flowers where so recently there had only been snow banks. And we were young, and so it seemed was the whole world.

We were not the first to arrive, for when we got there the corral was all ready half full of horses. There were people lounging in the shade everywhere. A few we knew, but mostly they were from the north side and we didn't know them. We were met by Frank, who had charge of the corral, and Emma, who took charge of the girls. Frank and I took care of the horses, then we went to the house where everyone was served coffee and cake as soon as they arrived. And then later, about six, all present were served sandwiches and coffee before going to the barn loft to gather for the dance.

Part of us had spent the afternoon polishing the floor with bales of hay. You can really do it, too. Each one would take a bale and by pushing it we would race around the floor. A half hour of this and you could scarce stand up. Then we had to bring the piano from the house and raise it into the loft. This we did by means of ropes under the piano which was in a wagon directly below the opening in the floor. No trick at all with four lariats and about a dozen men. We placed bales of hay along the walls and covered them with tarps and blankets for seats.

Most of the early comers were the young folks and we were soon pretty well acquainted and off to a good start for a good time. About seven-thirty, just as it began to get dark, the older folks started to come, and by eight the orchestra was tuned up and we were ready to start.

There was plenty of room for ten sets of square dancers, but we danced lots of other dances too, such as waltzes, two-step, schottische and polkas. Dad called the square dances and I don't think I have ever seen such spirit and enthusiasm at a dance. I think it is worthy of mention here that I never saw any evidence of liquor at that party, and don't believe there was a drop there. Not that there weren't men there who drank; there were, plenty of them, but party drinking was not the thing to do in those days and very few women ever drank, and none openly. Of course, at public dances and even at the school house there was drinking among the men. But not at this dance and there wasn't one fight. There was a wedding, though.

There was one very eligible widow in the crowd and likewise an equally eligible bachelor of about the same age. It was about midnight and we had stopped for the usual midnight lunch and coffee, the custom with all country dances. Mrs. Phelps got up and went to the center of the floor and called for attention. Then she announced that her sister, Mrs. Masterson, and I don't recall the man's name, were announcing their engagement and would be married there during the dance. An old man, the minister, who no one seemed to know, came to the center of the floor, beckoned to the couple that was to be married, and they came forth and the ceremony was performed. People were pretty much surprised because no one seemed to know that they were even interested in each other. The man was a storekeeper in Pryor, and I wish I could remember his name, but that doesn't matter. Anyway, after about a half hour when everyone had shaken hands and congratulated the groom, Mrs. Phelps got up and shouted "April Fool!"

No one had realized that it was past midnight and the first of April. Of course, there was a big laugh and everyone felt rather foolish for having been taken in so completely. Then the groom got up and he hollered "April Fool!" Well, no one knew quite what to think until he pulled from his pocket a "License to Wed Mrs. Molly Masterson." And now the most confused person in the house was none other than the April Fool Bride. It seems the groom, when asked in advance to play the part, went them one better and secured a license blank which he proceeded to fill in by himself. The preacher was real, and for the rest of the night no one knew whether they were really married or not, least of all the bride.

We danced until almost daybreak, then some of the near ones went home taking some of the others with them. The girls that were left went to the house and some went to bed, others curled up in chairs, on davenports or on the floor and tried to sleep a while. Some of the boys slept on the floor and some in the hay mow until about ten the next morning when we were awakened by the breakfast bell. There were about fifty of us there for breakfast. We had toast and coffee and oranges and those who wanted had eggs as well, and about noon the party began to break up for good. The last of the horses were caught and saddled and we were saying goodbye to our hosts and friends.

The music[ians] had loaded into a spring wagon with their instruments and Fred was in the seat ready to take them home. One young musician had got quite a crush on Emma and he was having trouble saying goodbye. He was sitting in the back of the spring wagon, feet hanging out back when Fred finally started the team. Mrs. Phelps was

standing in the front door, and as the wagon started, the fellow patted the place by him and Emma hopped up beside him. There was much laughing and chiding as Mrs. Phelps stepped back into the house and picked up a thirty-thirty rifle that always stood just inside the door. She pulled that rifle to her shoulder and fired two bullets into the dust just at the tail of that wagon so fast they almost sounded like one. Emma jumped out and everyone was pretty sober for a minute. Then Mrs. Phelps sang out "April Fool! And goodbye everyone!" and she disappeared into the house. Everyone broke it up then and mounted their horses and started for home. It was late when we got home that night but we went all the way, tired but happy, and with never to be forgotten memories.

That party must have cost the Phelps family a lot of money, but I don't think there ever was one which held so many pleasant memories for all present as that one. And they will long be remembered for their wonderful hospitality. Long live the memories of the Phelps, may their souls rest in peace, for both of the old folks have passed on, and I believe Bud is the only one of the younger ones left now.

Ed Waters & Old Man Barndt

Not everyone who lived in those parts was a real character, but there were quite a few who were. There was old Ed Waters. Ed and Old Man Barndt[8] were two old bachelors who lived together on the creek. Ed could scarcely read or write and he trusted no one. But at that, he was a pretty good neighbor. Dad had some bees and we had built a small house for a honey house where Dad kept his equipment and extracted the honey from the combs. He needed an old stove in there to warm the honey and to heat water. By inquiring around the neighborhood, we found out that Ed had an old cook stove that he didn't use, and he said, sure, we could have it when we were ready. So some time later Dad sent me with the team to get it.

When I got there, Ed wasn't home but Old Man Barndt showed me the stove and helped me load it. I took it home and set it up and had just barely started a fire in it when the door burst open and the wildest looking man you ever saw burst in. It was old Ed. He shoved me aside and knocked all the lids off the stove, grabbed a pail of water and doused it in the fire, then rammed his hand down behind the oven and pulled out a roll of bills. It was his entire savings and he had kept it hidden there for years. When he came home and found we had taken the stove, he was frantic. He never rode a horse and it was about two miles from where he lived to our place. He had run every step of the way and he was probably sixty years old. But he got there in time, just barely.

[8] In 2008 when we visited the area and found the remnants of the old Sherwin cabins, we stopped in at the old Raymond Post Office by accident, not knowing at the time that's what it was. The current residents there claim to be descendants of Barndt and provided interesting information about the area.

Jack Snell

And there was Jack Snell. Jack lived just below us on the creek. Our places adjoined. Jack was about the best hand with horses or cattle I have ever seen. He could take a horse that was just a cayuse in someone else's hands and he would spruce that horse up and somehow give it spirit and make it hold its head high and walk faster than most horses could jog trot. All his horses were good walkers and would turn on a dime. Jack always had a good dog, too. His dogs were the most loyal dogs and the best trained cattle dogs I have ever seen.

Once Jack had gone someplace [by] horseback and had left his dog home. It was a big shaggy English Shepherd. Jack had gone through the gate just below our house and because it was a warm day and he decided he didn't need them, he had left his chaps by the post at the gate. Later, the dog showed up there and lay down on the chaps. Jack came back [a different way], and the dog laid there for three days waiting for him.

Jack had a nice bunch of cattle and I used to help him with them a lot. I always enjoyed helping him brand for he was the smoothest working man with a rope you ever saw. We would have two men at the fire to hold calves and one to run the irons. Jack did the roping. He would move into the herd, dab his rope on a calf and drag it to the fire where two boys would grab it, throw it and take the rope off, while Jack would go for another. That calf would be branded, earmarked and trimmed and back with its mother before she even missed it. Jack would go like that by the hour and never miss a throw.

Jack was a bachelor until he was about thirty-five and we really were surprised when he married a very nice widow from Cowley. Clara was about Jack's age and she was much more social minded than Jack. She always said Jack never had but two things on his mind, cows and grass, and that he knew more cows and horses by name than he did people.

I guess it was about a year after they were married that Clara asked us and the Roy Huntingtons to have Thanksgiving dinner with them. That was a bad winter and even at Thanksgiving time the roads were badly drifted and traveling was tough. I think by then Jack had a car, but the roads made that useless. Clara needed lots of things for the big dinner. She waited as long as possible, hoping they would get to town, but finally gave up going and prevailed upon Jack to take a pack horse and go to Lovell for the much needed supplies.

Clara made a long list and gave it to Jack. It was only two days before Thanksgiving and the time was short. Jack came home late that night and came in and set a small sack on the kitchen table. Clara looked at it in surprise and said, "Where is the rest of the order?" "Rest of it?" Jack said, "That's all, and if I'd known there wasn't any more than that I wouldn't have dragged a pack horse all that way." Clara was dumbfounded. She looked in the sack: Two pounds of walnuts and about the same of mixed candy. She said, "Let me see that list." Jack fished it out of his chaps pocket. She opened it up and showed it to

him. A full sheet but not enough room, so she had turned it over and written “Two lbs. walnuts and two lbs. mixed candy” on the back. That’s all Jack had read.

In spite of this, Jack and Clara went ahead and lived out their lives together, though I have no doubt Jack heard about it many times in the years that followed.

Harvey King

The King family lived on the upper end of the creek just over the Montana line. You see, Crooked Creek headed in the Pryor Mountains and wound its crooked way south into Wyoming. So part of the community was in one state and part in another, and sometimes all in a state of confusion. We used to say, "We live on Crooked Creek. The farther down the creek you go, the crookeder the people" and we lived in the next to the last house.

But about the King family: there was Harvey and Martha and their son Edwin. Mr. and Mrs. King must have been over sixty and Edwin at the time I am telling about was twenty-one and an only child. Harvey and Martha were from Massachusetts – typical New Englanders – and I never did know how they happened to land in Wyoming on a stock ranch. But they owned their own place and had a small bunch of cattle which was their means of livelihood.

They were a pathetic couple and yet both had a rare sense of humor without which they really would have been in a bad way. Harvey had been a carpenter and cabinet maker until stricken with a disease which caused him to lose partial control of his arms and legs. He walked like a drunken man. His speech was affected. He usually had to reach several times for a thing before he could put his hands on it and his eyesight was very bad also. Even so, Harvey managed to farm. He did his own plowing and any other kind of field work, as well as irrigating. He exchanged work with neighbors and most of them were good about helping him out with anything he couldn't do. Of course, as Edwin grew up, he eventually took over, for his Dad was losing control more and more.

Mrs. King was a little dried up old lady with a bad hump back. Soon after she and Harvey were married, she had been vaccinated for something, and a doctor that didn't know his business or maybe just made a mistake, had hit a nerve or something, and the crippling was the result. Later she was told she would never have any children, but much later she did, and thus Edwin, their only child, and the most blessed thing in their lives, came to them rather late in life. Edwin was a rather queer boy, as one could expect under those circumstances for he was worshipped as no boy was ever worshipped. Yet Edwin turned out rather well and shouldered the responsibility of his ageing parents as few had thought he would.

Each fall after the crops were all in and the hay stacks fenced and the wood hauled, usually some time in October, Harvey and Martha started out on their vacation. They loaded into the spring wagon a few squash, some apples or any other garden vegetables they thought appropriate and started down the creek to visit. It was less than a mile to the first stop, Sam Legg's, but that was the first day's drive. They would spend the afternoon there visiting and stay all night. They would give their horse a squash or some apples or something else. Then some time soon after noon they would harness the team, hitch up and move on. It was only six miles from their place to ours, but they made the trip last a week with one stop each day. After the first day the news of their vacation traveled ahead of them and we all knew when they would arrive at any given place. It was a wonderful

vacation for them and I think every place they stopped did their best to make it so. And this, I believe, points up the neighborliness of the community in general.

At King's place, the corrals and hen house and barns and most other out buildings were below the hill from the house level. It was quite steep and lots of rolly stones, so when the old lady went to take care of her chickens she had to travel this hill and it really was very difficult for her, for her hump back crowded her lungs and made breathing very difficult. She always carried a stick with which to steady herself and she used this stick to help direct a calf or a pig or a chicken in the direction she wished it to go. They had a pet lamb which had grown up to be a rather bothersome ram. [He] used to threaten to charge the old lady, but a well aimed blow on his nose usually changed his mind. However it turned out that he was only waiting his chance, for one day he came up from behind as the old lady was returning to the house and he really took her. She went down and each time she tried to get up he would hit her again. He wouldn't even let her sit up. He kept her flat on the ground in below freezing weather for over an hour until Edwin finally came and found her and rescued her. And the ram lost the next round, but good.

Edwin was twenty-one now and he decided they should have another room on the house. They had always lived in three rooms, so after the work was caught up that fall he got Burt Huntington to help him and they went to the mountains to get house logs. It wasn't far, only about ten miles, but the boys took a camp and planned to stay up there while they cut and piled enough logs for the job, probably only a couple of days. They had only been in the timber about an hour when a falling tree struck a small pole and this pole in turn hit Edwin square between the eyes, driving a small limb about the size of a lead pencil clear into his brain, killing him instantly.

Burt jumped on a horse and went for help and they came for me. We made a litter on the wagon and brought him home. And although several of the women had come to be with the old folk, no one dared break the news for fear of the shock to the old folks, so a doctor had been sent for and by the time we reached the gate, it was dark. We waited there for the doctor to arrive, then sent word to the house and Mildred [Huntington] broke the news. Mildred was the one chosen because she had lived since a small girl as neighbors to the Kings and they loved her like a daughter.

Poor, poor old people! They were brave and they stood it better than anyone ever dreamed they could, but they were completely crushed. There was absolutely nothing left for them to live for. They tried to comfort each other but it was the most pitiable sight I have ever seen. The neighbors had to take turns staying there for weeks. The poor old dears kept saying it wasn't necessary, that they would have to get along, but then when the time came for everyone to go, they couldn't stand it and it would be prolonged another day. Finally they gained their composure and resumed their work although their hearts would never be in anything again.

We buried Edwin on the ranch and everyone knew that was a mistake, but it had to be that way – they would have it no other. The grave could be seen from the window and they would both stand at that window with their arms around each other and pray by the

hour. Perhaps that was the source of their strength, the only thing that kept them going at all. And God must have given them strength, for they lived and endured their sorrow for about fifteen years after that. Then Harvey died, and soon after, Martha. But before they died they had Edwin's body moved to the cemetery and arranged for the plots for themselves. They had to sell the farm and move to town several years before they died.

Photo: 7 - Harvey, Martha and Edwin King's grave marker in Kane, Wyoming

In a community like ours at that time there was no professional care of the dead, and when tragedy struck we relied on each other. There was a community graveyard and the menfolk dug the grave and acted as pallbearers. The womenfolk helped lay out the dead and prepare them for burial, and although this may seem rather primitive today, I know it was a source of great comfort in those days for anyone in sorrow to know that their neighbors were taking over and their loved ones were being handled with kind and sympathetic hands.

George Legg

And so it was when George Legg went. George was a little older than Edwin, but not much. He had always been big and awkward and ill at ease, and I know he suffered terribly from inferiority complex, but I don't believe anyone really realized how much else. Maybe we could have done something to help him. George was the [friendliest] and yet probably the most frequently rejected boy you can imagine. All the other boys had a girl; George never did. If we were on a picnic, he carried the water, he built the fire, and he chopped the wood, and I think a lot of this was to keep busy so no one would notice he wasn't being included.

But one day he simply sat down at the foot of his bed and put a twenty-two bullet into his temple. And after he was gone, I for one felt very guilty and yet I never really did anything mean to George, neither did anyone else intentionally. But neither did we ever do anything very nice. And once again, the community was called on to take over. And this time I had to make a midnight ride on horseback to Lovell to notify a coroner. Twenty miles on horseback, alone, on a dark night with nothing but a troubled conscience for company.

Photo: 8 - George Legg's headstone in Kane, Wyoming

Old Sykes [See also Appendix II]

There is so much to tell about "Old Sykes" that I hardly know where to begin. Sykes could easily go down in any man's book as the "most unforgettable character I've ever met." Physically he was about five-10 or -11 and he weighed about 220 pounds. Oh, he was a powerful man! And there are so many stories about his feats of strength that I won't have space to relate near all, but I will give you some later. Right now I want to complete my picture of the man. Sykes at this time was well past sixty,[9] but even so, his hair was blond, very fine like a baby's and although it was definitely thin, he was not in any way bald. Rather I should say that it had always been thin. It was cut rather scraggy for he was his own barber.

Photo: 9 - Frank Syke's cabin as it existed in 2008.

The first time I ever saw the man he wore a canvas patch over the left eye, a "breech clout," moccasins, and a forty-five six-shooter. And that was his usual summer garb. The patch over the left eye was the result of an accident while chasing horses. The eyeball was pierced by the limb of a tree some years before. In winter he wore buckskin pants and coat made by himself from his own traps.

Sykes was a hermit. He lived alone in a one room log cabin on his homestead[10]. The cabin was on a hill, the highest place on his land and from there he could see the entire half section. His piece of land was in Wyoming but bordered on the Montana line[11]. It was fenced with a six-wire fence [that] was kept tight and in excellent repair. Inside his fence there were no less than a dozen springs and two nice ponds and very good grass due to the springy condition there. Outside there was no water and practically no grass.

Sykes had a team of horses, a black and a gray. They were always as fat as pigs and about the only use they were was to haul a little wood for the cabin now and then, and one trip a year to town. As I said before, the entire place could be seen from the cabin and when Sykes wanted the team, he merely stepped outside and fired his gun in the air to attract

[9] The 1900 census recorded E. F. Sykes and gave the month and year of his birth as Jan 1854, age 46, and the place of birth was Michigan. This according to Diane Scannell's research. See Appendix II.

[10] We visited the remains of Sykes cabin in July of 2008. It is in remarkably good condition considering it is at least 130 years old. I have corrected some minor details about the cabin with some observations from that trip, but it is accurate for the most part. The cabin faces east and can be seen easily from highway 37, about a mile to the west, just south of the Wyoming/Montana line.

[11] The actual Wyoming-Montana line is about a half-mile north of the cabin.

their attention and let out a war whoop and here they would come on a dead run. They were always rewarded with a bit of grain and so they always came.

Sykes had come to the state as a young man and as part of the surveying crew which surveyed the line between the two states. He had spotted his claim then and returned later to settle on it. That must have been some forty years before I knew him. He hadn't always been a hermit. The man's early life was a complete mystery, and although I knew him for fourteen years, and probably was the closest friend he ever had, never once did he mention a wife or children to me. Yet people who knew him years before say he had a wife, or at least a woman, when he came there. She was supposed to have been an Indian and later they had two boys. I was never able to contact anyone who had ever talked with either the woman or the kids, but they were seen in or about the cabin by some who chanced that way. People were not nosy in those days, and knew no more of a man's business than he chose to tell, and from what I knew of Sykes in these later years of his life, that would have been very little.

Now what happened to this woman and her children no one ever knew. Even later, when I knew the man, it wasn't unusual that no one saw him for months on end. For his cabin being in the middle of his place, and the gates closed, and him being the unfriendly type, you just didn't bother him. And so as I said no one ever knew what happened to the family. But it was about that time that three new graves showed up, just north of Sykes fence, just outside, and so just outside the State of Wyoming. There was one large mound and two small ones with a flat stone for a headstone for each. But there were no names. The graves were protected from wandering stock by a pole corral-like enclosure. Now it was known that there had been a sewing machine in the cabin and naturally some things that a woman and children would have, but from that time on no one ever saw the sewing machine or any other evidence that there ever had been a woman or kids on the place. And Sykes never mentioned them and so far as I know no one ever made so bold as to ask about them. Of course, there were rumors aplenty. Some had it that he killed the entire family in a fit of rage. Others thought they all died that winter from fever or disease of some kind. But no one knew, and to this day they still don't. Maybe the graves were just dummies, who knows? They are still there though, and untouched[12].

I said I was probably one of the closest and certainly one of the few friends the man ever had. I was but fifteen when we first met, and him in his sixties. George and I were hunting ducks, and as I have said, Sykes place was well watered and as he never allowed anyone on there, it was alive with ducks in the fall. I had seen the man earlier that summer and I had heard hundreds of wild tales about him. How he took pot shots at strangers who came on his land, and various other unfriendly habits of his. But we were just boys and I didn't think he would hurt us. We had tried all the other likely places for ducks, so I suggested we go by there. You see, it was only a couple of miles from our place. We were on foot and we had this one twelve-gage single-shot shotgun. Well, we came to his fence and crawled through and headed for the cabin. We were careful to steer clear of the ponds so as not to scare the ducks and so we wouldn't be suspected of hunting without permission.

[12] And the graves are still there in 2008, unmarked.

We came to the cabin without incident and were about to rap on the door when it opened and Sykes stood there. He said, “How!” like an Indian. We said, “Hello.” And before we could say any more, Sykes said, “What day of the week is it?”
“Sunday,” I said.
“What date?”
“September 29.”
“Good. Come in.”
That was my first meeting with Sykes. I learned as I saw him more that that was the way I would always be greeted, and it didn’t matter whether you went there or he came to our place, as he got so he would do later, he always said “How! What day of the week is it?” and I learned why. He kept his own calendar and as he didn’t see people for long periods of time, this was his check on his own record of time. As he said himself, “If I don’t ask first thing I forget it.” And so we were taken inside the cabin. We leaned the gun against the wall outside.


Photo: 10 - Interior of Old Syke's cabin. The remains of the bed frame are in the NW corner.

Sykes was dressed in the usual buckskins and his forty-five hung low on his right hip and was tied down with a thong around his leg. The cabin was about twelve by twelve, made of heavy logs, with a small high window in [the south wall and another in the rear opposite the door]. You stepped over a log sill about a foot high to enter and the floor inside was lower than the ground outside, for it was the ground itself, and from long use it had been worn away and hadn’t been replaced. However it was hard and well-packed and practically dust-proof, from grease that would be spilled there over the years. Don’t get the idea it was dirty though, for that was not the impression I got at all -- just long use. And anyway, there wasn’t much of this floor to be seen. The cabin was too small and there was too much in there. In the [left] corner [as you came in the door] there was a small cook stove, the kind we call a “sheep-herder stove” with four lids and a small oven. The legs were gone and the stove sat on a sort of hearth made from flat rocks leaving room around the side to set things to warm or dry out. In the corner by or behind the stove was the wood box and over this on the wall a few very old looking iron frying pans and pots and a battered up old dishpan with a black old dishrag made from overalls spread to dry across it.

There were no chairs and Sykes told us to sit on the bed. The bed was a built-in bunk in the back corner, but the room was so small that you could practically sit on it and warm your feet by the stove. In the front opposite the stove there was a sawed length of log on end for a water bucket to sit on and beside it there was an old wash pan. The high door

sill was used for a wash bench, I found out later. On a nail beside the water bucket there was a hand towel, grimy but having the appearance of having been freshly washed. This was made from half a grain sack. Seamless sacks, we called them.

Do you get the picture so far? There is lots more, for this cabin was really packed and I thought of the stories about a wife and two boys. [13]

Photo: 11 - Syke's Cabin can be seen from State Rte 37, lust south of the Montana line, looking west. The ponds Dad refers to are behind the cabin to the left and still exist. The site is being considered for preservation by the Bighorn Canyon NRA.

On the [south wall] there was a table made from hewed poles. It was high, more like a bench, about four feet long and two feet wide. I suppose this was more in the nature of a work bench for it was too high for comfortable eating, and anyway, Sykes always ate with his plate in his lap, either sitting on the door sill or the bunk. This bunk was rather ingenious, I thought. The corner of the cabin made two sides and the other two were framed with poles. One leg is all it required. The bottom then was rawhide thongs laced back and forth like a snow shoe. This lacing had been done wet and was as tight as a fiddle string yet springy. For a mattress he had a canvas pad filled with deer hair. Deer hair, you know, is hollow and stiff and the very best of insulation. Then along with this he had an old tarp and a pair of old blankets.

At the foot of this bed there was a large oak barrel. This was where he did his tanning and the barrel was usually filled with deer hides in one stage or another of the process. Sykes made wonderful buckskin and I still have some of it around[14].

On the [rear] wall between the bed and stove there were a couple of pegs, and here, hung high and smelling the same, was his harness and saddle, halters, ropes and other equipment, for this was the only building on the place. After all, the man had only been there forty years and these things take time, you know! Over the bed there was a hanging shelf. This was loaded to the ceiling with sacks of things and rolls of things and other things, and bulging from under the bed there were boxes of garden tools with home-made handles, rolls of deer hides, and various other things. I happened to notice that one box

[14] On tanning days, Sykes would put up a sign at the gate to his property, “Tanning today – No visitors”. This was because he always did his tanning in the nude. This is from NPS archives, and from other accounts of Frank Sykes.

contained old magazines, so I asked him if he liked to read and he said he did. After that I always brought him old magazines and rags, and he seemed glad to get them both.

I know I haven't mentioned near all the things there were in that cabin for the walls and ceilings were fair dripping with furs, seed corn, sacks of dried pemmican and jerky, beans and other dried edibles. Sykes was almost entirely self sustaining, both as to food and wearing apparel and other essentials as well. He made jerky from venison and he made pemmican from everything from rabbits to ducks or muskrats to woodchuck or porcupines. He had a few plum trees and crabapples and wild berries. For sugar, he could always find a bee tree. He dried his fruit for winter and made berry jam using honey. He raised Indian corn which he used green in summer and pounded for meal in winter. He usually had a small patch of wheat that he threshed by hand and used for flour, and his clothing was hand-me-downs from the animals he caught.

Sykes did make one trip each year to the county seat. That was Basin, Wyoming. He always went to pay his taxes and bring back his years supply. He had to have salt, and he usually brought some alum and Blue Vitriol. The last two he used in tanning, and sometimes he would buy a sack of flour. This he claimed was to get the sack, not the flour.

It was on one of these annual trips to town that he got caught in a terrific windstorm. The wagon bed was blown off and landed on top of Sykes, resulting in several broken ribs and a badly sprained back. He managed to get things together again and got home, then before lying down, he rigged a rope above the bed to pull himself up again. No one knew about it until he was up and about again.

But we were hunting ducks. After visiting with the old fellow for a while and listening to some of his yarns, we got up nerve enough to broach the subject of duck hunting on his ponds. Sykes seemed to have enjoyed having us kids there and someone to talk to. He laughed a lot at his own jokes and he could really tell the yarns, so we were somewhat surprised when his whole attitude changed at the mention of hunting. He didn't say anything for a while, then, "I'll tell you boys, I have never allowed anyone to fire a shot on my place. I want the ducks here. I trap the ones I need to eat, but I'll get you a duck to take home. Come with me." And he went out the door.

We started off toward one of the ponds. I was on one side of Sykes and George on the other. We had barely started when he stopped, looked from one to the other of us, and then asked us both to walk on his right. He said, "I never allow anyone on my blind side." And he didn't smile when he said that.

When we came close to the pond we detoured to keep in a draw and behind a clump of willows. We crawled close to the water and could see through the brush that there were three hens and one drake about one hundred feet up along our shore. Sykes parted the willows carefully, then drew his six-shooter and fired. He blew the head clear off the drake, put his gun back and walked over and fished the duck out. "Here," he said, "you

can have this." And like an Indian, he turned and walked off. He didn't say goodbye, come again, go to hell, but we went home.

I had been quite impressed with the old hermit. I enjoyed his stories and I wanted to hear more. Not just yarns, but facts of the early days and of his early life, and I felt that he was really lonesome and would respond to a little genuine kindness and interest in him. So I went back there many times that fall and winter, sometimes with some of the other boys of the neighborhood or with George, but mostly alone. But I never took a gun onto his place again. If I was hunting rabbits or ducks or deer, I always set my gun by a fence post before going on to the cabin.

Our friendship grew. I learned that Sykes had been born in the North Woods. He had been in a logging camp school a few months a year until he was twelve years old. He ran away from home then and got a job backpacking supplies for timber surveyors. He was large for his age and very strong even then. He wandered west and lived with the Crow Indians for a good many years. I gathered that even after he took his claim, he still spent much time with the Indians, but that was as far as he ever traced his life for me. He spoke of incidents of his later life, but the chain was broken, and even his early life story was completely unrelated to any certain place or named person. Never [spoke of] a town, a river or a lake by name, and maybe Sykes wasn't his real name either.

Rumor had it that there was a cave in the hills back of his place where he had all sorts of things cached including his wife's sewing machine and other [of her] belongings as well as three thousand dollars in cash which he was known to have received for a claim he once sold. At least no one ever could figure where he could have spent it, and he didn't trust banks. He received a few dollars each year for tanning hides, and for fur he caught, and also some of the cowboys used to have him braid hair ropes, hackamores, or cinches for their saddles. The money received this way was adequate for his few needs.

These hills are of limestone and I myself have found and explored dozens of caves there, but none that showed any signs of being used in that way. One time, much later, when Sykes was feeling rather old he said, "Boy" (he always called me "Boy"). "Boy, when I am through with this place I want you to have it."

I said, "You won't be through with it for some time." And we started talking about things that had been never mentioned before and he mentioned his cave for the first and only time as far as I was concerned. He said, "When my time comes, I will head for my cave and I will die there where no one will ever find me." I said, "But suppose you don't have time?" He replied, "I'll have time all right, and everything is ready." I gathered from that that the cave must be close by, but no one has ever found it. And Sykes, well, he wasn't able to carry out his plans. I'll tell you about that later.

Sykes had the reputation of never having entered another man's house or eating his food. Why this was so I never found out, but I was able to get him to break that precedent. Once when I was at his place, he had a kettle of stew on cooking. He never ate but one meal a day and that usually in mid-afternoon. It came time to eat and the stew was done.

It was a bitter cold day and storming outside and I was asked to eat. The stew was good. Lots of vegetables and some small animal, for the bones were small, but I never knew what the meat was. When I left I said, “You must eat with me some time,” and it was left that way.

I guess it was the next fall at threshing time. We were short of help and I thought of Sykes. Dad said he wouldn’t come, but I said, “We’ll see, anyway.” So I went over and asked him. He said sure, he’d help out when we wanted him. I told him the day and left. In those days we were still using the old horse-power machines and it took lots of men and lots of horses to do the job and if you didn’t have a pretty good crop, between the horses and the men, they ate it all up.

Sykes came and we wanted him to haul the grain from the machine to the bin. It wasn’t far, only about forty yards in fact. We had two wagons and the plan was to put a bushel of wheat, 60-pounds, in a sack, set it in the wagon and then another and another until there was perhaps thirty bushels. Then Sykes was to drive to the bin and empty those sacks while the man at the machine filled another wagon. But that was not the way he did it. He grabbed each sack as it was filled, swung it up on his back and trotted to the bin and back for another. By keeping a good fast trot he could keep up with the machine and he kept up that pace all day long. He was not a young man and we were afraid he would collapse, but he would do it no other way and wouldn’t admit he was tired.

Because we were afraid he wouldn’t come in the house, we had one table in the yard where several of us ate. But at any rate, he did eat our food, and one time when he came there on an errand, I got him to step inside, but he would not sit down.

One time I went over to see if I could get him to tan some deer hides for me. But he said he couldn’t because he had his barrel full. I said, “I have a big oak barrel over at our place and I’ll bring it over to you.”

“No,” he said, “I’ll come after it.” The next day here he came on a jog trot. That is the way he always traveled if he was going any distance. He seemed to use the ball of his foot and traveled with lots of spring in his stride. It looked so effortless. After the usual salute: “How! What day of the week is it?” just as if I hadn’t been over there the day before, he announced his errand, the barrel, of course.


Photo: 12 - Oak barrel

“But,” I said, “I thought you would come with your team.” “Too much trouble,” he said, “I’ll carry it.” He had a rope and he arranged a harness explaining that he had carried barrels half that large full of pork further than that. I mentioned that he was much younger then, too, but that didn’t stop him. The rope harness was placed on the barrel and loops fixed for his arms with a cross on his chest and a band on his forehead. He knelt down with his back to the barrel, drew the ropes tight, got to his feet, made a slight adjustment and took off. Same jog trot.

Now an oak barrel like that one weighs about sixty pounds and is very big and awkward. I would hate to carry one from the house to the barn. But I could see that old fellow for over a quarter of a mile, which was slightly uphill, and he never slackened his gait.

Dick Abbot had a small team of mules. It was mid-winter and one mule died in the barn. Dick harnessed the other mule and tried to pull the dead one out to drag it away, but the yard was slick and the live mule couldn't pull the dead one. It was then that Sykes showed up. Again he rigged a harness out of ropes for himself, notched the frozen ground for toe holds, and with Dick on his back for ballast, he pulled the mule out of the barn.

One fall day, I had saddled my horse and was riding out the north gate when a young fellow came along on a sorrel mare. The poor mare was skin poor and her feet were so sore she could hardly walk, but through it all, her breeding showed and I judged her to be a very well bred American Saddler[15]. I waited a moment for the man and horse to come up. He was a total stranger and obviously not a horseman. I judged from his clothes and the way he handled his mount that he was from the city, and when he came up he asked if I could tell him where Mr. Frank Sykes lived. I said, "Sure. I am going that way, or at least part way myself." He said, "Do you mind if I ride along?" "Of course not," I replied, "let's go!"


Photo: 13 - A modern American Saddlebred horse.

As we rode along he gave me his story. He claimed to be a son of Sykes sister, which I never knew he had. He also told me that he had ridden that poor mare all the way from Oregon and that Sykes didn't know he was coming, nor had he ever seen Sykes or had any communication with him. But he was the Nephew coming to claim the long lost Uncle. And I thought, "Oh, Boy! There are going to be two pretty surprised people, and of the two, I shouldn't want to be the Nephew." I rode as far as the gate and showed him in, then went my way.

I didn't hear any more about it for some time but as I rode by I did notice the Sorrel mare in the pasture with Sykes' horses. So one day I stopped in. I told Sykes I had directed the Nephew that way and asked if he got there OK. Boy! Did he ever blow up! He said he had never heard of the fellow before and he was no kin of his. He hadn't allowed him to stay on the place an hour. The mare was unable to travel further so he had allowed him to

[15] Nowdays, I think this is called an American Saddlebred.

unsaddle her and turn her loose there, but only after the fellow had signed a bill of sale turning the mare over to Sykes as a guarantee for her pasture at the rate of two dollars a month and if not redeemed within 12 months, the mare was forfeit. Likewise, saddle and bridle.

It was the next spring or early summer and one day I saw a man coming on a jog trot and I knew it was Sykes. I could tell he was hopping mad as far as I could see him, and that was once he forgot to ask, "What day of the week is it?"

"That g… d… s… of a b… of a mare!" he said. "She has got my horses so I can't catch them. When I call them to me, they all come but she breaks and runs and takes the team with her. Now they won't even come when I call." And here again he called her every foul name he could think of and included the would-be Nephew. So I saddled my horse and went over and corralled his horses for him, and he caught the sorrel mare and said, "Here, take the s… of a b… You can have her. Take saddle, bridle and all!"

I said, "But what if that fellow comes back for her?" "Send him to me," he said, "but don't let him have the mare until I say so."

I took the mare and right away I fell completely in love with her. By now she was fat and round and fully recovered from her terrible trip. She was a purebred American Saddler and beautifully gaited, and as kind and affectionate as a kitten. But my joy in her was short lived, for the owner came along a few months later, just before the year was up. He had come by train to Lovell, rented a horse there and rode into our yard one morning just as I had caught the mare to use. He was quite indignant at finding me using her and demanded her at once.

"I am sorry," I said, "but I got this mare to use from Sykes, and his instructions were not to turn her over to anyone but him or without permission from him. But, I'll ride over there with you if you like." This he was reluctant to do, but failing to get the mare from me, he finally agreed to.

Sykes made no trouble. He brought out the paper and handed it to me. I read it out loud and with much grumbling the fellow handed Sykes $24 and I gave him his horse and he rode away. Sykes gave me the money, but I said, "That doesn't belong to me." "It sure does," he said. "If she had stayed here I'd have killed her." And he wouldn't have it any other way.

Jim and Claude Kelsey were coming from the Dry Head with about one hundred cattle. It was late at night when they reached the Sykes place. The cattle were tired and dry and hungry. It was still several hours to the Kelsey Ranch, and so, without permission, Jim opened the gate to Sykes place and let the cattle in to water and graze a while. He and Claude stayed between the herd and the cabin to keep them from scattering, but that was hardly necessary for once they had their fill of water and a few bites of grass, they all bedded down. The boys caught a few hours sleep and before daybreak they roused the

sleepy herd and, pushing them out the gate, moved on toward home. Sykes was nowhere to be seen and they thought they had really pulled a good one.

But you can't start that many cattle moving without quite a good bit of noise. Sykes had been aroused [that night] but he thought the cattle were outside his fence. However, at daybreak, he walked over there anyway and saw what had been going on. He followed just far enough to see who had taken the liberty to use his pasture without permission, then without being seen, returned home.

Jim was a rough-and-ready devil-may-care sort and he got quite a kick out of telling how they put one over on old Sykes. It was about a year later when Jim was by that way again. This time he was looking for cattle and he rode in to ask Sykes if he had seen any stock hanging along his fence. Sykes was barely civil, but replied that he had seen none. So Jim said, "What's the matter, Sykes. Aren't you going to ask me to stay and eat?"

"Sure," said Sykes. "Get down." And Jim did. Sykes motioned him inside. He took a tin plate out and put it on the table, reached down by the stove and got a kettle of cold boiled potatoes, heaped them on the plate, then pulled out his gun and said, "Now, damn you! Eat!" And Jim started to eat. The spuds were small and cooked with the jackets. There was nothing to put on them or eat with them, not even salt. But Jim ate. Then when he thought he had done his part, he heaved a sigh and said, "Gee, thanks, Sykes. That was fine." But Sykes thumped his gun on the table and said, "Clean them up, every last one." So Jim ate, and in telling about it later, he swears there were at least ten pounds of those spuds. And when he had finally cleaned up the last one, Sykes said, "Now go! And don't ever open my gate again. And don't ever say I refused to give a hungry man a bite to eat!"

Old Sykes was pretty good as a veterinary. We frequently went for him when we had a sick horse or a wire cut. He was always glad to come and I think pleased to be called on. The last time I saw him he looked very much as he had the first, although fourteen years[16] had passed. For several years I had been farming the home place and I hadn't had time to spend the day over there as I used to do, but I still dropped by there whenever I could. Then we decided to move to North Fork and time was short. In my haste and with so much to do I neglected to go and tell the old man goodbye. A renter moved into our place and we moved off.

It was some time after that that Sykes showed up at the ranch one evening. He came to the door and asked for me. The new people had heard all the wild tales about the old man and were afraid of him. They told him I wasn't there anymore and he turned and left. About a week later, one of the boys from The Dry Head dropped in there to get a hair rope that Sykes was making for him. Sykes was lying across the bed, one moccasin on, one off, but otherwise fully clothed.[17] He had been dead about a week they said. And it

[16] This doesn't compute. Dad couldn't have met him before about 1910, and Sykes died in 1921. So more like 10 or 11 years.

[17] According to an account by Mrs. C. A. Thompson of Lovell, the former Lunita Lowe, it was Mr. Allen Lowe who found him.

was warm weather. The authorities were notified and they simply dug a grave in front of the cabin, folded his tarp over him, and buried him there. So he never made it to his cave. I wonder what he came to see me about that evening, and was he sick then? Where is his cave[18]? And what are the graves? I wish I had the answers to these and all the other mysteries about Old Sykes.

[18] Actually, the BLM maps of present day show a "Sykes Spring" and a "Sykes Cave", so perhaps someone found the cave, or what they thought must be the cave.

The Horse-Power

Earlier I spoke of using "horse-power" for threshing. Maybe I should go into detail a little about that. Of course in the early nineteen hundreds, most farmers were using steam engines for such work, but this was a small community and grain was not a principal crop. Mostly we raised hay, but we did have to have some grain too. Our jobs were too small to warrant a thresher coming from the Stinking Water[19], and there was a small threshing machine of a very old vintage and this old "horse-power" which belonged to the Strong Ranch there on the creek. By changing work with our neighbors we managed to get the work done and I for one looked forward each fall to threshing time. The women helped each other with the cooking and at the same time vied with one another for the compliments from the men, and every man bragged on every woman cooking except his [own] wife's.

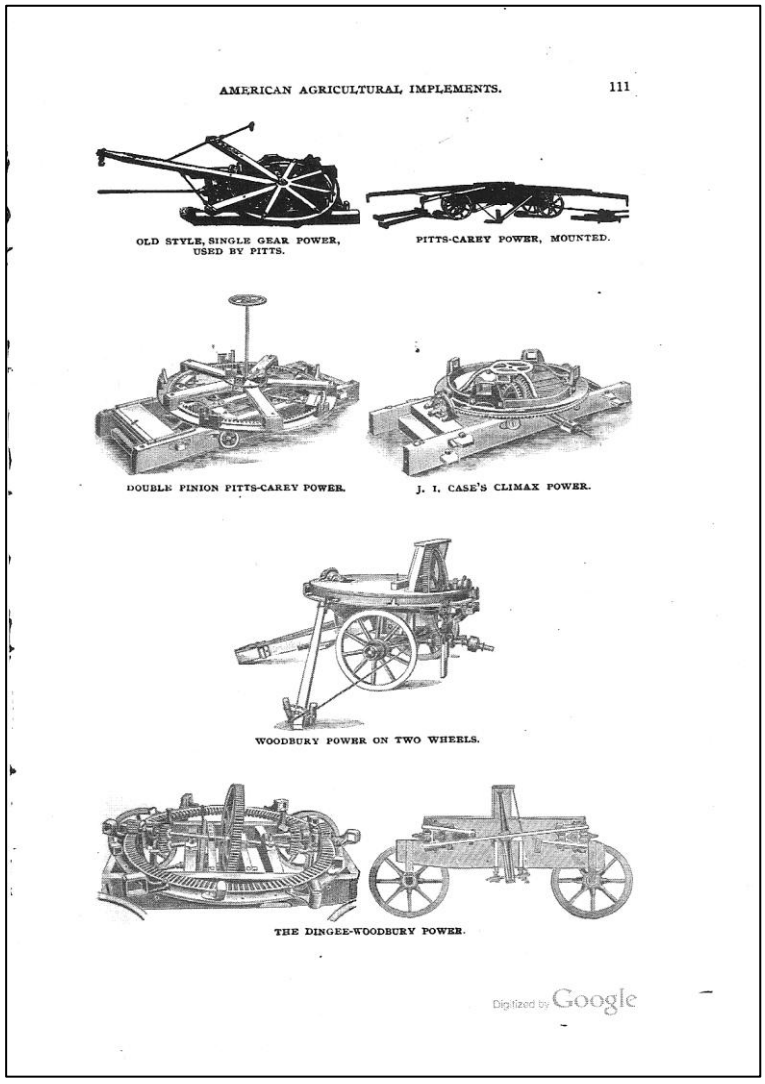


Photo: 14 - Several versions of a Horse-Power

Now, a "horse-power." It is a merry-go-round with real live horses, but they don't gallop, they plod around the ring. [There are] eight teams, sixteen horses, each team hitched to a pole called a sweep and their lead rope tied to the sweep in front of them. In the center there was a huge, horizontal log wheel called a bull wheel. This wheel was about six feet across. Then there was a pinion wheel of perhaps ten inches in diameter and a tumbling rod which ran along the ground and over

[19] The name "Shoshone" means "stinking water", from the sulfur hot springs that abound in this area.

which the horses had to step. In the center there was a platform over the bull wheel and here the driver stood and cracked a long whip over the horses' backs[20].

This was the power we used for threshing. It was always my ambition to get to drive the horse-power, but I never got to, for this job was usually given to one of the older men who were less able to do the hard work and considered better with horses. This was an excellent place to break young horses. Once they were hitched in and tied to the sweep in front, they had to cooperate sooner or later. There was nothing they could do. They couldn't stop for they were pulled from in front, and pushed from behind. They couldn't run away without taking fifteen other horses with them and then no place but around the ring. However I have seen it happen that the whole sixteen got excited and ran away at once. And that is a mess, for there is seldom any way to stop them until one horse stumbles over the tumbling rod and then there is a big pileup and considerable damage to be repaired.

I can see that old horse-power yet in my memory. I can hear the whine of the pinion, the creak of leather and in warm weather there was the smell of the sweaty horses. In cold weather, the driver with a long sheepskin coat, fur cap and mitts, and all the clothes he could get, for he stood up there in the wind, frequently taking the dirt from the machine and only a four foot platform to stomp around on to keep from freezing.

[20] If I may be permitted to expand a bit on Dad's explanation, the large horizontal wheel that the horses turn drives the small vertical wheel as a gear. The tumbling rod is the output shaft from the pinion gear that is the power take off point from the machine, used to drive whatever machinery you need to drive. The power take off would turn about 7 or 8 times faster than the horses are turning the large wheel based on the size ratios that Dad has described. Other versions produced higher RPM by means of more elaborate gearing. The original patents were held by Dingee and Woodbury, and a prominent manufacturer of those designs was J. I. Case Company.

The Steam Machine

And I remember the first steam machine we had there. Jim Legg bought one. It wasn't new, but it was quite a thing out there and it replaced an outfit that was probably the last of its kind to be used in this part of the country. The first time the steam rig was used on our place, we had an accident and some thought I was lucky not to have been killed or badly hurt, and I guess I was.

We were threshing in the yard close to the house, for we wanted the straw to cover a new shed we had built. The machine was in place and steam was up ready to go, but there were one or two men who hadn't showed up yet, so we were waiting. I was to drive the grain wagon and I had the team and wagon backed up to the grain spout at the machine. I was driving "Barney and Chub", a team of bay geldings. There were well broke but nervous about the steam engine. It was early morning and very cold and everyone had gone to the kitchen to keep warm until the work started. That is everyone except Jim's Dad who was tending the engine.

Photo: 15 - A steam tractor, early 1900s from which power could be taken to drive other machinery, like threshers.

I had wrapped the lines around the brake lever and I was standing by the kitchen door watching my team, for I knew they were on edge. Then things happened. The men showed up, and Mr. Legg, Sam, anxious to use the whistle, pulled the cord to signal "all ready." I happened to be where I could see Sam as well as the team and the instant he raised his hand I knew what was going to happen and I started for the team. No race horses ever got off to a faster or more perfect break than that team, but I was in time to grab Barney by the bit and away we went.

Directly in front was an ice house built of large logs. This was built in a bank several feet high so that the front was perhaps eight feet high and the back corner about five feet above ground. We were headed to just shave the side of this building with me between the horses and the house. I didn't have time to think, so I guess you just call it instinct that causes one to do the right thing in a case like that. Or else some higher power than our own takes over.

I couldn't have turned loose without being hurled into the corner of the ice house, and probably struck by the wagon. There wasn't room for me between the horse and the logs, so with one hand on Barney's neck and one on his [harness], I vaulted to his back and just in time. The right front wheel, my side of the wagon, missed the first corner of the ice house, scrubbed along the logs and caught on a log end at the back. This threw the wagon tongue with great violence against Barney's legs and at the same time brought us all to a sudden and violent stop. Barney was thrown flat with Chub on top and I went sailing through the air. That was the first time Barney [had ever been] ridden! I don't think he ever remembered it though – it was too short a ride!

Barney and Chub

After a team has run away once, they are never to be trusted again. And so it was with Barney and Chub. I remember one Fourth of July we were to have company and there wasn't any hay in the feed rack, but there was some in the field below the house, ready to stack. I hitched this team to the wagon and went down there to get a little for the day. I had fastened the lines to the front stake of the hay rack and as it was necessary I would speak to the team and they would move up or stop at my command. Then I had to step a rod or two behind the wagon to pick up some hay there. That was when Barney said to Chub, "Now's our chance, go!" And away they went right out on the road. They were headed up the creek on a dead run with practically an empty wagon. I had to run to the corral, about two hundred yards, where I had a saddle horse. He was not gentle enough to ride bareback so I had to saddle up, and then take off after the team.

The road was crooked but they had kept to it except for a few minor short cuts as it wound in and around the hills and coulees. But they were out of sight and long gone. I had no idea where I would find them. Then to my surprise, I met them coming back. Everything was intact and I easily stopped them for they had had enough.

A bunch of us young folks were going to Kane to a dance one night. It was about ten miles and pretty cold weather. We usually went every place on horseback, but this time we decided to drive Barney and Chub [and] the wagon. There were eight or ten of us. We filled the wagon box with hay and blankets and because it was pretty cold and might snow, we put the bows on and a new white canvas.

Photo: 16 - A spring wagon similar to the one Dad describes. From the Buffalo Bill Museum, Cody, [illegible]

This team had never pulled a wagon with a cover before and they were pretty uneasy. All went well until we were loaded and started off. Then, as we made a sharp turn at the gate and they saw that white thing coming behind, they started to go, and although I was standing up in the front of the wagon trying with all my might I couldn't stop them. It was down grade and the ground was hard so the wagon rolled easy and away we went. I was able to keep them in the road, but we made pretty good time for about a mile and were off to an exciting beginning.

Frank Strong

Between us and Frank Strong it seemed like there were a great many runaways, but Frank held the record, I believe, and I know for long distance runs he certainly did. Frank was a little dried up old character. He owned more land and cattle than anyone in those parts. He never rode horseback any more for he was getting pretty old, so he went from one of his various ranches to another by buggy, and he drove some pretty snaky ponies. He had a little team of buckskins that he had only been driving a short time. They were barely broke and plenty snorty.

Frank was on his way to Cowley [Wyoming] some twelve miles. For company he always had his little dog, Pup. Pup was a Boston Bull and he and Frank had [eaten] and slept together for a good many years. So Pup was along on this trip. He always rode in the seat beside his master. Somewhere out in the hills between Cowley and the Creek Frank lost patience with one of his team for shying at a tumbleweed and he used his whip to try to teach the ornery cuss a lesson. Probably Frank forgot that he wasn't as young as he used to be. At any rate, the team got the upper hand and away they went. They left the road, which was but two tracks through the salt sage, jumped a small ravine and the jolt left Frank sprawled on the ground with a mouthful of dirt. As he spit that out, a string of oaths followed that would have curled those cayuses' tails if they could have heard, which they didn't, for they were well on their way to Cowley. Frank followed on foot. And believe it or not, that team wasn't found for two days. Frank didn't follow very far until he gave up and started back for home.

It was dark when he got there and too late for Jim Kelsey, his son-in-law, to start out that night, but early the next morning he did. He followed that team or their tracks for thirty-five miles. They had gone almost into Cowley, where he had expected to find them, and then apparently decided to return to their old range on Sage Creek, north of Warren, Montana. In order to make their trip they had traveled some twelve miles in a south westerly direction, then west, then north and finally northeast so that they were found actually about twelve miles north of the ranch.

They had traveled sometimes on horse trails, sometimes on a run and again grazing. Part of the time the rig was on its wheels, sometimes bottom side up. They had lost both lines and tore up both bridles, and these Jim picked up as he came to them for the trail was not hard to follow. It was spring and the ground was loose and moist, and when Jim finally came up on them, they had cornered themselves in a dry wash. They had started up there and when they found they could go no farther the buggy prevented their going back. What there was left of the buggy was right side up and Pup was sitting in it. Because of a patent fastener, none of the [tugs] had come unhooked from the singletrees.


Photo: 17 - A 1915 Model T

It was soon after that that Frank bought a Model-T. California had never been able to produce a wilder driver than Frank Strong was. He never was able to

get anyone to ride with him a second time, and as he went from ranch to ranch he had a man in a buckboard with a team of mules follow after, for he was sure to get stuck in a creek crossing, on a hill or in a sand trap. I believe Strong had the worst temper of any man I have ever known. I have never seen him in a good mood for very long at one time. If he wasn't having trouble with his men, it was his wife, or Edna, or Babe, his daughters, or a team or a machine. And no man before or since could bring forth such a prolonged stream of profanity, every word of which fell neatly into place to further and assure the damnation of the person, animal or thing which had displeased him.

It was said that Frank had never owned a suit of clothes in his life. Well, I guess for that matter, lots of us hadn't. But Frank could well have afforded anything he wanted. One fall when he shipped his cattle he accompanied them to Omaha, and after they were sold, Frank and some of the other men went out to see the town and Frank must have gotten awfully drunk, for he came home with a new suit, the first he had ever had. He hadn't worn it and it was still in the store box, so Frank brought it into the kitchen when he got home and he very sheepishly opened the box and showed his finery to "the old lady" and the girls. Ma Strong was truly shocked, and it took more than a little to shock that old girl. When she finally recovered she said, "Well, yes, Dad, that's a fine suit. But what did you bring for me and the girls? You know we helped with those cows."

Frank was stunned! He stood there a moment, then he gathered the suit up in both hands like so much trash and he walked to the stove, lifted a lid and chucked it in. I guess [those people] were right who said Frank Strong never wore a suit.

Caves in the Pryors

The Pryor Mountains are mostly of limestone and I don't suppose I would be exaggerating to say there are literally hundreds of caves there. I personally have found a great many ranging in size from large to small. One I remember is along the horse trail just north of the [Wyoming-Montana] state line. It has an opening about the size of a wash tub. You go straight down about ten feet and you are in a room about twelve feet square. The floor is white sand and level. The walls are white and the ceiling is a piecrust of limestone. This is all there is to the cave. I placed a limby cedar down through the hole and pitched some wood down there so that I might build a fire and eat my lunch there, one cold windy day when I was deer hunting.

Another cave Jim Legg and I found. It was a large funnel about fifty feet across and at the bottom of the funnel there was a hole some three feet across, through which the dirt and rock from this hole above had gone into a cave below. It was winter and the steep sides of this funnel were frozen, making it safe for us to descend to where we could look below. When we got down that far we found that there was a cone of dirt reaching from the cave floor to about four feet below us. We [slid] ourselves down and ducked under. Then as we became accustomed to the dim light we moved on down the dirt pile to a rather uneven floor of huge broken rock. We threw stones ahead of us to determine the extent of the room then moved on as long as we could see daylight from our entrance hole. We had no light so we dared not go further. We could hear the drip of water and our impression was that we were in a really large cave. However, I have never been back there and I don't think anyone else has ever been there either.

One other cave we found was in a coulee. The coulee simply went underground through a narrow cave entrance. We had stopped on a ridge while deer hunting. It was a solid layer of rock and it sounded hollow under our horses' feet. While we were sitting there I noticed a small hole in the rock. It was round and about the size of a dollar. I dropped a pebble in there and I couldn't hear it hit bottom. We tried again. No sound came back to us. We took our horses and got off of there quick, then we started scouting the area and we found the entrance about two hundred feet from where we had been. We followed a narrow

Photo: 18 - Big Ice Cave in the Pryor Mountains as it is today. This is probably the one Dad describes, but of course, it wasn't developed then.

hallway some distance then it opened out and we lost contact with the sides so we stopped there and when we looked up, perhaps a hundred feet above us, we saw daylight coming through the tiny hole from above. I don't know how thick that piecrust is, but I don't care to fool around there again.

All of the caves in this part of the mountain known as the Hogs Back were dry or practically dry caves, as far as we ever knew, but farther north on both East and West Pryor there were several ice caves. I believe seven had been explored at that time. One of these I have explored. One day late in August, about a dozen of us young folks took this trip to the ice cave. It was about fifteen miles and quite a climb for the cave is practically on top of East Pryor Mountain about nine thousand feet above sea level. Of course, we went by horseback for there was no other way.

We got to the cave about eleven o'clock and even up there on top of the mountain, it was a very warm day. It is a pretty part of the mountain and there are evergreen trees and mountain meadows all around. There was a sheep camp there and just below a rimrock was the entrance to the cave. The entrance is a broad arch about thirty feet across and fifteen feet high. You go down a sort of rock slide through this arch, and while you can still see the sky through this entrance and it is perfectly light in there, you come out onto a beautiful skating arena.

I have never heard a geologist's explanation of this cave, but it has always remained one of the greatest curiosities of my life. I can best explain and describe this cave by comparing it to a mixing bowl turned over a block of ice. A block of ice which would be the largest area the bowl would cover. That would leave a space above the ice and all around. And roughly that is the way the cave is. You first come onto the beautiful glassy ice floor about seventy-five or one-hundred feet across each way and roughly round. But over on one side the ice doesn't quite come to the rock wall. Here someone has shoved a log with lots of limbs over the edge but the log is covered with ice, making descent very dangerous. But there is a place on the cave wall where we can fasten a rope so that we may be sure of getting down and out again.

We descend about twenty feet, and from this level we can go around three sides of this block of ice. We are on the cave floor, ice twenty feet high on one side and rock covered with frost an inch deep on the other side with seldom more than three feet separating the two. One place there was a curtain of icicles which we had to break through. We had a gas lantern in order to see better, but it wasn't really so awful dark down there for some light came over the side of the ice in places and some came through the edge of the crystal clear ice. At that time the cave had been known for some time and had changed practically none from year to year.

Down below I found a bear skull and I brought one of the teeth home with me. I kept it for a long time but it got lost somewhere. At least I don't have it any more.

Journal of Wylie Grant Sherwin

From Book 2: More stories, early nineteen-hundreds.

As I said when I started to write, I didn't know just what would follow or what form I would take in jotting down my story. Now it has been a year since I made my first entry and I have found it easier to group these stories around a person or a place or something else in common, and so time doesn't run smoothly through this narrative. I hope you are able to keep this in mind.

So next I plan to tell you some of the early day incidents and tragedies that, taken all together, have gone to make up the history of this corner of the west. I only wish I was better at the telling, for I realize there is so much to relate and I am only telling of the things which happened to people I knew. I am not going back into history beyond the turn of the century and I know personally most everyone of whom I write, although a few of the incidents happened before I came to these parts, but only a short time before, and mostly after.

Homesteaders and Nesters

These were the days when the early ranchers were trying to hold onto their range and the springs used for stock water, such a necessary part of their domain. These springs and the open range were generously shared with other ranchers and there was usually a great harmony among these old timers. They looked after the neighbors' cattle as well as they would their own, exchanging strays when convenient, but in the mean time branding calves with the brand of the mother when they were in the wrong herd.

Much has been written making these big ranchers out to be villains, and some were, although most were as fine and peace loving people as one will ever find. They were only men trying in the only way they knew and with the only means at hand to protect what they considered to be theirs. Unfortunately, they were at odds with the written law in respect to the homesteaders – the "nesters" they were called.

Of course the ranchers were homesteaders themselves at one time. Pioneer homesteaders, they came across the country and settled. They went through much hardship to develop their holdings. Of course, these early comers did have first choice, and in many cases, theirs were the only economically sound ventures. They usually could develop hay land and raise feed for their stock for winter, while most of what was left was only a spring or a stream in a canyon where an actual ranch could never be developed. But under the homestead law, a man could file on a piece of land of his own choosing as long as it was a part of the public domain. Much homesteading by the Nesters was little short of legal blackmail, forcing a rancher to pay rent on a spring, or buy the man out, or forfeit the use of much grass. So you can see that a man was not necessarily a villain because he hated nesters with the same intense hatred that he hated a rustler or a horse thief, any one of which had come to rob him.

And the nester was not always a villain either. Sometimes, even generally in some localities, the nester was an honest, hard-working man willing to take second choice and make the best of it, for second choice is what he had always had. Some of this later type were treated friendly by the ranchers and others suffered. Some were run off and some won out, and others, even though they were unmolested, starved out and left, leaving upturned sod and a tangle of barbed wire fencing behind. These were cursed most heartily.

Much has been written about this struggle between the rancher and the nester and I saw plenty first hand. However none of which I am going to write here, and for several pages to follow, could ever be made public without changing names, for it could damage or embarrass too many people.

The Dry Head, as I have explained, was an isolated bit of Montana. But to help you get the picture, and to help me in my story and stories to follow, I must give you a little more detail. (See enclosed map)[21]

[21] Dad's hand-drawn map is not to be found, but I have added BLM and NRA maps in Appendix I.

To begin with, there is the Bighorn Canyon which forms the east side of the country known as The Dry Head. Then there is the Pryor Mountain, East Pryor, which forms the west boundary and which is so steep and rough that it is a complete barrier as far as stock are concerned. On the north, there is Dry Head Creek, which comes from a canyon in the Pryor, flows a short way through an open valley, then enters the lower canyon for some

Photo: 19 - The beautifully restored and preserved Ewing-Snell Ranch in the Bighorn National Recreation Area.

ten miles before emptying into the Bighorn Canyon. And in this valley of the Dry Head, there is the Phelps Ranch. They have a fence from canyon to canyon. On the south end the Bighorn comes so close to the Pryor that there is nothing but a jumble of rock and a bunch of short canyons between the two, and the canyon [is] well over a thousand feet deep and the mountains thousands high. In fact, this is where the place known as The Bars is. If these bars were up and Phelps's gate shut, no stock could escape. This comprised a country larger than some counties, about twenty miles north and south by ten or twelve wide, the main body of which was a rough plateau along the rim of the canyon.

This range was controlled by four main ranchers. There was the Phelps Ranch, and at the south end, Lee Ewing had a place just north of the breaks there. And there was Barry's place down next to the canyon, and back up by the mountains lived Doc Wells. Barry had only horses on the range and doesn't figure into this story. Lee Ewing was sort of in partners with Frank Strong, and Strong's cattle, or at least a part of them, were run in the

Dry Head. All went well for years. There was plenty of grass in good years and in poor years they suffered alike. But then came Hannan.

Link [Lincoln] Hannan

Hannan settled on a small creek that was little more than a spring, in the south end of the country about five miles north of Lee Ewing's place[22]. His claim was just above where this little creek, Davis Creek, entered a canyon on its way to the Bighorn canyon, and sat astride the main cattle trails through the Dry Head. So you can readily see what a thorn in the side of the ranchers he would be, and most of all, Lee Ewing and Frank Strong.

Link Hannan was medium build, very dark of skin, with steel blue eyes, about thirty-five years of age. He walked with a quick and easy stride, the type of man that would vault a fence rather than open a gate. As a homesteader, he comes under the type who expected to make a ranch of his claim. He took the claim knowing full well he would be resented and at the same time hoping to overcome that resentment and become one of the ranchers and [be] among friends. But he never had a chance. He was an interloper from the beginning and at first he was given the old silent treatment. But Link went about his business of homesteading. He built a cabin and corrals and he brought his wife and two small children, one a boy of three, and a baby girl to their new home. And then he started to fence the creek bottom. He left room for stock trails below his fence, and he purposely left some water outside so that he could not be accused of hogging a water hole.

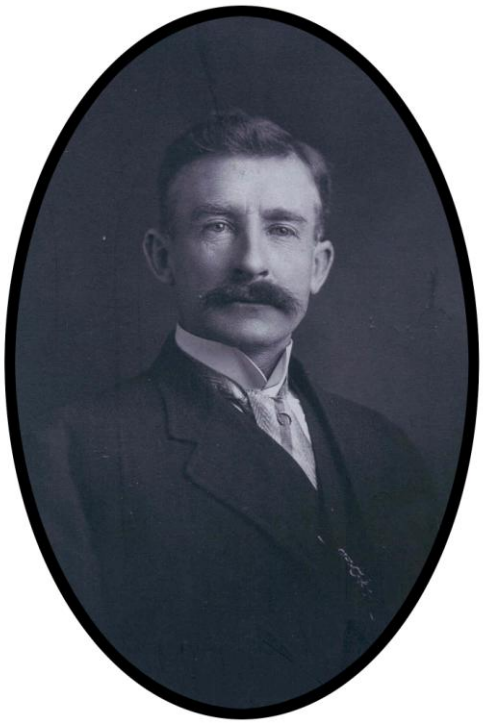


Photo: 20 - Lincoln Hannan, date unknown. From Bighorn NRA archives

The second year, Link was able to break some ground and start a meadow. It wasn't much, only about ten acres, but by now he had a couple of milk cows and about a dozen range cows, a team and a couple of saddle horses, and his hopes were to raise enough oat hay to feed them during the worst winter weather. His prospects looked good until in August, he found his fence down one morning and some range cattle in his grain. They had eaten and tromped down a good deal of his hay, and when he ran them out he found several posts on a sharp ridge had been broken off. These posts had been snapped off at the ground and were broken toward the outside. Obviously, someone had roped them and jerked them over with a saddle horse.

[22] According to Bighorn Canyon archives, this ranch was what is now known as the Carolyn Lockhart ranch, almost at the end of the road into the canyon. This ranch has been preserved.

Hannan cut what was left of his crop and hauled it to the corral. It was some time later that fall when Link went out to get his team and he found the outside gate open and all four horses gone. From their tracks, they had gone out the gate and up the trail on the run, as though being driven or scared. And Link was left afoot. He scouted the nearby country all day, but no sight of his horses. And so, for several days he watched the water hole for their return. He left the gate open so that if they should return, they could come in, and this meant that he was continually running stray cattle out on foot. But one morning the horses were there. They had come back in the night, from wherever they had been chased.

It became harder and harder to keep the fence up until finally Link got two big dogs and trained them to run the strays out. They liked their work so well that they not only ran them out, they frequently jerked their tails off, and soon the outside cattle gave that place a wide berth.

Things went from bad to worse, and one day, the following spring, Link saw a bunch of about a hundred steers coming over the ridge. There were three men with them and as they came closer, he saw that it was Frank Strong, Lee Ewing and Ed Morris. They brought the cattle down to the fence where the water was and they dropped them there. Link mounted his horse and rode out to talk to the men. As friendly as possible, he asked Lee, "Where are you taking the steers?" And Lee replied, "Right here."
"But," said Link, "there isn't that much field around here."
"That's my worry," said Lee.
"Well, it's mine, too," said Link. "I have a few head of stock myself, and if your steers clean this up I won't have any range for my cattle at all."
"You catch on fast," said Lee. "That's the idea."
"I see," said Link. "You are going to eat me out. Well, we'll see." And he rode back to the corral.

Frank and Lee and Ed stayed close by all afternoon, holding the cattle along Links fence and on the water. They were still there at dark and Link had to take the dogs inside to keep them quiet for they were anxious to get at those stray cattle.

Next morning when Hannan looked out, he was not surprised to see that the whole bunch of steers was inside his fence. The fence had been cut on the creek below the house, and just above the little canyon. Link had kept his own stock in the corral for he had expected this.

"Well, Alice," he said [to his wife], "It looks like we have a job to do. Can you help me run those steers out?"
"What are we going to do?" she asked.
"Well, we are going to run those steers off," Said Jack. "And we will have to give them a good enough run so they won't come right back."

So while the children still slept, Link and Alice rode out. They took the dogs and they kept out of sight of the cattle as they rode up the north side of the creek, for those steers

were fresh and plenty wild this morning. They would stampede easily, so when Link and Alice came out of the brush, it was well above the cattle, thus making sure they would go out the way they came in and not tear down any more fence. They moved easy at first, and held the dogs in check. One steer after another threw up his head and trotted back to the main bunch, and in no time, every steer had seen the riders and turned to go toward the break in the fence.

It was then that Link gave the dogs the word, and at the same time, Alice and he put spurs to their horses and, letting out a war whoop, charged down on the herd. And it was then that an entirely unpredictable thing happened. As the leaders went out through the down place in the fence, they should have followed the trail and turned slightly to left or right. But they did not. They went straight ahead between the two low rims of the creek canyon. The creek dropped off fast and the canyon walls were soon quite high. For a ways, the bottom was wide and brushy, but it soon narrowed down and from there to the Bighorn River far below in the canyon, there was only a deer trail. Deer, of course, use rather rough trails and will go down or up over a ledge that a man on foot would have trouble with, and they will go along ledges where no cow or horse could possibly find footing. For a mile, this little creek canyon was a series of slides and drops until it tumbled into the big one below.

Here was a herd of stampeding cattle headed down that canyon. Link and Alice stopped at the fence, but the cattle and the dogs went on. Link tried to call off his dogs, but with the noise of the stampeding steers and with the excitement, the dogs paid no attention.

"Now what have we done," said Alice.
"God only knows," said Link. "You better go back to the house. I'll be there soon."

Link rode out along the rim of the canyon and looked down. The dust was rising in clouds, and he could hear the frightened bawling of the steers and the barking of the dogs. When he finally caught sight of the dogs, he was ready with his gun. He fired just in front of them to startle them and attract their attention, and then he was able to call them off. And he stood there, surveying the mess for a while. He could see that some of the herd had somehow made it to the bottom, others were crumpled up in the little canyon bottom, and still others were stranded on ledges.

Link turned and rode back home. He was sick at the thought of what he had done, yet how could he have known? And certainly he had been provoked into doing what he had done. But Link was not a man of violence. He had tried for three years to mind his own business. But now he had been forced into a situation from which there could be no peaceful way out. Link braced himself for real trouble.

It was about noon when Frank Strong and Lee Ewing showed up. Link watched from the corral as they rode the skyline looking for their cattle. They could see the entire creek bottom where Link lived, but no cattle. They circled above the fence and down the ridge north of there. Finally, they came to the creek below and saw the trail where the cattle

had headed into the canyon, and then they disappeared from Link's sight down the way the cattle had gone.

Link went to the house and he and Alice had a long talk. Link sat by the window where he could see the creek below, and he told Alice that he would take her and the kids out to Billings the next day. Alice, of course, would have none of that. She argued that she and the kids were not the ones in danger, and if Link stayed, so would they.

Lee and Frank followed the cattle down the canyon and soon discovered what a mess they had to contend with. Of course, they felt that this was caused by Link and his dogs, but I am sure they knew also that it was partly their own doing, for their scheme to eat Link out had backfired, and where Link expected Frank and Lee to retaliate in some very violent way, they in turn had learned a hearty respect for Link, and they didn't know to what extent he would go. They knew that Link, although a mild mannered man, always carried a sidearm and a thirty-thirty rifle when on a horse. Of course, they were armed too, and they both had men who worked for them and who were good reinforcements if needed.

While these men were mentally sizing up the situation, Link probably was doing the same. And I am sure he felt he was one man against the whole bunch, for while thus far he had had no direct trouble with Wells, or the Phelps Ranch, he could be sure where their sympathy lay. And Barry, well he remained on the sideline and I am sure enjoyed it very much.

Frank and Lee could do nothing that day. They went home and came back early the next morning with a half dozen men to help. They found that there were thirty-two dead steers and a dozen more with broken legs that had to be shot. But that was only a portion of the damage, for none of the cattle could be brought out the way they went in. The Bighorn Canyon for miles was very narrow in the bottom, with small bars first on one side then on the other. Otherwise the walls were straight up at most places. It was about twenty miles of this down river to the mouth of Dry Head Creek, the first place where any cattle could possibly get out. The river averages about one hundred feet wide, and is very swift, and this was spring; there would be high water soon. It was not possible to get horses into the canyon, so it was planned to send four men down on foot. They would attempt to swim the cattle from bar to bar down the river until they reached the trail where they could come out.

Now about the only time a cowboy walks is when his horse sets him afoot, and that is the most embarrassing thing that can happen to him. So it was not easy to talk these boys into that kind of cowpunching. There would be no beds, no shelter, little food and lots of foot work. Besides, not a man in the bunch could swim, and none owned a pair of shoes. Riding boots would be pretty bad on the rocks and cobblestones of the river, so it turned out that Frank and Lee and Ed Morris, who was Frank's foreman, and one of Lee's boys, were the ones to make the try.

No one knew how long this would take or how successful it would be, but certain it was, that once started, the men at least would have to keep going until they reached Dry Head Creek. They could not come back up stream.

The first day, they were able to shove the steers off the bar at the mouth of Davis Creek, and they swam down river about a hundred yards, coming out on the same side they went in, but below a ledge. The men were able to make their way along this ledge and shove the cattle in again, but this time they came out on a bar on the east bank, and it would be necessary for the men to cross over before they could push them further. However the steers were where there was some feed and they would be all right for a couple of days. So the boys crawled out and went home that night. Their men on top had waited with the horses. Frank and Lee knew more about what they would want to work with now and they felt that the plan was at least feasible and had a good chance of success.

But they were smarting under their defeat, and they were loud in their declared intentions toward the "Son of a Bitch" who had caused all this. But just the same, they were careful to keep out of sight as much as they could, as they came and went by Hannan's fence, and every man carried a gun. Had they but known it, no one was in any danger at that time, for they had all had enough and each was willing to give the other a wide berth.

The boys returned again next day with ropes, a few tools and axes, and some food. One man stayed on top to be a lookout and watch the horses. This man on the rim remained there throughout the entire trip. He was their supply man as well as lookout, and it was frequently necessary for him to climb down as far as possible and from there lower or drop supplies to the men below, who, with the aid of a raft and by crawling along ledges, were able to move the cattle less than a mile a day. Those wild steers became pretty docile before long and so sore footed they could hardly walk, for their feet were either in water or on rocks continually.

And so it was just one month to a day when the cattle finally swam ashore at the mouth of Dry Head Creek. Several had drowned and some had just quit, refusing to go any farther, so there were only about half as many came out as went in. And everyone should have been wiser as well as sadder and content to bury the hatchet, but of course, that couldn't be.

Frank and Lee had set out to run Link off, and although they certainly had gotten the worst of it thus far, they were not in any mood to admit defeat. Anyway, they had talked too long and loud. They couldn't quit now.

Link never relaxed his vigil for one instant. He was on guard constantly. And as spring moved into summer, he got so that he not only carried his six-shooter, but he made it a point to always have his thirty-thirty close by. If he was in the wagon, the rifle was in a scabbard in the front. Even on a mower or hay rake, the rifle was fastened close to him so that he could reach it. A six-shooter is good for short distances, but would not reach very far and Link must be prepared for either.

Frank and Lee talked more and louder until late that summer they talked themselves into going after Link. They went to see the Phelps, and Charley said to leave him out, but Ma Phelps said, "Not me! I'll help run the Son of a Bitch out of the country." And so she saddled her horse and came along. They stopped by for Dick Wells, who had already agreed to come along, and they stopped for Henry Dahlem[23] also. Henry had a claim and worked for various ranches and was in their good graces, but Henry said leave me out also.

And so the four, Ma Phelps, Lee Ewing, Frank Strong and Dick Wells started for Davis Creek. On the way they came across Ed Morris and he joined the party. I don't think they had any real plan of action at this time, except to throw a scare into Hannan that would really stick and force him to take his family and leave. Of course, they were all well armed, and their tongues were well oiled, but when they were about to top the ridge where Link's place lay, a couple of hundred yards below, they stopped and were reluctant to ride over the hill en mass. That, they said, would be just plain stupid, so they all dismounted and tied their horses to some juniper trees, for this ridge was pretty well covered with brush and rocks.

Ed Morris was a big man and the youngest of the bunch. He could easily have avoided this mess, but he loved a fight, and a chance to show off to an advantage before his boss, Frank Strong. I say he loved a fight, but maybe only when he was on the side where he had plenty of backing. I doubt if there was a man, and I include the one woman in the group, [who] would have been so brave if they had stood one to five. Ed, keeping a juniper bush for cover, peeked over the hill. It was mid-afternoon, and there below he saw Hannan on a mowing machine, cutting hay. He was at the far end of the field and would come much closer soon, but then when he turned so he was coming toward them, they saw that he had the little boy on his lap and they were talking and laughing. They were cowards, everyone, for none were willing to approach the man openly, but by now they were all laying where they could watch every move the man made and he did not know of their presence.

They watched him for over an hour and they could not agree on the mode of attack, and finally Lee could stand it no longer. He took careful aim across a rock and fired. He didn't hit Link and he claimed later it was a deliberate miss so Link would separate himself from the boy, and that is what Link did. There were several rather large rocks in the field, right close by, and Link shoved the boy behind one of these, grabbed his rifle from its scabbard on the mower, and dropped behind another rock himself. About this time the gang on the hill opened up and the bullets would zing off the rock, but Link laid low, and when the firing ceased, he made his way on his belly through the waist high oats to another boulder someone hundred feet away. He still hadn't been able to see anyone, but he knew there were several of them, and so he kept quiet and waited, for he felt safe now where he was and he could see the boy hugging the rock where he lay.

[23] Henry Dahlem was the first sheriff of Park County, Wyoming. Later after these events, around 1924 he started a tourist camp called Red Star Lodge, just about 5 miles east of Yellowstone's east entrance. The lodge, now known as Shoshone Lodge, is still operating. The name was changed by Dahlem in the late '40s because (the story goes) he felt the name Red Star sounded too "Russian".

There was an occasional shot now, but only from one gun and Link figured maybe some were changing position in order to smoke him out from a different direction, and that is just what they were doing, but because they had figured Link to be behind the wrong rock, they had exposed themselves and Link got his turn.

First he saw a black hat behind a rock. He fired and the hat disappeared, but almost instantly there were people everywhere. They had all jumped to their feet and took off. The hat was Strong's and there was a hole through the crown and a burned streak through Frank's hair. And that is when, as the stories had it later, Frank kicked a jackrabbit and said, "Get out of the way and let someone run that can!"

Link emptied his gun and although no one was killed, Ed Morris got a bullet from the side that clipped the muscles of his back and brought him down. However, he was able to get out of sight and onto his horse. Everyone grabbed their horse and took off. Frank being the oldest was the last to reach his horse, and as he ran up, the horse broke loose and Frank was left afoot until someone noticed the loose horse and went back to look for him.

Hannan waited for some time, then stood up and when no one shot, he felt sure they were all gone, so he took the boy to the house where his wife had watched from the window. From where she was, she could see both Link and the boy, so she hadn't been too worried. But when Link said he was going to saddle up and see where they had gone, Alice protested. Link said, "We can't sleep tonight if we don't know, and maybe I have wounded or killed someone who is laying up there on the ridge. I've got to know." And so he rode up there.

He didn't take a roundabout way, but straight up the trail for he could not leave the house without being seen if they were there, so it would do no good to try a sneak. But of course, they were all gone.

And now, when another scheme had backfired on them, Frank and Lee went to court and had Hannan brought to trial for attempted manslaughter. On the witness stand, when Hannan was asked if he was shooting to kill, he said, "I sure was, but I am not proud of my shooting." And Frank ran a finger along the wide part in his hair, and Ed had a twinge in his back.

The jury said "not guilty" and Hannan returned home. He was not molested after that. But a man cannot live and rear a family where he is not wanted. Humans must have friends. Life without neighbors is only tolerable when there are no people near enough to neighbor with. When Link found a man who wanted his place, he gave up his dreams of a ranch in the Dry Head and sold out. Maybe this isn't the way it turns out in the movies, but this is a real live story were real men were acting and reacting according to the clay from which they were made.

Of course the Hannan incident didn't end homesteading in the Dry Head. They came and they went, most of them giving up and selling their claims to one of the older ranches, so that in the end, there were only a few more ranches than there had been to begin with.

Doc Wells

And now I want to tell you about the Doc Wells place. If I were a story teller, I would call this "The End of the Trail," and a good writer could make a real story from the true incidents connected herewith. He would have to draw but little on his imagination and could easily prove that truth is stranger and far more interesting than fiction.

I don't think I have ever seen a more beautiful setting for a ranch home, at least for the summer. Picture if you will a snug little mountain park, tucked up close to the east side of a high mountain which rises ledge on ledge almost straight up 2000 feet, and here at the base there is a large spring of crystal clear water. [It's] the start of a nice stream which flows down through mountain meadows and on out to the range land below, and surrounding this spring there are tall spruce and lodge pole trees where the squirrels scold and the blue grouse feed on the pinion nuts. The shade is deep and cool. In this setting of mountain beauty is the Doc Wells place. The cabin is of logs, low built with a dirt roof. The kind of cabin where first there was one room, then another one was added, and another, until it looks like several cabins in a string, yet all under the one roof of split logs, cedar bark and plenty of dirt, from which the grass grows a foot high in summer. Here the wind practically never blows, though you can hear it in the treetops and in winter see the fierce blizzard on the mountain above or out on the range below.

Here the sun goes down by four o'clock even in summer, which is welcome then, but in winter there is a little sun in the morning and by noon you can catch glimpses of it through the spruce treetops until about one o'clock, and then it is gone and you have to content yourself with the yellow glow of the sun in the hills far below on the Bighorn Mountains away to the east. You know that it is still early afternoon, but here it is already twilight. When it snows, each flake is placed with gentle care on this limb or that one on the post by the gate, or on a corral fence, and the only sound is the plop of some great bunch of snow when a bush or a limb of a tree finally can take no more.

Doc Wells lived here, alone, most of the year. Doc was not married, or at least he had no wife here. No one knew much about Doc before he came to Dry Head, but there were stories about a wife somewhere.[24] No one ever knew though. Doc usually had a man, or a man and his wife during the summer, but when the hay was up and the cattle off to market, there was not much left to do. There were always "Grub liners" and trappers dropping in, and some stayed for quite a spell, for Doc was friendly and his food was the best, and any man who would do his share of the chores around the place, and whose company Doc liked was urged to stay on.

Doc was past fifty and it was spring. Doc had been to Billings and brought back his mail and quite a few purchases, among these a complete new outfit of clothes. A suit, shirt, tie, new boots and all, and while in town, he had arranged with a man to come out to the ranch the next day to start work. And it was this man who found him. He was sitting at the table in the kitchen, a gun in his hand and a bullet through his head. Doc had shaved

[24] I found a brief reference to an Abigail Kidwell having married a Doc Wells (born 1881) in 1906, and she's buried in Lovell, Wyoming cemetery (died 1942). I have no idea if this is any relation.

and changed clothes, putting on his new outfit; his hair was freshly cut from the trip to town, and neatly combed, and those who saw him said he really looked elegant, only he was dead! On the table there was an envelope addressed in a woman's hand, but without a return address. It had been mailed on the train so there was no information in the post mark and the contents of the envelope had been burned. So Doc Wells came to the End of the Trail.

Mr. Harris

The place was sold and George Trumble of Bridger [Wyoming] bought it. Trumble was a banker in Bridger, but he wanted the place. He couldn't stay out there, so he hired Mrs. Masterson and her son Monte, and there was a grown girl, Mollie. They were to take care of the place and the stock.

Mrs. Masterson was a very good-looking widow and her children were very near grown. Probably she was not looking forward to being alone when the young folks married, at any rate, it came out later that she had been corresponding with a man from Florida whose name she had gotten through a matrimony magazine. This friendship had reached the stage where he had asked to come to Montana to see her. By letter, they seemed to have a great deal in common. They were about the same age and he was a widower. He was not rich, but had some money. Mrs. Masterson had no extra money, but was by no means destitute, and so she took the young folks into her confidence, and they all decided that it could do no harm to let the man come for a visit. After all, how else could they come to know each other? And so it was late fall when he arrived and Mr. Trumble brought him out to the ranch.

At first it seemed that maybe everything would be all right, for he really was a fine looking fellow. Of course, he didn't fit the west too well, and the entire family had great fun at his expense that fall and early winter, for they were a fun-loving family. "Mr Harris" (that was his name) didn't mind and he would help Monte with the outside work, but he didn't seem too strong and he coughed a great deal, and it soon became evident that he was a sick man. When Mrs. Masterson asked him about it, he finally admitted that he had T. B. but that he had hoped the west would help him to get well.

Harris himself was the one to say that there could be no thought of marriage until he was well, and that eased a considerable strain on everyone. By now it was near Christmas and Mr. Harris decided to stay until after the holiday, then Monte would take him out. Then it started to snow. Up until then there had been none, and Harris loved it. He had lived in the north as a boy, but it had been a long time, he said, since he had seen snow, and so he took the twenty-two and went out to hunt rabbits.

He never came back. Monte went to look for him just before dark. He called and called, but no answer. The fast falling snow had covered his tracks. The next day, help was summoned and they searched for two days while the snow continued to fall, but they finally had to give up. He was found the next spring when the snow went off. He had pitched head first down a steep hill. The gun was about a rod farther down the hill, but there was a twenty-two bullet in his forehead. "The End of the Trail."

George Trumble

George Trumble was a very large man, well over six feet tall, and he carried considerable weight. Some said three hundred and twenty pounds. He had been a very good horseman in his younger days, but being in the bank, he hadn't had a chance to get out too much for quite a few years, and that was one reason why he wanted the ranch in Dry Head. It was a long day's ride from Bridger, but in summer he went out as often as business would permit. He would stay all night, or sometimes several days, then return to the bank. Always by horseback, of course.

It was later in summer after they had found Harris. Monte saw a horse standing at the gate on the ridge. He recognized it as the big buckskin that Trumble usually rode, so he went up there to see what was going on. The horse was saddled and the bridle reins were down. At first, Monte thought the horse must have thrown George and come on to the gate. But as he came closer, he saw Trumble lying in the sage brush close by the horse. Closer examination showed that his forehead was crushed, probably where he had struck a rock. They called it probable heart failure. "The End of the Trail."

Now the place was beginning to get a bad name. Three violent deaths in such a short time, and looking at it that way, it was a spooky place. With the huge spruce trees whispering back and forth their eerie secrets and the breezes rippling through their tops, spreading the news, it gave folks the creeps wondering if the spirits of those three men might not be lurking near. Reluctant to leave the place they had loved, for it was so beautiful. Beautiful but forbidding, beckoning you with one hand while warding you off with the other. [But] after George Trumble died, the stock was sold and the place was vacated. The hay land was neglected and the range used by the other ranchers.

Seth Tripp & [Frank] Annerer

Several years went by and then Seth Tripp came along. Seth was medium young, I suppose about forty, a bachelor and I might say, a very handsome one. Seth was no hermit, and where there were women, he cut quite a swath. He caused the married men with young wives to ride close herd on them. At this particular time there were several young homesteaders in the Dry Head.

Seth made a deal for the Doc Wells place. Of course he was thoroughly briefed on the history of the place by the residents of the area, but that didn't bother Seth any. He moved in and he brought quite a bunch of horses with him, for Seth was a horseman. His horses were all select saddle stock and he gained quite a reputation for his fine mounts.

Seth didn't live alone too much. He was sociable, and there was usually someone coming or going or staying a while, and so things went for several years. Seth broke and sold saddle horses to all the cattle ranchers for miles around, and he spent much time just riding about the country, visiting the homesteaders as well as the older ranchers, and that is how he met the Annerers. [Frank] Annerer was a white man, but his wife was a good-looking half-breed Crow. Annerer was past fifty, while his breed wife was about twenty eight. And Seth found them both good company. Annerer loved good horses and so they had quite a lot in common.

Annerer like most homesteaders, was pretty hard up and while trying to improve his own claim, he had to work for the neighbors when he could, in order to lay up a grub stake and buy the other things necessary to build with. Besides Elsie, his wife, he had three small sons to provide for. Annerer lived about eight miles below where Seth did, and between Seth's place and the Post Office, which had been established at Barry's Ranch. Seth always stopped in there to take any letters they might have and to leave the mail on the return trip. Seth liked the boys and they looked forward to his frequent visits.

Seth decided to build some new corrals and a new fence, and he asked Annerer if he wanted a job, so Annerer came to work. It was pretty far to ride back and forth every day, so he stayed with Seth all week and went home only on weekends. At the Post Office, the mail came each Tuesday and Saturday, and Seth usually chose Tuesday for his weekly trip down there. It took most all afternoon and if he did much visiting, he sometimes came home at midnight. And even though Annerer was up at his place, Seth always stopped to take or leave the mail for Elsie.

This arrangement continued all summer. No one knows when Annerer began to suspicion that there was dirty work afoot. From all appearances, he and Seth were the best of friends, but one night Annerer woke up and Seth hadn't come home. It was after eleven o'clock. The moon was full and it was as bright as day outside. It wasn't really so awfully late, and Seth lots of times came home later, but Annerer went to the corral and caught his horse, saddled up and started down the trail.

Annerer had not been carrying a gun, so his was at home, but as he went out the door he took Seth's gun which hung in its holster there on a nail, and he strapped it on. Annerer was the quiet sort of man who one never suspects of being capable of violence. He had shown no jealousy and certainly Seth had seen no reason to suspect trouble. As Annerer rode down the trail in the moonlight, he kept watch for Seth, expecting to meet him on every turn, but he did not. As he came within sight of his cabin, he stopped, and down below he could see every detail as though it were noon instead of midnight. The cabin doors were open for it was a warm night, and by the corral was Seth's horse. There were no lights in the house.

Annerer stood there for a long time, hoping Seth would come out, but he did not. Annerer moved down closer and the cabin was a bare hundred feet away. The doors of this two room cabin were arranged so that there was one on the east and one on the west, but both were in the room used for a kitchen and from where Annerer stood he could see straight through the house. And [as] he stood there bathed in the moonlight, he heard no sound [and] saw no one. Then Seth's horse nickered. And Elsie came to the door. She was in her nightgown, and when she saw Annerer standing there, gun in hand, she screamed, and his bullet hit her in the heart at the same time. Seth knew he could not escape by the door so he jumped out the window and ran for his horse, but Annerer fired again and he went down.

Annerer went into the kitchen and he saw by the blood where Elsie was hit and he knew at once that she was dead. He covered her with a blanket and went into the yard where Seth lay on the ground. Seth was conscious and Annerer picked him up and carried him in the house, and he said, "I'm sorry, Seth, is there anything you want me to get for you?" Seth asked for a drink of water and Annerer brought it. Seth was shot through the middle but he didn't seem to be in so much pain, although he couldn't move his legs.

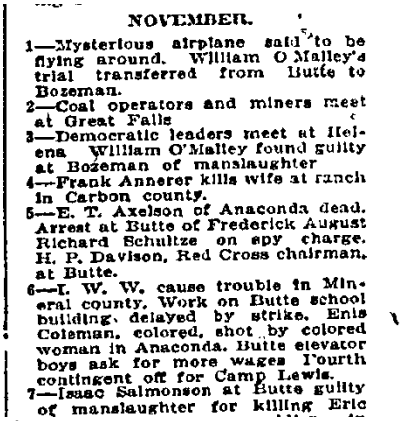
And so the two men talked things over. Annerer was stunned and for him it was the end, he had no further plans. But Seth's mind was clear and he took charge. The boys were sleeping in a lean-to shed back of the cabin and they had not been awakened. The nearest neighbor was Lemmie Chessmire about four miles away. Lemmie's wife was Elsie's sister.

Seth said, "You must go down to Chessmire's. Tell them there has been an accident and have them come up here. And then you must go to the authorities and give yourself up. But before you go, give me a pencil and paper. I want to write a note, for I know I won't live long. I want to leave what I have to the boys. Maybe it will help in some way to relieve the misery I have helped to bring on them. But hurry, for time is short, and you must go. Take my horse, for he is a better traveler than yours."

Annerer stopped in at our place, which was twenty miles south of his, for breakfast that morning. He was calm and he ate well, and of course, he never told us a word of what had happened. He only said he was going to Frannie [Wyoming] to catch the train for Red Lodge [Montana]. We wondered, why Frannie, for it was closer to Lovell, and the train didn't go through Lovell until one o'clock. But we scarcely knew the man, and we

didn't ask questions. It turned out that he went to Frannie because he could cache himself in the hills until he saw the train coming, then have time to walk in, buy a ticket and get on. He didn't want to be arrested until he got to Red Lodge, the county seat. There he gave himself up and told the authorities what had happened.

Seth died, and on the evidence in his note and in his handwriting, Annerer was cleared, however the same note was not accepted as a will and the boys got nothing. So one more man came to "The End of the Trail."



NOVEMBER.

1—Mysterious airplane said to be flying around. William O'Malley's trial transferred from Butte to Bozeman.
2—Coal operators and miners meet at Great Falls
3—Democratic leaders meet at Helena. William O'Malley found guilty at Bozeman of manslaughter
4—Frank Annerer kills wife at ranch in Carbon county.
5—E. T. Axelson of Anaconda dead. Arrest at Butte of Frederick August Richard Schultze on spy charge. H. P. Davison, Red Cross chairman, at Butte.
6—I. W. W. cause trouble in Mineral county. Work on Butte school building delayed by strike. Enis Coleman, colored, shot by colored woman in Anaconda. Butte elevator boys ask for more wages. Fourth contingent off for Camp Lewis.
7—Isaac Salmonson at Butte guilty of manslaughter for killing Eric

Photo: 21 – Note item #4: From a published "Chronicle of events of 1917 in Montana". Unknown

Clint Hough

While I am in the Dry Head, I have one more story to relate. It is about the Hough children. Clint Hough and family lived on the Lee Ewing place, having bought Lee out a few years after the Hannan shooting scrape. There were three children, Eddie, about seven and very small for his age, Ralph, about a year and a half younger, but as large as Eddie. He was pretty fat, and as Eddie used to say, "Ralph runs awfully hard but not very fast." Then there was Helen, the youngest of the three, and very tiny. Their mother only weighed ninety-five pounds. But what Mrs. Hough lacked in size she had in spunk and she was a real pioneer.

I went to work for Clint that summer and I have never in my life seen such independent children. They had an old roan horse and a big black dog, Nigger, and as soon as they had had their breakfast, they would catch that horse, saddle him with their small saddle and lead him up to the wagon or a stump or a rock and they would all pile on. And they went everywhere. Sometimes they would come to the field where I was working or they would go down to their Uncle Jess's place several miles away, or they would just go exploring. And their mother never worried. She always said they will come home when they get hungry, and Nigger and Roney will take care of them.

One time, they went swimming in the creek. It was a blistering hot day and the best hole they could find in that creek wouldn't cover their knees. They must have stayed in there all afternoon, for that night their backs were so blistered with sunburn that they couldn't sleep, and their mother smeared them all up with thick cream.

They killed rattlesnakes, and they came in with tales of mountain lions and everything else. We never knew for sure whether they had seen a mountain lion or just bobcat, for there were both in those rocks around there. That is how I came to know this family and the children in particular.

The following fall, Clint had to be gone from home for several days on business, and Uncle Jess came to help out while he was gone. Actually, Uncle Jess was Mrs. Hough's Uncle, so he was quite old. One day, Mrs. Hough had to ride out south to look after some cattle and as usual, the three kids were off on their own business while Jess was hauling wood from down the creek.

This creek, like all of the streams over there, tumbled down through a small canyon into the Bighorn Canyon. There were no known trails into the Bighorn Canyon anywhere near there except that, many years before, some prospector had gone down that creek to the river prospecting for gold. And in order to do so, he had used ropes tied to juniper bushes to let himself down and [get back] up, and the old ropes, though badly rotted and much weathered, were still there.

It was along this creek that Jess was getting wood, and not very far above where it dropped off into the canyon below, for it was only a mile or slightly more from the house clear to the river.

That afternoon, the kids came down where Jess was getting wood. They had left the pony at the corral, and they played around there for a while, and then they were gone. Of course, Jess didn't think anything about it, for they went where they pleased. He hauled his load of wood to the house and took care of his team and went about his chores and later, Mrs. Hough came home and started supper. But no kids. She asked Jess and he said the last he had seen of them was about five o'clock, down the creek, and by now it was getting dark, although there was a moon.

Mrs. Hough and Jess began to get worried so they walked down the creek calling to the children and calling for the dog, but getting no answer, save their own echo coming back from the surrounding ledges. Now Mrs. Hough remembered that sometimes the children would meet her out on the trail when she came home from riding for stock. She had gone out along the canyon rim but had returned much higher up. She thought they might be waiting for her along that trail, and so she resaddled her horse and started out along that canyon trail. She went for several miles, calling frequently, but they were not out there, so she started home. It was now eleven o'clock at night and there could be no doubt that the children were in trouble somewhere.

She was almost home when she saw all three in the trail in front of her, tired and hungry and without their dog, but not in the least frightened or worried. They had found the old prospector's trail, and the rope ladders, and they had gone clear to the bottom of the canyon. [They] even went swimming in the Bighorn! Dark had come and they started home, but missed the trail, so they had found their way up that canyon wall, without ropes, and where no one even knew it was possible to go, and all this in the dark.

When asked how they ever got up those places, Eddie said, "Oh, we boosted Helen up, then she pulled and I pushed to get Ralph up, then they both pulled me up." But Nigger couldn't make it, and they found him the next day at the foot of one of the rope ladders where they had to haul him up with a rope.

Boating on the Bighorn River

Our place on Crooked Creek was just above the upper end of the Bighorn Canyon[25]. That is, we were about a mile and a half up the creek from its mouth, and our creek emptied into the river after it had entered the canyon. Where the river enters this canyon is called The Narrows. Here the river, which is a couple of hundred feet wide normally, is suddenly pinched down to forty-five feet, and all river bottom and shore gives way to low canyon walls. These perpendicular walls rise steadily and rapidly until within eight or ten miles they tower twelve or fifteen hundred feet above the stream. They hold this height for a considerable distance and then gradually recede until at the Garvin Crossing[26], which is about twenty miles from the upper end, the walls reach a low of about two hundred feet, then from here they build rapidly again and at one place in its forty-five mile length, the canyon is thirty-five hundred feet deep. That is on the lower end where it nips off the end of a spur of the Bighorn Mountains, called the Bull Elk Divide.

Photo: 22 - The Bighorn Canyon

Several boys I have known, and a few I didn't, have made the trip through this canyon by boat. I don't know how it happened that I never did, for we were so close and we were always using a boat on the river above. In fact, we had a part interest in a sixteen-foot sheet-iron boat; Jack Snell owned the other half. We sometimes had swimming parties in the Bighorn where several families of us would have a picnic and seine fish. We caught catfish, sturgeon, ling, pike, grayling and sometimes trout, and of course, suckers and carp, which were no good.

Several times I took the boat and two or three other boys and we went down through the canyon to the mouth of Devil's Canyon, which was about ten miles along the crooked stream, and at this point the walls of the canyon are fifteen hundred feet high and practically sheer. It would take us about an hour to come down the river, if we had good luck, but about six hours of hard work going back, for we could not row against the current and we would have to tow the boat from shore, going a short ways on one side until the ledges forced us into the river, then row across and tow from the other shore.

[25] The GPS coordinates are 108º 17.5' W x 44º 57.75' N, just off highway 37 at the pay station entrance to Bighorn Canyon NRA. There is a ranger station building on the west side of the highway, and the grove of trees just north of the building about ½ mile is the cabin site. On the east side of the road is the entrance to Horseshoe Bend Campground and boat launching area. In 2008, the cabins were still there, though not in good shape.

[26] This place is now shown on the BLM maps as Barry's Landing and is at the end of the paved road.

Once in a while there were sheer ledges to the water's edge on both sides so that it was necessary to fight the current and row upstream through these places, and there were a few places where the water ran still and deep and it was no effort to row. We always went prepared to stay all night for it was too much for one day.

In Porcupine Creek, which is the stream in Devil's Canyon, the fishing was usually wonderful. The creek is a swift mountain stream about a rod[27] wide and crystal clear. It tumbles over and around huge rocks which have fallen from the canyon walls above, and the trout from the Bighorn seek this smaller stream for spawning, so we caught lots of two to five pound fish here.

On one of these excursions I had two fellows from Lovell with me, Davis and Dalton, both from the sugar factory there, and when we got to the mouth of the creek where we [had] moored our boat, we found two families camped there and our boat was gone. There seemed to be just two women and several small children. We asked if they knew anything about the boat and they said, "Yes, Jack Snell gave their men permission to use it." Well, that was all right, but it sort of spoiled our plans, for the women didn't know when the men would be back. And on closer questioning, we found out that they had left about noon the day before to go down to Devil's Canyon and they did not go prepared to stay all night. Of course, knowing how long it took to fight one's way up that river, I knew they wouldn't be back before noon if they had started [back] that morning.

It was late August and the river was low, and I figured we could go quite a ways along the bank, so we decided to go as far as we could and wait for the boat, thus saving the other fellows the work of towing the boat and at the same time saving considerable time for ourselves. [So] with our supplies and equipment on our backs, we did manage to go down river about a half-mile, and to our surprise, we found the boat. It was tied up and there was a rifle, a Kodak, and a few other things in it. We weren't quite sure just what to make of it, but we laid their things out and loaded ours in and shoved off. We kept watch for those fellows all the way down, for we thought they would be making their way back by fording from side to side on foot, and at this low water, that could be done. [But] when we finally rounded the bend into the long, still water just above Porcupine Creek, we still hadn't seen any sign of them. When we put ashore, we saw their tracks in the sand where they had gone both ways, so we knew they had been there and started back, and we concluded we had missed them somewhere on the way, for frequently the current demanded that we give our undivided attention to the boat.

We spent the afternoon and the next morning fishing. We caught lots of fish and were ready to start back at just about twelve o'clock, and the river being low, we made it back in good time. At one point about halfway back, we found a man's hat floating on a still pool behind a rock. This caused us to be even more watchful for those boys the rest of the way and by now we were really concerned and anxious to get back to see if they had returned. We were not too surprised when the women told us they hadn't seen their men at all. They had been worried, but had convinced themselves that the boys were with us. And now we knew, of course, that there had been a tragedy, so we went back and close to

[27] A rod is 16.5 feet.

where we had found the hat, we found the bodies. They had come to the surface since we had passed.

The tracks on the shore told the story. It must have been late at night when they started to return. They must have thought they were going to cross the river at a point where they had crossed going down, and one man had entered the river [and] had stepped off an underwater ledge not a rod from shore. He wore waders that came up under his arms, and he could not swim. The other man had run down the sandy shore about thirty feet and entered the water. He could swim, but was hampered by hip boots, and so they were both drowned.

I had more than a few experiences in that river, some in the way of fun, for we used to swim there a lot. In low water, we would take the boat in the river above the canyon and we would row out in mid stream and jump out, turning the boat adrift while we swam and dived and played alongside, and then we would catch the boat and climb in.

Jim Legg never learned to swim, and one day just he and I were down there fooling around. We had the boat in a large eddy of still water, and Jim decided to learn to swim. We measured the water with an oar and it lacked a few inches of coming over his head. We could tell that the bottom was soft and no rocks, so Jim decided to dive out of the boat. He did. He dove straight down and into about a foot of goo on the bottom. When he came up, he couldn't see and he was spitting mud and water like a whale. By stretching his neck he was able to keep his nose out of water until I could give him a hand to guide him to the boat, and there he hung until I towed him ashore.

I had a pinto mare which was almost as good as a boat, and I swam her across that river six times one day trying to find a place where we could cross with a wagon, but it was too deep.

Another time, there were some men trying to bring six-hundred head of cows and yearlings across there. The river was only medium high and you could ford it on a horse, but the yearlings could not wade and had to swim. In this ford there was a shallow place in mid-stream. The cattle would swim that far, but when their feet hit bottom they would mill around and turn back every time. These were Woodson Moss's cattle, and he had five men helping him. They worked a half a day and succeeded in drowning five head before he came up to get me to help them. As soon as I got there, I saw what their trouble was, for I had had plenty of experience with cattle in that river.

I said, "Let's drop down a little ways where the river is narrow and deep. Then once they hit swimming water they will go on across." That's what we did. We had the entire bunch on the far side in fifteen minutes and never lost a one.

I came close to drowning in that river once, though. We were fooling around in the boat like I said, and I got too far behind and missed the boat, although the other boys were in it, so I struck out for shore. We had got over into pretty swift water, and in my haste to get ashore, I pulled in behind a big rock where there was a big eddy, and the center pull

was too strong for me. I couldn’t get out and I was almost sucked under before the boys got there with a long stick and I grabbed it and was pulled out.

The Petersons

Earlier in this story I did mention school, but before I get too far away, I better finish it. I graduated from the eighth grade, but without honors. Maybe I should say they gave me a dishonorable discharge. I had several pretty weak subjects and my teacher almost had a nervous breakdown in her efforts to see that I did pass. As you can see by this narrative, spelling was my worst subject, and English – grammar – we called it, was next. I could split more infinitives than any kid in school. And as for spelling, well they tell a story about Joe Jones that could easily apply to me.

Joe was corresponding with a dude about a bear hunt, and when the dude finally came, and got better acquainted with Joe, he said, "Joe, how many kinds of bear have you in this country?" and Joe replied, "Three. We have black, and brown, and grizzly." The dude said, "That's what I thought. You spelled 'bear' three different ways." "Well, the way I figure, I am smart enough to know what I mean, and if the other fellow isn't smart enough to figure it out, he must be dumber than I am," said Joe.

After I finished school there I went to Powell, and by milking cows for my board and room, I managed to get a few months in two different years of high school. But I was needed at home, or at least my wages were, so I gave that up and worked.

While I was going to school at Powell, I stayed with a family by the name of Peterson. They had quite a bunch of milk cows and besides helping with the milking, I had to feed and pump water by hand into a large tank for this bunch of cows. They had running water in the house, that is, it ran out after I pumped it into a large tank in the attic.

One time, Lew Peterson had gone to the mine for a load of coal and he wouldn't be home until late, so Mrs. Peterson was helping with the milking. She was quite young and very pretty, I thought, and I was still pretty new there and a little embarrassed sometimes. There was a heifer that had only been fresh a week or so, and she wasn't very well broken yet. We had all the cows in stanchions in the barn with the usual gutter running along behind them. This heifer was small and short and next to her was a big old red cow. She was a foot longer than the heifer and stood at the end, on the heifer's left. It so happened that I was milking the big cow at the same time Mrs. Peterson was milking the little one. Her cow was doing a lot of moving around and sometimes she crowded me and we would both have to get to our feet and get her back in place. Young women in those days didn't wear men's clothes, at least, Mrs. Peterson didn't. She had on an old dress kept for just such work, and dresses weren't so short, either. So each time she sat down to that cow on that one legged stool, it took quite a bit of arranging before she was ready to milk, and by that time the heifer was too far away.

So I stood there, stool and bucket in hand until she finally got settled again, and then I sat down and continued milking my cow. Both of us had just about finished when Mrs. Peterson yelled, "Look out!" But it was too late. That heifer hoisted her tail and humped her back and I got a hot stream right down my neck. In her quick change of position she had planted a foot on the hem of Mrs. Peterson's dress so that when she tried to get up

quick, she was caught and she fell over backward in the gutter, spilling her whole bucket of milk up under her skirts. That was probably the most embarrassing moment of my life.

During these first years on the ranch we had quite a struggle in an effort to develop the ranch and at the same time provide cash for our needs, and so Dad, as well as George and I, did almost anything to make an honest dollar. Dad was quite a good trapper, and coyotes and cats brought from six to ten dollars each. Dad would set out a trap line and George or I would lots of times tend it. And between us we would add several hundred dollars to our meager income.

It was Dad's traps that got him a job with old Johnny Booz, for he offered Dad and me a hundred dollars a month if Dad would come to his ranch and trap, and Dad could keep the fur. Johnny was being overrun with coyotes and wolves. Johnny would also provide horses and room and board. This was too good to turn down, and so Dad left us boys in charge of the ranch, which wasn't too much at that time, and he went to the M-Y[28] Ranch to trap.

[28] Dad has drawn a branding symbol here for the M-Y Ranch, that I cannot easily reproduce, but I can describe it: The "V" portion of the "M" is extended down to form a "Y" so that the M and Y are superimposed.

The M-Y Ranch

The M-Y Ranch deserves and will get quite a few pages in this book, for it was there that I spent a great part of the time between my sixteenth and nineteenth years. It will take several paragraphs to describe the lay of the land and this in itself is of much importance, for it is what made the M-Y one of the really unique ranches of its time.

I have described the Dry Head in some detail, how it was fenced naturally by the Bighorn Canyon, the Dry Head Creek and the Pryor Mountains. The same Bighorn Canyon forms the west boundary of the Garvin Basin, and [is] the line which separates these two very interesting pieces of country. Where the Dry Head was bounded on the west by the Pryor [Mountains], the Garvin Basin is bounded on the East by that section of the Bighorn Mountains known as the Bull Elk Divide, and further south, by Sheep Mountain, then Denson Mountain. Then, coming down from the Bighorn Mountains there is Devil's Canyon, which runs into the Bighorn, and you have another large section of country completely fenced by canyons and mountains and called Garvin Basin; half is in Montana and half is on the Crow Reservation. The Bighorn River is, at this point, the line, and so is the Montana-Wyoming boundary.

Roughly speaking, the Garvin Basin is shaped like two triangles back to back pointing in opposite directions; one in Montana and the other in Wyoming, and coming down the Montana-Wyoming line from the Bighorns is Trout Creek. This creek flows about six miles through a very narrow canyon, then for a hundred yards it is crossable before it enters the lower canyon and on into Devil's Canyon, and the whole thing is about thirty miles long by ten wide in the widest place. This is Garvin Basin, and at the same time it is the M-Y Ranch, for there are no other ranches in the whole basin.

Garvin Basin gets its name from Sam Garvin who was one of the early-day cattle men. Sam Garvin got his start, as so many of the early ones were supposed to have done, by the skilled use of a saddle rope and a running iron.[29]

One of the prime essentials in building up a herd in this manner is a nice, secluded location where there are few people coming and going and it is much to be preferred that even these few can be controlled if necessary. What better location than this wonderfully protected readymade basin. And to make everything perfect, it lay in the heart of the cattle country and completely surrounded by big outfits. The biggest of these was the ID, standing for Indian Department, and the ID herd belonged to the Crow Tribe.

As I said, the north half of Garvin Basin is in the Crow Reservation, but as this section is rather isolated, and in winter, completely cut off from the rest of the Reservation, the Indian Department was happy to find a lessee. It was on the Wyoming side, though, that Garvin established his ranch proper. That is where he filed on a homestead and developed quite a lot of hay land.

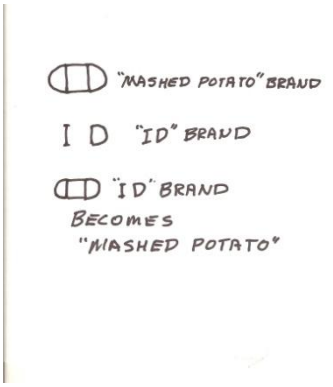
[29] A running iron is used to change one brand into another. No self-respecting cattle rustler would be without one.

The proposition that Garvin had in mind called for a good man in whom he could trust, and that is where Bill Lee came in. Bill was a real good hand with cows and horses, and also a gun or a rope. And his scruples were such that Sam could use him, so Lee was taken in as a partner: Garvin and Lee.

Cattle rustling is done several ways, or was in those days. You might come across a maverick now and then, a maverick being a calf old enough to wean but not yet branded, or an older critter that had been missed. These mavericks were, at that time, considered more or less anybody's game. Unless you were caught with a cow bawling over you while you branded the calf with a brand that didn't match, you could hardly be called a rustler. But when you start working over the other fellow's brand to make it into yours, then you really were a professional.

Garvin and Lee took for themselves the brand they called the Mashed Potato, and this is the way it was made: (see right) It was an oval with two bars running through it, and here is the I D brand:

I D



See how easy it is to make the I D brand into "Mashed Potato? And then a cow or steer has changed owners without a bill of sale.

Naturally, the Indian Department became Garvin and Lee's best supplier, and for other reasons than the brand alone. In summer there were lots of I D cattle on Bull Elk Divide until the big full storms came, then they were taken off the other side of the mountain and hence to the lower parts of the Reservation where they would winter on the grass in the foothills. But when these storms come, the cattle do not wait for someone to come for them, they start for the low country without help.

This is where Garvin and Lee got busy. They were usually up on that divide in that storm and they would grab a bunch of cattle, and by taking them along the divide to the Wyoming line, they could drop down through Cook Stove Basin and Upper Trout Creek and out on their own range. There these cattle were dropped and left alone until the mountain was well snowed in [and] they could be safely re-branded, for they could be sure of at least six months in which the new brand would heal and blend in. Of course, if the cattle were tracked and found soon after they had been brought in, then Garvin and Lee pretended as much surprise as anyone at finding them there, and they were considered as just strays.

In winter there was only one way in or out of Garvin Basin, and that was by way of Dry Head. You crossed the Bighorn at the place known as the Garvin Crossing. Here the canyon walls reached their lowest, and at one point on the Garvin Basin side, they were somewhat broken, making it possible to reach the river there, and in the canyon just

below where you dropped in, there was a few acres of grass, but on the opposite side the walls were straight up with no beach or bar and so, when the river is long enough to ford here, you have about fifty feet in which to come out of the river. If the river is too high, don't even try to ford from that side, for you have to buck the current some to make this landing and if you miss, your horse will have to swim and will be carried down too far to get out.


Photo: 23 - Branding cattle

On this side you come out and start up a very narrow little canyon called Chain Canyon, for up this canyon where it is only about five feet wide, there is a big iron eye bolt leaded into the ledge on either side, and Garvin had a huge chain padlocked across here so that no one could come or go without a key when this gate was closed. In winter, when their brand working operations were carried on, Garvin and Lee saw to it that there were no unwanted or unannounced guests.

Things went well for the pair for a good many years and although it could never be said they weren't [under] suspicion, they never were caught. They built up a herd numbering well over a thousand and certainly that should have given them sufficient start so they could get along without stealing any more. But as we know, and history proves, such a practice once started and gotten away with for a time, is seldom stopped until the parties are caught. Or is it that no one knows unless someone is caught?

But in the case of Garvin and Lee, they became careless, and once when they brought a bunch of cattle down through Cook Stove Basin, they didn't wait until winter came to work the brand. They only had a few and there were so many others for them to mix with, the easiest thing was to get the branding done and turn them loose. One other thing went wrong: the [approaching] storm turned out to be only a bluff with a couple of inches of snow. Then there was the old blue cow. The boys didn't know they had missed her calf, and after she had been branded and turned out, she headed straight back over the mountain and she was picked up the next day by the boss of the I D herd. Two inches of snow leaves a plain trail, and the Indian Department had the evidence they had always hoped for and long sought. Garvin and Lee were sent to the federal penitentiary. Maybe they were lucky at that, for if they had been caught by some of the big ranchers of those days, they would have been escorted to the nearest tree.

This is where Johnny Booz comes into the picture, for some banking interests in Billings took the ranch and turned it over to Johnny. I guess they gave Johnny an interest in the ranch if he would go out there and run it. And that is when it became the M-Y ranch.

Johnny Booz

Johnny Booz[30], when I first knew him, was in his fifties. I am just going by his general looks. I don't really know and I doubt if he did either. I have heard him say that he didn't know when his birthday was.

Johnny had been a jockey in his early life. He had started riding and exercising race horses as far back as he could remember. He had had no interest in school and I gather there were few who had any interest in him, at least to the extent of seeing that he got an education. Piecing together what little I ever heard Johnny say, I gathered that he rode horses in races until he was about sixteen and then, as the result of an accident or Johnny's hot temper, a jockey was killed and Johnny left Georgia in a hurry. He wandered west into Texas and came north with the trail herds, winding up in Montana. He became rather a good cow hand and he was a natural for saving his wages, for he neither smoked nor drank nor gambled. He had no friends, men or women, and so he finally bought a small ranch and some cattle of his own. And from this start he took over the Garvin Basin Ranch, making it the M-Y and building the herd there until at the time Dad went there to trap, he had about five thousand cattle and four hundred horses.

Johnny was a small dried up little man with a steel grey hair and mustache, and beady black eyes that darted this way and that as though he expected someone to pounce on him. His skin was the color of the saddle he rode, and I am sure as impervious to wind and weather, and his legs, though short, were perfectly fitted to any horse. I honestly believe the man had spent more hours of his life on a horse than off.

Johnny talked with a Georgia accent and a whiney voice he sounded like he was whining for sympathy all the time. And I have never seen a man with so little humor or love or kindness in his makeup. If something really funny happened, or was said and Johnny felt that he might laugh, he would turn his back or walk away rather than to be seen smiling. There was a rare exception to this however, and that was when Johnny was feeling in rare good humor and he could think of something to say that would embarrass someone else, then he would laugh at their expense.

Johnny could barely read and write, but was pretty good at figures. He always promised good wages, but would scheme every way possible to keep from paying what he had agreed to. If he came into the bunkhouse and found the men playing a friendly game of cards, he would find little chores for one or more to do, just to break up the game. You never dared leave a deck of cards where he could find them, for he would destroy just a few so the deck was no good. He tore pages out of every magazine or book that was ever on the ranch.

Dad trapped over there three months that winter and he and Johnny got along fine, mainly because Dad stayed in one of the roundup cabins quite a way from the ranch and practically never saw Johnny. Anyway, between the two, they hatched up a deal where the whole family was to work there the next summer. Dad was to run the irrigating and

[30] Dad spells this Booze, but on the BLM maps of the area there are creeks and springs named Booz.

haying crew, Mother was to cook at the ranch, and I was to ride for cattle. George helped on the ranch and also rode quite a bit.

The M-Y Ranch was actually only about twelve miles due east of ours, but to get there it was about forty miles by saddle trail through the Dry Head and by way of Garvin Crossing. And it was a pretty hard day's ride, because of the rough country and crossing the canyon and such.

Well, come April, we all moved over to the M-Y. Dad had rented our place for the summer to Jack Snell, and we were to stay until after fall roundup, which always took place early in October. We took our own saddle horses and several pack horses. It was necessary to get over there soon after the first of April because the Bighorn would start to rise and there would be no more fording in that canyon until August. You see, there were three ways in and out from that ranch, and each was closed for part of the year. One way, of course, was the way we went in, fording the Bighorn. Another was also by saddle horse and it took you high on the Bighorn Mountains to cross Devil's Canyon by what was known as the Sioux Trail[31]. If you left the ranch by this route you came out at the mouth of the Stinking Water. However, the route was closed all winter by snow. And the third way was the freight road over the Bighorns to Sheridan, and it was by this road that all supplies had to be freighted in. This road went to an elevation of near ten thousand feet, so it was only usable for a team about three months of the year. Usually it was too soft even after the snow went off until August and the [new] snows came in October.

At the time we went in there, there had been very few women on the ranch. And Mother was there from April to November and never saw another woman. We didn't get any mail but twice from April to August, then we got mail once a week until October.

The tillable land on this ranch is very small compared to the number of stock it supports, and at that time we cultivated only about 160 acres. All but about twenty acres was in hay, the 20 acres was sugar beets to be used for calf feed in winter.

There were two sets of buildings, one set on the farm land where the ranch headquarters were in summer, and the other up in Deer Creek Canyon that we called the Winter Ranch. It was necessary to move up here in winter because there was no water at the Summer ranch after the ditch which irrigated the place was turned off. Then too, the north wind swept across this bench without anything to check it. The meadow lay on the point between Trout Creek Canyon and Deer Creek Canyon, and on the third side, Devil's Canyon. It was a peninsula jutting out there about three miles. The Winter Ranch, being a couple of miles up Deer Creek and above the walled canyon but well protected by high hills on north and south, seldom had any wind at all. Here were most of the improvements such as corrals, barns and feed [stores]. For here in winter we would feed the weak ones and some of the weaners[32].

[31] Also known as the Bad Pass Trail. It roughly parallels the current highway 37 and extends all the way through the canyon to Hardin, MT.
[32] Calves that are being weaned.

I should point out that everything about this ranch was built for the care and handling of the stock, and the house in each instance was deliberately planned to function as a kitchen large enough to eat in as well as cook in, and a small bedroom to keep the cook closer to his or her work. Frills of any kind, even comfortable chairs, were entirely lacking. Furniture was mostly of the home-made variety.

Each place had a bunk house with wall bunks built in, to accommodate eight men. In summer there were more men, but they rolled their bed rolls out in the hay or a barn somewhere. Or, as was usually the case, they would be out in one of the half dozen cow camps on the ranch. In those days, no man was eligible for a job on a ranch without his own bedroll, and if he came to work for Johnny, he better have his own saddle horse, for he could get fired and told to get out the best way he could.

I helped with the calf roundup that spring, and I will give you some details about these roundups a little later.

Dad got the farming under way and by the twentieth of June, the hay was ready for the first cutting. Roundup was just over and everyone came in to help hay except the cow foreman and one man to help him. They were kept busy distributing salt and moving cattle. We were through haying by early July and the irrigating was turned over to George and I, and Dad was put to freighting. It was ninety miles to Parkman, near Sheridan, [Wyoming] and that was where everything had to be hauled from. It took Dad six days to make the trip if the roads were dry, and longer if he got caught in rain. He carried his bed and cooked his own food on the way, and he made ten trips that summer, which was one more than had ever been made before. He drove four mules, and thirty-hundred [pounds] was an average load. Coming down the mountain to the ranch you dropped six thousand feet in six miles, and he used what is called a rough-lock instead of the brake, for a brake block would wear out and give way long before you were down. Nor would a brake hold that load on those hills even if it slid the wheels. But a rough-lock, that is a huge chain with links of three quarter [inches thick] in steel, each link about six inches long and the chain about three feet long. This is placed around the rim of the wheel and fastened by log chain to a special clevis in the center of the front axle with

Photo: 24 - Wagon with rough-lock chains hanging ready.

just enough slack to allow the wheel to roll onto this rough-lock, then slide. The rough-lock would dig into the dirt and rocks so that it was possible to go down a very steep hill. On one or two places it was necessary to rough-lock both wheels.

These rough-locks would gouge huge furrows, and the rain would run down there and cut the furrow deeper until it was necessary to keep moving over to keep out of the deep ruts. Fortunately, most of these very steep places were not in timber and there was room to maneuver. You probably wonder what there would be in the way of supplies that would amount to thirty-thousand pounds for one ranch, but you see, that was a year's supply of everything. And I can assure you a minimum was for human consumption. Probably the biggest item on the list was salt. It takes a lot of salt for five thousand cattle, and a couple of trips were oats for the saddle horses in winter and the teams used to feed the cattle. There was always some machinery to bring in, and blacksmith coal, one load of woven wire to use on the ranch, and a small amount of lumber. We used poles or logs for most things but we had to have some lumber for repair work. And we used one load of cement. There were lots of other things that could be used, but there was never time to get it all.

Once when Dad was coming down what we called the Pole Patch Hill, which was one of the longest and steepest hills on the road, loaded with four foot woven wire, the rough-lock chain caught on a solid rock and snapped the log chain in two. Of course, the wheels couldn't hold the load and they were pushed into the lead team and everything started to move fast. It was a mile to the bottom of the hill and a spill was inevitable, so Dad pulled the team around sharp, hoping to broad-side the hill and stop. But the load was too heavy for the wagon and over he went.

Dad was prepared and standing up, so that as the wagon went over, he jumped from the high side up the hill and thus escaped being thrown among the spools of wire. He escaped with a bruised knee, but the load was a wreck and some of those spools of wire rolled for a quarter of a mile until they came to the timber.

Dad was late getting in that night, riding one mule and leading the others. Those were good mules, but like all mules, they were ornery. I recall one time when I was sent up to this same Pole Patch to get a load of poles. I had to drive for quite a ways on a narrow road back into the timber to where the poles were cut and piled. I was driving Slim and Molly, the largest of these mules. There wasn't much room to turn the wagon around when I got to the poles, and I was pulling forward and backing up several times to make the turn. I was just about in position but I had to pull up once more to get straight and then back up to the pile. This last time, I had to pull the team up as close to a big log as it was possible for them to get. Maybe they were getting tired of this forward and back and getting nowhere. Anyway, when we came up to this big log, they both stepped over, and although I pulled with all my might, and hollered whoa, they didn't stop until they had dragged the front wheels of the wagon over there too. And there I was. It was impossible to back out, I had to unhitch the team and chop that log in two with an axe.

The M-Y was not all of Johnny's interests. He owned a beautiful ranch over in Sheridan County in the last side of the Bighorns, called the Pass Creek Ranch. This is where he

raised purebred bulls to use on the M-Y and so his time was divided between the two ranches. They were eighty miles apart, but it was not infrequent that he would leave one ranch after supper and ride all night, arriving at the other for breakfast the next morning. We always figured his idea was to catch someone sleeping in, or at any rate, to keep everyone guessing where he would turn up next.

It was on one of these all night rides that Johnny came close to disaster. He got caught in an early fall snow storm and he and his horse fell into a big sink hole on the mountain. The hole was about twenty feet across and the sides were about six feet high of slide rock. It was right by the trail and he had seen it many times, but this night in the storm the snow had built out over the edge and the horse stepped on this false footing and tumbled in. No one was hurt, but they could not get out. Of course, Johnny could climb out, but he was miles from any help and he would be on foot. It was in the middle of the night, snowing hard, and pitch dark.

This is where his pioneer training saved his life. He didn't sit down and wait for morning or for help, but he spent the rest of the night tromping snow. He would kick all of the snow he could find into one place where the wall was the lowest and tromp it hard. Then he climbed out and shoved all the snow he could to that place from the top and he tromped some more. By morning he was a pretty weary man, but he had a snow trail hard enough to hold his horse. We had no telephone at the ranch, and as usual, were not expecting him so we would never have gone to look for him. That was one time he was late for breakfast.

Cook Stove Basin

I guess this is as good a place to tell you about Cook Stove Basin as any. It is first a pretty little mountain basin on the Wyoming side of the state line, just north of there is what we called the Indian drift fence, the state line and the reservation line. Trout Creek heads in Cook Stove, and one of our main cattle trails from summer to winter range drops off from the mountain down that way. But the thing that made this basin so interesting to me was its name and how it came by it. When I first came into that part of the country, there was a legend that somewhere in the basin there was a cabin with a cook stove. No one seemed to know where this cabin was, and as much of the basin was very rough and heavy lodgepole timber, it was no surprise.

One time Charley Moore and I tried to take a short cut from Burnt Mountain down to the trail in the basin, and we came to a little canyon in the heavy timber which we could not cross. We followed down the southeast side of this little canyon and came to Trout Creek on a game trail, but here the beaver had built a dam and the creek was in a little canyon itself. So the water was probably ten feet deep here and full of brush. We could not cross. We turned up the side of the stream. It was very thick and tangled down timber with a thick second growth. You couldn't see a rod through that tangle and we were having a great deal of trouble getting our horses through. Then I came to a solid wall of down logs. We left our horses to look for a way through and it turned out to be Cook Stove Cabin.

It was built as many I have seen. It was all above ground but the walls were never higher at the eaves than a scant six feet. It had had split poles and dirt for a roof. This had caved in, of course, but the walls still stood. The door was of logs with rawhide hinges. The second growth timber had grown up through the cabin just as thick as it had all around and there, in the far end from the door was the cook stove. It was easy to read some of the effort that man had gone to in building his home here in these mountains.. He must have planned that this would be a permanent address for him, else why would he have gone to all the work he must have to get that cook stove up there.

The stove was of the cast iron type with four lids. I don't recall the make, or if the name was to be seen. It must have weighed a hundred pounds or more, and in those days there would not have been a road within seventy miles. This energetic pioneer must have had but one length of stovepipe, and it was homemade of sheet iron and still there. He had built a hearth of stones and dirt to set his stove on, then measured off the length of his one piece of stovepipe above the stove. From there through the roof he had made a chimney of little poles and then inside he would place the stovepipe and fill between with mud. Then he would pull the pipe out and build another section and so on until he was well above the roof, finally bringing the one piece of stovepipe back to the stove and connecting the stove to the chimney.

The stove and pipe and mud chimney were all there at that time. That was in 1912, I believe, and even then the second growth trees were good sized. As I write this, it has been over forty years since I was there, but I feel sure I could go back.

I wonder who he was and why did he choose that site. Maybe at that time he had a small clearing there, but there was no water closer than Trout Creek, and it was down in a canyon at least a hundred feet below, and very near straight below. There were hundreds of good places where there were springs and little parks. His site could not have been a good look out, for even if at the time he built there he could overlook the trail but he was always open to ambush from the other side where it was heavy timber.

While I am in this area I must tell you of one other discovery I made. This time I was alone. As you come out of Cook Stove Basin below, there is a short ways where the creek is in the open. Here there is a short fence connecting the rim of Cook Stove to the rim of the canyon just below. From here to the next break farther down below, the canyon again becomes a fence. It is at this second break and close to the ranch where we had a complete set of corrals. Here in the fall [we] funneled all of the cattle through these corrals, and we pinched off the calves, having them on the ranch side while the cows were on the winter range side of the canyon. After they had both grieved for a few days, they would give up and the cows would go out on the range while the calves were taken back to the hay meadows for a while.

It was in connection with this work that I came out of Cook Stove one time and went through this upper gap out onto the winter range. I found some signs of a few cows and calves which had got through. I was supposed to take them to the weaning corral and I set out to track them down. Their tracks led me into a small canyon where the brush was very thick and there was some doubt whether I could get on through, but finally I broke out of the brush into a small open place. There was a ledge on my right and a spring stream on my left. It was perhaps twenty feet from one to the other.

As I stopped here to get myself a drink and water my horse, I noticed that the ground was littered with flint chips. And I noticed that the ledge was black and smoky. On closer examination, I saw that it was a flint ledge, and there had been huge fires built against it. At the base of the ledge there was about a foot or more of flint chips. And then, of a sudden, I realized what I had found. This was one of the places where the Indians had come to get their flint for arrow heads. Here they found the three essentials: a flint ledge, lots of wood, and plenty of water. By heating the ledge and throwing water on the hot rocks, they were able to cause the flint to flake off. Then by picking up the pieces that best suited their purpose, they could soon finish them to their needs.

I have asked a great many old timers and some professional archaeologists such as Dr. Jepson at Princeton and I have never yet found anyone who has actually found such a place. Dr. Jepson has urged me to go back there and try to find the place again, and take pictures and write a paper on this discovery. Perhaps I will get time to do that some time. And maybe I am a little afraid to try, for it has been over forty years now and although I have a very good memory for details, maybe I could not find the place. I would have to have help and I would be much embarrassed if I should take someone on a wild goose chase.

Roundup Time

All the big ranches had two roundups each year. The spring roundup was called the calf roundup, and was for the purpose of branding the young calves. The fall roundup was called the beef roundup. I helped on a good many of these but one of each is sufficient for this book. I should tell you here that after Johnny took over the Garvin Basin Ranch, he was able to secure a lease on the Bull Elk Divide in addition to what Garvin and he had had. This more than doubled his summer range, but did allow some mingling of the M-Y and I D cattle and so when roundup time came, there was always a Reservation man on hand until the divide was cleared. Such a man was called a "Rep", short for Representative.

Our cattle grazed down the east side of the Bighorns onto the heads of Lodge Grass Creek, Rotten Grass and Little Horn, a few as far south as Duncan Mountains and Porcupine Basin. So there were several other brands with which we frequently mixed in summer, namely the O 4 and the 33, as well as the Ed Dana, the Spear and the Heinrich Ranches. These last named made our spread look like a nester's in comparison.

Sometimes these other ranches would have a Rep at our fall roundup, but if they did not, their interests were looked after by us and those present just as well as though they were there. They did the same for us in their territory.

After the last cutting of hay was in the stack, the next thing was fall roundup and all available help was used. During the summer, the cowboys had used about six saddle horses, so now the first thing was to run in the "cavy[33]" and for several days it was quite a show while we got shoes on most of the horses and "stomped out" some of the salty ones. For once we were out on the range, we would seldom have a good corral to work in.

Lots of the horses had to have a foot tied up in order to shoe them, others had to be thrown and some had to be "eared down" in which case you grabbed a horse by the rope or halter and worked up until you could catch an ear. You hung on and twisted, and this frequently subdued him until the [farrier] could pick up his feet. Some old-timers wouldn't let us pick up a foot, but just place a hand on his ear and he was no more trouble.

On the roundup we usually used a rope corral. Sometimes this was ropes stretched between trees forming a circle and sometimes we drove stakes and used one side of the wagon.

We usually used about forty-five horses on beef roundup, and at the start, the roundup boss gave you your [string of] horses, usually three, and those were your horses until the job was done. You didn't bother anyone else's, and no one bothered yours. The boss, of course, knew these horses pretty well, which were gentle and which were not; the ones

[33] This is frequently spelled "cavvy", or "cavoy" and is called a "remuda" in the southwest. It's a large bunch of horses used in a roundup. There are enough horses to allow several "shifts" of horses to operate while those off duty rest, and to allow recuperation in case of injury.

that would buck and the ones that you had to work your way on. He handed out these horses where he thought they would do the most good. Usually he tried to see that each man got one trusty horse that could be used on night herd, or at the rider's discretion. And of course, there were a certain number of colts. It was a greenhorn indeed who complained about his string for to do so was to invite the boss to try you out on a really rough string.

There were about a dozen of us on this roundup, and we started by camping at the head of Cook Stove Basin, where we had a small cabin for headquarters. It wasn't large enough for more than the cook to sleep in and we didn't even try to eat in there except possibly in the rain. The Cook Stove camp was pretty central, and except for a spike camp on Bull Elk, was our main camp for the next two weeks.

We started on the divide, which was about twenty miles long and we picked up bunch after bunch of cattle working them south, dropping them at water, and going back over the country again hunting through all the timber and coulees and finally after several days, we bunched what we had and worked them. That is, we held them in a more or less compact herd while one or two who knew all the brands and who had some authority rode among the cattle and by careful working they would shove the I Ds one way, the M-Ys the other and so on until the herds were clear of strays, and woe to the cowboy who let a critter return to the main herd once it had been turned over to him. And here let me say, cowboying was an art, a real art, it wasn't stampede or Hollywood cowboying. You worked quietly most of the time and if you outwitted a cow or steer, you seldom had to outrun him.

After we had the herd worked so that they were all M-Y cattle, and perhaps there were several hundred of ours, we then moved on to the Reservation drift fence and once we were on the Wyoming side with the gate shut, we had to work the beef from the herd in the same manner as we had worked the strays before. This time there were several things to be considered. We shipped only four-year-old steers, but some of these would be cut back because they were not fat. Then there were the dry cows. If they were fat they were shipped, but there were a few old cows that, even though they were thin, were shipped. And there were the spayed heifers. But all in all, seventy-five percent of the beef herd was steers, four years old or older.

The beef was worked out and these we shoved down into Cook Stove Basin. We had a drift fence at the lower end and, it was like picking apples and putting them in a rack. The rest of the herd was taken farther south and shoved down Deer Creek to be picked up later and moved on down to the winter range. This went on day by day until after about two weeks we had the gathering all done.

Most days started in frosty early morning before the sun was up, when most every horse had a hump in his back like a camel, and the boys were stiff with cold and you talked pretty nice to your mount and you were careful not to move too quick lest you give him cause to buck.

We had a horse wrangler of course, and it was his job to keep track of the cavy. They had to run loose because they had no other feed. But they must be easily accessible all day in case someone had to change his mount, and they must always be in the corral by daylight.

Because a bunch of half wild horses in a rope corral have to be handled pretty easy, and you can't walk up to any of them for fear you will be kicked by some of the others, they must all be caught by roping. You took your rope and waited your turn, one man after another selecting the one of his three he chose to ride that day. With a deft throw of his rope over the heads of the others, he fished out his horse, led him to his saddle and saddled up. If you were likely to have to cast your rope twice or more times, you better let the roper catch him, for we always had a roper who seldom missed.

After the beef is all gathered, then starts the drive to [the] railroad. In our case it was Parkman, [Wyoming] or Wyola [Montana], both small places north of Sheridan. It was about eighty miles and we would have some eight hundred head. It would take about eight days, for we must graze the cattle through, and the object was to reach the cars with as many pounds of beef as we started. That meant never really driving them, but rather keep them grazing or trailing to water in the direction we wanted them to go.

After the gather, part of the boys were let go. They were through for the summer as far as the M-Y Ranch was concerned. There were nine of us on the trail. One was the cook who also drove the wagon. There was a horse wrangler, and there was Johnny. That left six of us to do the real cow punching and night herding.

The first day we gathered the beef from Cook Stove and counted them. Counting a herd like that is a trick in itself. You have to get them pretty well strung out and then as they go through some narrow place, you can get a pretty good tally. This count has to be done several times on the trail, for it would be easy to drop a few at night or on the water somewhere, or where there is quite a lot of brush.

The first night we always had to "close herd" the bunch and it took all hands until midnight to get them quiet. Then three of us held them while the other three got a wink of sleep for two hours. The ones on herd were relieved at two o'clock for their two hours rest. Breakfast at four, a fresh horse, and the herd was moving at daybreak. The big job at this time was to keep them from breaking. They wanted to go in every direction and they started to run at the drop of a hat. And Johnny would scream, "Stop those steers!" or "Hold 'em down, hold 'em down!" You are losing beef every time a steer breaks.

We go back through the Reservation fence, out past Red Springs and down the wagon road to Percheron Creek, from there down to Lodgegrass, [Montana] below the mountains, and on over to the Little Horn. But the first day we won't go far beyond Red Springs. After an hour or so, the herd begins to quiet down and [is] inclined to graze. We keep them moving, but give them lots of time. They are fat and we don't want to tire them too much. We must keep watch for other cattle and clear the way in front of our herd.

By mid-morning our cattle have come to some very good grass and they are hungry. We drop them and allow them to spread out. When they are full they will lie down and two of us can watch while the rest of the boys go to the wagon. They will probably have a bite and a cup of coffee, then catch up on a little of the sleep they lost the night before.

We are divided in three sets of two now, and we will keep our partner clear through. We will stand guard two hours at a stretch, night or day, as a usual thing, but this does vary in order to even up the time. In the day time, the cook gets you something when you are able to eat. Late in the afternoon the herd starts to move again and they graze until dark. We try to hit water in the middle of the day and dry camp at night; they travel better that way and it is awfully hard to hold a big bunch on water at night. Too much brush and other obstruction and you couldn't circle the herd.

That afternoon it started to rain. Not hard, just a sort of dry drizzle. The cattle liked it and we all had chaps and slickers, but just the same you get pretty cold and if your hat leaks you can get pretty wet. Your boots get wet and they probably were hard to pull off or on anyway.

We camped on the hill above Percheron Creek that night. We had the wagon, of course, but we didn't carry a tent. Every man had his own bedroll and a waterproof bed tarp, but when it is raining and the ground is wet and the grass is wet, there is not much cheer in such a camp. I came in off the herd at nine that night and Walter Kane was my partner. We were standing three hour shifts, and we would not have to go out until three AM. I hoped it would be through raining by then. We turned our horses loose and caught and saddled our night horses. Sometimes we would picket the night horse if they were dependable, but usually we tied them close by our beds so we could be on our way to the herd fast if necessary.

In this respect there was a hard and fast rule about relieving the guard. If the guard changed at three and there were two boys out there, one would ride to the wagon about five minutes till three, call the relief and ride back to the herd, once around and [then] head for the wagon. And the relief better be there for its [now] their herd. Gosh, what a night! The rain was coming harder now. There were four of us boys in there besides Johnny and the cook. The cook slept under the wagon and that privilege no one denied.

It was so darned wet that Walter and I, by hunting through the wagon, dug out an old tarp we found there and we stretched it up to the wagon wheels and staked it down at the foot. It made more shelter than we needed, so we asked the other boys to drag their beds under there too. We had picked the levelest places, of course, and it was pretty rough there and some small brush. But it was too dark and too wet to be bothered by such as that. Johnny and the cook had been sitting in the front of the covered wagon in the dry all this time.

It was after we had all settled down and were beginning to get pretty cozy that Johnny decided to roll his bed out. First he started to roll it under the wagon. Big Bill Johnson was cooking, and boss or no boss, he knew his rights and wasn't afraid to stand up for

them. He was putting a big log on the fire, and as the light blazed up, he said. “Hey, there! Who’s trying to steal my bed ground?”

Johnny didn’t argue, but came around the wagon lugging his bedroll and trying to find a decent place. We pretended to be asleep. He kept talking and complaining, but we didn’t hear him, and all the time the rain was pouring down. By crowding me, Johnny was able to get at least a part of his bed under our shelter, but there was lots of brush there. He put it there anyway and crawled in.

He wiggled and squirmed and twisted this way and that. He fussed and grumbled so that no one could go to sleep, but no one paid him any heed or offered to give him any more room. Finally he said in that high pitched whiney voice with the Georgia accent, “Christ boys, I’m up in a sapling!” So we finally gave ground and let [him] come in.

Walter and I took over the herd at three and it was still very wet, but the rain had practically stopped. When you are on trail and going to stand night watch, you don’t take off many clothes at night. We pulled our boots, if we could get them off or on easy enough, and we tucked them, spurs and all, under the head of our bed, and this with a folded coat was usually our pillow. And speaking of pulling your boots: we could always get them off by using the spokes of a wagon wheel for a boot jack, but getting damp boots on over damp socks was not so easy. I remember one time when Frank Bales (he was a breed Indian kid) took his turn on guard in his socks because he couldn’t get his boots on and to the herd in the allotted time.

While on trail the wagon was our only home and although it actually offered no shelter, yet it was someplace to go when we weren’t on the herd, and during the day some of us could lounge around there and eat and sleep.

One very warm fall day, there were a half dozen of us sprawled out in the shade of the wagon. Charley Moore was on his back, arms thrown out wide, and under the front end of the wagon. I noticed that the warm tar from the front wheel had dripped on Charley’s right hand. He was snoring so loud no one else could sleep. I pulled a song stem of wheat grass and reached over and dragged the tip lightly over Charley’s nose. Without waking up, he brushed at it and left a smear of tar across his face. He was soon back at the wood pile and making as much noise as ever. This time, the wheat grass brushed his forehead and again there was a smear of tar. Next it was his ear and each time more tar.

Maybe I got too rough, or the tar got too thick, or the other fellows laughed too loud, and Charley woke up. And I suddenly remembered that it was my turn on the herd. My horse was saddled and standing nearby and there was barely time for me to make a quick getaway, while Charley scrambled from under that wagon.

Walter was good with a rope and he never missed a chance to use it. One time we were coming down the slope of Sheep Mountain toward our camp. There were a few trees and a gentle grassy slope clear to our camp about a mile below, and of a sudden we jumped a black bear. Walter grabbed for his rope, shook out a loop and after that bear we went, me

on his right and Walter on his left and pretty soon we were lane-ing him straight down the slope. Walter made a fair catch just back of that bear's head. I broke right and Walter left, and the bear went end over end, and before he could get to his feet, Walter took off down the slope. That bear bounced and tumbled at the end of that rope clear to camp. He was still breathing but completely dazed when we reached camp. We drug him back in the brush and took the rope loose. We left him there and next morning he was gone. I'll bet he had a headache, though.

I recalled this incident of Walter roping the bear because while we were on trail the day following the rainy night, Walter had occasion to use that rope to good advantage again.

It was mid-afternoon and the herd was dry. They were traveling good and strung out for a mile for they could smell water. We were heading for Lodgegrass Creek a couple of miles away. Walter and I were bringing up the rear. There were no drags, for they were all anxious to travel. And then we heard a dog bark behind us. We looked back up the freight road and there came an Indian in a wagon. He was coming at a trot and approaching pretty fast. The dog was running ahead to bark at us.

Now you can imagine what that would do to a bunch of wild steers. They were hardly used to men on horseback, and they had never seen a dog, and the clatter of that wagon coming up behind was a sure way to start a stampede. A good cow hand doesn't have to take time to think through a situation like this. That is the difference between a cowboy and one who never will be, he knows and he acts by reflex, I suppose. So we both wheeled our mounts at one and the same time and headed for that Indian on a run. I waved my hat and Walter pulled his rope loose. He could shake a loop faster than any man I ever saw, and as we met that dog, he dabbed a rope on him and dragged him about a hundred feet to that wagon, and swung him up and into it before the dog or Indian knew what had happened. We scared the tar out of the Indian and turned him out across the prairie.

A bunch of big fat steers like this is a touchy proposition. They can blow up awfully quick and with very little cause. Once, a jackrabbit jumped out of a bush just to one side of the lead. About fifty steers broke sideways and jumped a deep wash. There was no place nearby for us to get across to them, and it was too wide and deep to jump with a horse. We had to hold up the herd for about an hour while two of us went a long way around to get over there and bring those cattle back around the way we had gone in, for they weren't interested in jumping back.

We were always having little flare-ups like that and sometimes a pretty good run would develop. In daylight these are not serious except they do run off a little fat, but at night a stampede is a cowboy's nightmare. And we had one on this drive.

I remember we were loading at a little siding called Aberdine that year. There were several places where we could load, but Johnny chose that one because we could get there with fewer fences, and there was plenty of grass close by. We held the herd four or five miles out until Johnny made sure there were enough cars there to take care of us, for

eight hundred big steers and heifers makes a pretty good train load. Then we got word to move in close, for we would start loading at daylight the next morning. The agent assured us there would be no more trains that night, and it would be safe to hold them close to the pens.

Cowboys have the reputation for singing quite a lot. And this has led to the belief that a cowboy's life is a happy and carefree one. And maybe it is or was for some, but how many people ever stopped to think why a cowboy did sing? Sometimes it was because he was lonesome and singing helped to while away the long hours, but on night herd, regardless of any other reason, he sang because that was the best assurance against startling the cattle.

The darker the night the more nervous they were apt to be, and singing warned them of our approach and they were not startled. If I wasn't singing or humming, I always talked to the herd at night. I don't mean I held forth at great length to the herd in general, I mean I spoke to them more individually, each one, as I came to them on my rounds of the herd. You see, out at night, you usually keep moving all the time, slowly, quietly circling the herd so that none would slip away. As for the cattle, if they were not hungry or thirsty, they usually were all lying down quietly. You didn't dare make a quick move or snap your bridle reins. The flare of a match was a sure way to cause trouble.

On this particular night, it had been dusk when we moved the herd in. We bunched them on a grassy slope about a quarter of a mile from the yards. And because we wanted to corral them early the next morning, we were holding a little tighter herd than usual.

It was cloudy and threatening to rain that night as we ate our supper around the campfire. We had been on the trail eight days and everyone was pretty tired. The cattle had become much more gentle and easier to handle and so we decided to stand one-man guard that night. That meant one and a half hours instead of three. We rotated the guard each night and Walter and I would have had twelve to three, but by splitting it up, I took twelve to one-thirty. We only had one time-piece in the bunch and when Charley Moore turned the guard over to me, he gave me the watch and said, "Here you are, Boss, be careful you don't spill 'em, they're spooky tonight." They always called me "Boss." I guess it was because I was the youngest of the lot.

I started to put my slicker on before going too close to the herd, but it wasn't raining at the moment and I decided to just carry it across the saddle in front of me for a while. I circled the herd and sang or hummed as I went so as not to startle them. There were quite a few on their feet all right, and any that were moving out were turned back gently. I had made several circles around the herd, but I hadn't looked at the watch for I knew my time wasn't up yet, and I couldn't see without riding away from the cattle and striking a match. And then it happened.

It had been thundering quite a lot or I probably would have heard that train coming. But then, the agent had said there wouldn't be any more trains that night. The train burst around a bend and through a cut, and the headlight stabbed right into the herd. Just at that

instant, the engineer pulled the whistle, and I know those cattle were really scared, for I was, myself.

I happened to be on the far side of the herd from the train, and in nothing flat, every animal was on its feet and running. I grabbed my slicker in my right hand and turned with the cattle. As soon as I was able to break out ahead of them, I started shouting and waving my slicker and at the same time I was working my way to the left, for I wanted to try to start them in a circle. I had never seen a foot of this country in daylight and all I could do was pray that there were no fences or cut banks or rims in our way. And then, before you could believe it possible, there was Walter, and right behind him the rest of the boys. Firemen with their greased pole never had anything on those boys.

We were all on one side of the lead, and I had bent them a little by myself, and now we were able to bring more pressure until finally we were really circling and the riders were well spaced now and hollering like wild Indians to keep them from breaking that circle until they had their run out.

There was no more sleep for anyone that night. It took all hands from then on, and at daybreak we corralled them and started to load.

I asked the boys how they got there so quick, and from what they said, I guess that train whistle had the same effect on them as it did on the cattle. Anyway, they were all asleep one second and the next they were running for their horses, for they knew what would happen all right. The big danger in a stampede like that is, of course, a pile up. Should the lead go over a bank, or through a fence or something else to cause one or more to fall, then others fall over them and the results can be terrible. We were lucky, for we didn't lose a steer, although we probably lost several thousand pounds of beef.

Once the cattle were loaded, there was quite a scatter among the men. Johnny boarded the train with the cattle to accompany them to Omaha. Frank Bales started for Hardin, Walter and the horse wrangler headed for Sheridan, while Bill Johnson, who had cooked and driven the wagon, along with Charley Moore, Sam Glenn and I, headed back for the ranch. Bill went into Parkman first and loaded up a light load of freight. Charley and Sam and I took the cavy. We put our bedrolls and a little grub on a couple of the horses, for we would go back in two days while the wagon would take at least three.

A Long Winter

Back at the ranch, we were busy for several weeks, gathering the cattle and pushing them onto the winter range, weaning the calves as we did this and branding a few that had been missed in the spring. Johnny was back on the ranch in about two weeks and by the first of November, the fall work was pretty well done. Johnny then turned all the help loose except Sam Glenn, Bill Johnson and me. Dad and Mother and George and Jim all went back to our own place. Charley Moore lived at Lovell and he went home. Johnny stayed for a few days to outline the work for us, and then he left also, for one big snow and the mountain would be impassable. When he left he said he would be back about the first of the year. He would have to come from Sheridan to Kane by train, and he had sent a horse out with Charley to be left there for him to use when he did come.

Sam and Bill and I: Two old men and one kid of seventeen. We would not see another human being for at least two months and maybe not then. It was twenty miles to the nearest ranch and that was Barry's, but we would not be able to get there most of the time, for once the slush ice started in the river and it froze out from the bank, but not clear across, we would be unable to go that way. The Sioux Trail was over too high of country and so we were stuck. There was not another living soul on our side of the mountain or the canyon.

Sam was grouchy, a confirmed old bachelor, a little dried up old cowpuncher who had never known any of the comforts of a home. He had knocked about from cow outfit to cow outfit all his life and I think the poor man must have had ulcers, for he had that pained look all the time and he was less likely to smile or say a pleasant word than even old Johnny. Sam was to spend most of his time riding, picking up any poor animals or young heifers due to calve and bring them in for feed.

Bill was just as different from Sam as two men could possibly be, except for age. He was big and good natured. He laughed easily and loud and long. He liked to cook and he liked to eat. He could practically pick a weak cow up and set her on her feet by himself. Bill laid no claim to being a cowboy and so his job was in the ranch, not the range. He was to haul hay, feed calves and colts, and a thousand other chores.

And me, well, I was to help either or both, wherever needed. I was the crew, you might say, Sam and Bill the bosses. One man, two bosses. And in all, only three of us. Doesn't sound like it would work too well, does it? And it didn't. Knowing Johnny as I did, I feel sure that he got great glee out of arranging it this way so as to assure as much discord as possible. His thought being, if they fight, they won't play.

At first I spent most of my time helping Sam. We brought in about sixty mares with colts and we kept the colts in to wean. The mares were put across Trout Creek and the colts in the fields for a while. And we had to gather all the bulls. These we put in Deer Creek Canyon down below the winter ranch, and here they stayed all winter. The feed was good in there and it was well sheltered.

Sam and I were back at the ranch most every night, but once in a while we stayed at one or another of our cow camps. These camps were kept stocked with a few provisions, some bedding and some grain for our horses, and at most of these camps we had a small horse pasture where we could turn our horses loose for the night. These cabins were all much the same, about ten by twelve feet, built of logs, dirt floor and dirt roof. One very tiny window and the door was one log up from the ground, about two and a half feet wide by four feet high, so that by stepping high and stooping low you could enter. We usually had a pit in one corner where the food could be stored under ground in winter, and by keeping our sacks of grain and other things on top, we could keep our spuds and canned things from freezing.

While Sam and I were busy with these range chores, Bill was just as busy on the ranch. His biggest job was hauling hay from the meadow and piling it in long ricks where it could be fed to the calves here at the winter ranch, later on. We had several large pens and the fences were of poles and fixed so a calf could feed there like at a manger. The colts would be fed here also for a short time, while we halter broke them. As for work around the ranch, there was always work aplenty. The corrals always needed some repair and so did the sheds and barns.

I helped Sam for several weeks and then I decided it was time to give Bill a hand, for he had been asking Sam when he could spare me. Sam was reluctant to let me go and I saw that if he had his way, he never would. One evening I just told him I was going to help Bill for a while. He did quite a bit of fussing about how Johnny said he was to have me until he was done with me, and Bill said he was to have me when he needed me, and that was the first big row. Sam and I had been sleeping in the bunk house and Bill was using the bedroom in the cabin. This worked fine while Sam and I were working together, but when I was going to work with Bill, it seemed better to move in with him. Anyway, he asked me if I wanted to, so I did. And Sam got mad about that. Bill had been doing most of the cooking. He rather liked to do it, and neither Sam nor I would object, and while Bill got breakfast, we would do the chores. We didn't have a meal at noon, but usually took a lunch, or more often, went without. And speaking of eating, maybe I should give you an idea of what we had to eat.

Milk and eggs we had aplenty. We had a very good milk cow and she supplied us with all the milk and butter and cream we could possibly use. We had twenty-five Plymouth Rock pullets, and due to our good care, they really put out the eggs. We even fed eggs to the cats. And I'll tell you what we fed those hens, which I think accounts for their response. They had wheat, in the straw, chopped sugar beets, and usually fresh meat, for if a calf should die, or any other animal, we always saved the meat for the chickens.

These things we had plenty of, but we had practically nothing in cans. We had plenty of flour and sugar and coffee, some bacon and lard, but not near enough. No ham, but quite a bit of salt side meat. Early in the winter we had quite a few sage hens, for there were literally thousands of them, but later they became so tough and strong we had to plank them. You know, put the bird on a plank, season well. Put in hot oven for six hours, baste

frequently with melted butter, then when you take it from the oven you throw the bird away and eat the board.

We had one deer in November, but after that we had no more fresh meat. Sometimes I was almost tempted to cut a hunk off the chicken meat. Of course, we didn't have any fresh vegetables either. We did have beets and carrots stored in the cellar, and we had a few vegetables in cans. Our fruit was all dried fruit, raisins, prunes, peaches and apples. Oh, yes: There were apricots, too.

You take about a cup full of each of these dried fruits, dump them all into a kettle and stew. This we called "Son of a Bitch." Another dish we cooked quite a bit was "Spotted Pup." That's rice and raisins cooked together. Eat that either hot or cold with cream and sugar. It's pretty good. Of course, we had sourdough bread and hot cakes. Sometimes we made "Sore Finger Bread" with baking powder.

Bill told me about one time when he was coming through Dry Head. He stayed all night in some old cow camp there. There was a little flour and what looked like the rest of the makings for biscuits there, but otherwise no food. So he set out to make the biscuits, but what he had used for baking powder turned out to be cornstarch. I said, "well, did they rise?" And Bill replied, "No, but they squatted to rise."

But to go on with our winter fare, we had plenty of spuds. We had them cooked most any way, but the way I liked them best we called "Sheep Herder Potatoes." We put about a half cup of dried salt pork in the pan, let it fry just a few minutes but not brown. Then a fair sized onion, sliced, and about three or four spuds. Add about a fourth of a cup of water and cook with cover on, on top of the stove. They are something like scalloped potatoes, but better.

We wouldn't have fared so bad if we had just had some fresh meat. I like gravy for my hot bread or boiled spuds, and eggs don't make very good gravy. Bill could make pretty good cake and I sometimes experimented with cookies and candy. All of our cooking was done in the evening after work. It was a good way to spend some time before going to bed. Johnny had made sure that there wasn't a whole deck of cards on the place, and neither was there a whole magazine. It may sound like I am exaggerating about this, but I am not. Johnny didn't read and he didn't play cards and anyone who did was wasting his time. I have seen him start a fire by crumpling up whole magazines of recent date, and this in a place where any sort of reading was at a high premium. As for books, very few ever found their way to the M-Y, and of those that did, none survived.

I enjoyed my work with Bill very much. It was hard work, much harder than the riding I had been doing with Sam, but Bill was such a good natured fellow and never out of sorts, time went fast.

Thanksgiving had already slipped by unnoticed. The days were quite short and we would be up before dawn, harness two teams and do our other chores. Then right after breakfast, start for two loads of hay. We would be back before noon, but we didn't waste time for

lunch. We went right back for our second loads so that we would be through by about four. This gave us time to chore again before dark. Then we cooked the big meal of the day.

If Sam was in, he stayed in the bunkhouse until we called him. As soon as he finished his meal, he went back there. And he never spoke unless spoken to, or maybe he would inform us of some cows he had brought in for us to feed. Bill was never one to brood, so he would say, "Come on, Sam. Cheer up! It's a long time till spring." I believe Sam enjoyed his ill temper though. At least he maintained it throughout the winter, and it got steadily worse until he would not come to breakfast until we were gone, and quite often when we came in at night, Sam had eaten and gone to the bunkhouse, but he never prepared anything for us. He would even let the fire go out in the stove and leave the water bucket for us to fill.

One evening Bill was writing in a sort of work diary of his. He looked up and said, "Hey, know what day this is? Merry Christmas!" And so we got busy and made some candy and cookies. We called "Merry Christmas" to Sam, but maybe he didn't hear. Anyway, later I took a big plate of stuff down to him. He took it and thanked me and just for an instant, I thought he was going to crack his grouch. He didn't though, and the next day it was the same old thing.

I wish I had kept a diary that winter. I don't know why I didn't. I certainly had plenty of time on those long evenings. We didn't write letters for there was no way to mail them. We had a box full of incomplete magazines, but those get pretty old when you have gone through everyone a dozen times. Bill and I took two decks of cards which were not alike and by using half of one deck and the same number of the other, we got all of the suits. We sometimes played cribbage or pitch until we got so we knew the cards as well from the back as the front.

And then it was the middle of January. We had been expecting Johnny any day for quite a while. I can't say that we were looking forward to him coming very much, for we knew better than to expect him to bring anything of interest, not even the mail, for none of us had the same address and anyway, Johnny wouldn't think of mail. Even so, I got in the habit of looking up the trail whenever I was where I could see that way. We didn't have a dog. Johnny said, "When you haul everything you eat ninety miles, you don't haul it for dogs."

Our work was now becoming harder, for we had the corrals full of calves, and Sam was bringing in more poor cows or heifers each day. We fed two loads of hay on the field and brought two more home each day. And our herds built up until we had a maximum of eight hundred head on the feed ground. The rest of the herd wintered out or died, which a great many did. But cows were cheap and feed was scarce.

As the winter progressed, the sage hens flocked in. I know there were lots of times when they outnumbered the cattle two to one. They came in from the hills to eat the hay leaves. They would part ahead of the team and run in again behind to get their share of the hay.

Once in a while we would kill one for the cats, but we couldn't eat them, they were too strong of sage at that time of year.

One morning after a couple of inches of fresh snow, I went by the barns down at the summer ranch to feed the studs we had there. As I came to the yard gate, I saw fresh horse tracks and also a man-track where he had got off to open the gate and lead his horse through toward the barn. At first I thought Sam must be ahead of me, although this was my chore and there was no other reason for him to come there. And then I remembered that Sam had headed the other way that morning. It was just good daylight and those tracks had to be not more than a few hours old. I tied my team and followed the tracks on to the barn, and there, inside, tied in one of the stalls was a saddle horse eating hay. He had been unsaddled and looked like he had had some pretty hard riding. There was no one in sight, but I suspected the rider must be upstairs in the hay loft.

Well now, I didn't know who it could be. People didn't just happen to come that way, and I'll be frank to admit I was just a little uneasy about sticking my neck up through that hay hole. I hollered, "Anybody upstairs?" No reply. I hollered again. And I heard a sort of sleepy reply, so I did go up. He probably had just barely got to sleep, but there he was, wrapped up in everything he could find and burrowed into the hay. He gave me some cock-and-bull story about hunting horses, and when I asked why he hadn't come to the Winter Ranch where we were, he said he didn't know where it was. But later we found his tracks where he had come right by there in the night, following outside the fence within two hundred feet of the house.

After talking to him for a while, I asked him if he had had anything to eat lately. He said, "Not much." So I told him to come with me. He saddled his horse and we went out where Bill was. Bill told him to go on up where we stayed and get something to eat. We would be up later. He did, and when we got there he was gone, and we never saw or heard of him again. He didn't take anything but a little food and he didn't leave by way of the regular trails. There was so much stock around that his tracks were beat out. So we didn't know which way he did go. After it was all over, we came to the conclusion that he was hiding out from the law, but we never got any news in there, so we never knew.

That was the first outside person we had seen in almost three months. Damn, we were mad when he was gone. We were looking forward to quite a visit and some outside news.

At this time, I didn't use tobacco. Sam smoked Bull Durham, and Bill did too, but Bill also chewed Horseshoe. Bill chewed during the day and smoked only in the house, mostly of evenings. Somehow he miscalculated on his smoking tobacco and in February, he ran out. He still had plenty of plug, but no smoking. I knew that Sam still had plenty and I said, "Why don't you ask Sam to share with you?" But Bill said, "It is my own fault, and if I use some of his, we may both run out, and anyway, things are bad enough between us as it is." So Bill took some of his chewing tobacco and he pulled it all apart, leaf from leaf, and spread it on a paper on the oven door to dry. When it was dry he crumpled it up and smoked it in a pipe.

Bill was drying his first batch when he started laughing. He always laughed with a hearty belly-shaking laugh. “I’m as bad as old Joe Davis,” Bill said. “He ran out of smoking tobacco once and he saved his chewed cud and put it up on the warming oven to dry. This he smoked later. Old Joe liked it so well and it fitted his thrifty nature even better, so it became a permanent habit. From then on he never threw his cud away.”

Bill entertained himself and me a great deal that winter with his funny yarns. He had had a hard life, I know, but his memory seemed to have caught and held only the pleasant and the humorous. And he would get a huge laugh from the telling of these stories. They were never dirty, and he was never amused at someone’s misfortune. Many of his stories were a huge joke on himself, but none the less funny to him or me. This would be a much better world to live in if there were more Bill Johnsons.

That was a long, hard winter, with lots of snow. We were very short of hay for the number we had to feed, and there were lots of dead cows by spring. But that was to be expected then. As for myself, there were plenty of times when I was so lonesome I could cry. But of course, I didn’t and these spells would pass and I would get real pleasure out of the life and work there.

February first, and Johnny hadn’t come yet. Bill and I talked it over and decided if Johnny didn’t come by February 14, I would take a pack horse and go out to Crooked Creek. Bill was stretching his tobacco to make it last that long, and we were pretty low on coffee and sugar. Then too, I think Bill felt that I needed something to look forward to. I had caught about a dozen coyotes during the winter, and I wanted to get [the pelts] on the market while they would bring good money.

Valentine’s Day came and went and no Johnny. Bill said he could manage for a few days. The weather had been like spring for a couple of weeks and most of our cattle were feeding out on the hills pretty good, however the last two days had been quite cold again. So it was the morning I took my pack horse, a big roan, and started for the outside. I was riding a good traveling gray we called Griz, and both horses were shod with “never-slips”, although they were getting a little worn by then. At that time of the year, the trails were very icy on account of thawing by day and freezing by night.

I was somewhat worried about the river crossing, for I had no way of knowing whether it would be frozen over or not. My hopes were that the recent warm spell had taken the ice out and the ford would be clear. It was just getting daylight when I started out that morning, and bitter cold. We had no thermometer, so I don’t know how cold. I was dressed as warm as I could with two pair of pants and shirts and a sheep-skin coat and wooly chaps, and I was used to the cold, so I didn’t mind. I had told Sam that I was going and he was sore about it, for he said there was more work than the two of them could handle. I asked him if I could get anything for him, but he said no.

I climbed aboard old Griz and Bill handed me the lead rope. “Take it easy, kid,” he said, and I was off. It was twenty-two miles to the river and for the most of that way the trail followed a dry creek called “Twenty Mile,” headed northwest. The country is open and

there is no protection from that north wind. It was slow traveling over that icy trail and it was about noon when I got to the Garvin Crossing. From the top of the rim looking down I could see that the crossing was very bad. The ice had gone out all right, but the recent cold snap had started to freeze the river up again.

At the ford where the river is about two hundred feet wide, the center one-third was open and each bank was frozen about one-third of the way out. Above the ford where the river was still and deep, it was frozen solid with mirror-like ice.

As I sat there and looked down, my heart fairly sank. For I was afraid I would never be able to get across there. But I walked to warm up and lead my horses and went down the steep trail. I had an axe in my pack, and I got this out. I tested the ice at the ford and found that it was about six inches thick out to the open water, and I measured the water. It was axe-handle deep and pretty swift. This meant belly deep even to Griz, and I judged the other side to be about the same. There was lots of mush ice running and I knew what punishment that was for horses.

I decided that would be pretty risky. I might get the horses in there and couldn't get them out. So I took my axe and went up above to try the ice there. It was fine except about six feet in the middle where it was barely frozen over, so that was no good. I came back to the ford determined to chop it out. But with a dull axe and no bar, I worked for an hour and got up a big sweat but made very little headway. Anyway it was on the far side that I would be stuck. After wasting several hours this way, I finally decided to give the ford a try. I had chopped enough ice so that I knew I could get out the way I went in at least. So with much kicking and spurring and many false starts, I finally forced Griz in and dragged the pack horse after me. The floating mush ice would hit my stirrups and I could feel my horse shiver under me, and we came to the other bank. I urged Griz to jump up on the ice. He would almost do it, then he would whirl around and try to go back. All the time I knew they were both getting colder and colder. Finally I decided that maybe if I got off on the ice I could lead him up. I eased him around and tied my pack rope to the horn. I slipped off on the solid ice, but that was no go either. Once Griz did try to jump, but the pack horse didn't respond and he was jerked back in the water.

By now both horses were almost frantic with the cold. I stepped back onto my saddle horse and loosened the lead rope and was intending to turn back when Griz reared up and jumped onto the ice. The ice was slick and he lost his footing, falling hard on his side. I managed to clear myself, but the impact broke off a huge chunk of ice and Griz and I both found ourselves in the river again. I got a good ducking, soaked to my ears, and I knew what those horses had been taking. I scrambled onto my horse as he got up, but I had dropped the lead rope to the pack horse. Griz wasted no more time in that river and jumped out once more, this time being closer in, the water was much shallower. But now my pack horse had gone back to the ice on the far side. I rode ashore and up the bank, then around behind some brush where he couldn't see us. He nickered once or twice, then followed us on out. By now it was sundown and really cold. At first, I thought I would surely freeze to death. My teeth chattered and I could not stop shaking. I suppose some of it was from fright, but the cold was enough.

And then all of a sudden, I felt warm. I had heard how, when you were freezing you had the feeling just at the last of being very comfortable, and so I was sure this was it. And then I realized that my clothes were like armor. Everything I had on was solid ice, and if I had not been on my horse I surely could never have gotten on or fitted my frozen self into the saddle.

It was four miles up out of the canyon to the nearest ranch. That was Barry's place. We climbed the trail and as time went on and I didn't die, I decided I wasn't going to. But my hands and feet were pretty cold now. Luckily there were no gates and it was just getting dark when I rode into the yard at Barry's. Claude was doing chores and saw me come in. I couldn't get off my horse and Claude led him up to the porch. There he dragged me off and into the house.

After thawing my clothes enough to get them off, they put me to bed. I asked Claude how cold it was and he said 20 below. I had planned to make it home in one day, but I went on the next day. Dad and Mother were going to Lovell anyway, so they got my supplies while I rested up. The weather warmed up again, and when I went back three days later I had no trouble. I took almost a hundred pounds of reading material and a new deck of cards, some store candy and chewing gum.

As I got close to the ranch, I began to wonder if Bill and Sam had eaten each other up yet, but everything was as when I left. I doubt if even a grunt had passed between them while I was gone.

During this severe cold snap, there was a two-year-old heifer in the corral. The night before I left she broke through the ice on the creek and stood all night in water about a foot deep, with her hind feet. The ice was slick and she was weak and there she stood. The next morning she was froze in and we had to cut the ice to let her out. She walked pretty stiff but seemed all right until one day, about three weeks later in the spring, she started to get up and both legs broke square off at the line where the ice had been. We put her in a close pen and fattened her for beef. We felt sure that was one beef Johnny would never drive over the mountains.

It was about the first week in March when Johnny showed up. He brought Charley Moore with him. By now we were practically out of hay, and Johnny had us turn most everything out except the horse colts and some calves. He had Charley and I get in a bunch of four- and five-year-old colts to break to ride.

Sam got sore because he thought Charley was going to be range boss and he blew up and quit. Johnny only stayed long enough to start fires with the heart of most of my magazines, and swipe a few cards out of the new deck, then he pulled out again. It didn't matter so much about the magazines now though, for the days were getting longer and Charley and I were working with the colts from early till late.

We had about thirty-five little ones to halter break and seventeen big ones to saddle break. Those little devils were lots of fun. We had an old one-eyed gray horse. He was as old as the whole bunch of little ones put together. We called him Bob, and after we had caught all the colts and put halters on them, we tied them to a feed rack. Then we would saddle Bob and tie one colt on one side and one on the other and turn him loose in the corral. He had done this so much that he knew just what it was all about. He would walk around the corral, or go to the creek for a drink and the colts would fight and throw themselves, but Bob paid no attention. He went right on about his business. One day in Bob's school and you had a colt that was well halter broken, then two more and so on.

Of the seventeen older ones we broke, I can only remember a few. I think about six were from a Kentucky Whip stud, and they were really choice colts. One in particular I called Sweetheart. He was sorrel and a beauty. Then there was Steamboat, a long-legged dapple gray. He was a natural walker and easy to break. Of the seventeen, we had two bad ones. Both had been monkeyed with before and spoiled. One was a beautiful black with white feet and blaze face. We called him Crying Baby because every time we rode him he bucked, and when he bucked he bawled. He really was Charley's or in Charley's string, but we both took a hand with him. He was mean and would kick or bite and he would buck and if he couldn't throw you, he would sulk until he was rested, then buck some more. We had never got him so we could turn him loose outside of a corral. And that is about all we could do with him. Johnny said give him up, when he came back in later.

The other we called Rocky. Rocky was more of a mischief, not really mean. He would stand for you to get on. He seemed gentle, then when you were least expecting it, he would blow a gasket. He threw me more than once, then waited for me to get back on and he seldom tried it again while you were ready.

Johnny came back in about April first. He brought Lew Howe with him as another hand. Lew was lots of fun and an addition to our crew which we really enjoyed. He helped Bill with cleaning the corrals, cleaning ditches, building and repairing fences and so on, while Charley and I worked our colts and at the same time rode the winter range, pushing the cows onto new feed that was now uncovered from the winter snows. And at the same time we were working everything south, for about May first, we would open the gates and start pushing them into Wyoming and into the foothills where they would calve.

Johnny made a deal with Dad and Mother to come back that summer, and so did George and Jim. However they weren't to come in until May 15. In the meantime, Johnny came and went, leaving as much discontent in his wake as possible. As the crew grew, Bill had to spend more and more time cooking and choreing around the house. We were still at the winter place and by now there were seven of us when Johnny was there. George was there and Walter Kane was back. We all slept in the bunkhouse now except Bill; he still slept in the house.

The bunkhouse was made of logs and was about sixteen by twenty-four [feet]. It had two bunks in each corner, a door in one end and a window in the center of each of the other three walls. The windows were of the two sash kind and came pretty close to the floor.

The one in the back had a glass broken out of the right half bottom sash, and we had tacked a seamless sack over it. This had happened the year before and we had had the glass for a long time but no one bothered to put it in. Sam had tacked pasteboard over it and that had been peeled off when spring came.

When Johnny was there, he used the bunk on the right rear and closest to this window. Johnny, like lots of other old men, had to get up at night a lot and sometimes it was pretty cold outside. And so Johnny got the idea of a shortcut. He simply pulled a tack from one corner of the sack over the broken window. Of course the old fossil didn't think anyone knew, but we did, and anyway, with the weather getting warmer and that [being] the warm side of the house, it couldn't be kept a secret very long.

It was Lew who got busy and put the glass in one Sunday. He was just finishing when I came in. We were cussing Johnny for his filthy habit, when a thought struck me. "Hey, Lew," I said, "Let's tack the sack [back] over the glass." So we did. That night we were both awake when Johnny got up. We heard the patter on the windowpane, then Johnny cursing as he stumbled over boots in his way to the door. There was sufficient commotion in the other bunks so that Johnny must have known he had been observed, but he never did mention it and none of us ever mentioned to him. But I, for one, relished that joke immensely.

Johnny was not the kind you could kid, and nothing was ever funny when it happened to him. But it was soon after this that we had another good laugh at his expense, although behind his back. Johnny had two very special horses, Sid and Possum. Sid was a mouse blue and Possum was white. No one else ever rode these horses. Johnny usually just kept them for very special work such as calf branding time or for beef cutting. They always ran by themselves and were as inseparable as a mare and colt. They were still out on the range at this time down below Willow Creek. Charley and I had seen them several times and observed how sleek and fat they were.

The gray wolves were pretty bad that spring and we found plenty of evidence of their work. They would pull down a two-year-old like no one's business. And if there was a pack, they would lots of time cut the hamstrings of one critter after another like a dog killing sheep. Then they would eat one but leave several cripples not dead. Of course, these cripples could never get up.

Well, naturally we all carried rifles all the time, although I never did get a shot at one of the grays. But we had reported their work to Johnny several times. And so it was that Johnny rode down that way one day, blood in his eye and ready to kill. He had just crossed Willow Creek and out on the bench beyond, when he came across a fresh kill. It looked like he had scared them away. Johnny got down and drew his thirty-thirty, then walked up a little hill where he could see quite a bit of country. And sure enough, there they were, two of them, a couple hundred yards away. Johnny up and fired, not once, but twice, but nothing fell, and then to his very great chagrin, his 'wolves' loped out onto the ridge beyond. It was none other than his two most favorite saddle horses. They had been rolling in some rather damp, pink earth and were all covered with mud. No one would

have ever been the wiser if Charley and I hadn't heard the shooting and rode out where we could see. Johnny told what had happened, but it wasn't funny to him. Those old horses really weren't in much danger, for that old man couldn't hit the side of a barn if he was inside with the doors shut.

About the middle of May we started the spring, or calf, roundup. Calf roundups are conducted in various ways, or were then. Some of the big outfits like Frank Heinrich, with forty or fifty thousand head, or Ed Danna, of the Antler Brand, or the I D with seventy thousand, these really big outfits used the wagon method. Their range was mostly in the lower country where wagons could be used. Heinrich, for instance, usually sent out four wagons. Each wagon was accompanied by ten or more of his own riders, about thirty-five or forty horses, and probably four or five Reps from other outfits. These Representatives, or Reps, were treated just like the other men, and were under orders from the roundup boss as far as work went until it came to the actual branding. It was then their duty to look out for their own outfits' cattle.

On this kind of a roundup, the men were sent out in pairs each morning to cover a certain circle, pick up all cows with unbranded calves and by noon, converge on a designated spot. Here the wagon would be waiting with a meal ready. As each pair rode in, they would drop their gather with the assembled herd and ride to the wagon for chow, or chuck, as some called it. The chuck wagon carried the bedrolls also. Each pair filled their plate and ate their chow as they came, then rode back to the herd to help hold until all hands were in. A fire was started in a sheltered spot and the irons set to heat. Some Reps carried their outfit's iron, others ran it in when necessary.

With this type of roundup, the herd was held by several men while a roper or usually two, rode in, snared a calf and dragged it to the fire. There was always plenty of help and the job was done by mid-afternoon, and the day was over. Of course I forgot to mention that this day had started at four AM.

But at the M-Y, calf roundup was different. We were one of the smaller outfits and our country was too small and much too rough for the wagon. We had four cabins at different places on the range, and we had six different corrals. The cabins only had one bunk and a small cook stove, and were usually half full of rock salt, but they served as [the] cook shack for a certain area. There were only nine of us all told, and that included Jim as horse wrangler, Bill as cook and Johnny himself as boss. Then there was George, Lew, Walter, Charley and me, and Jess Howe (Buff) who was Repping for the Bighorn Basin Cattle Association.

Our day started at four also, and we made our gather, winding up at one or another of the corrals. We held the cattle outside until everyone was in and had eaten, then they were corralled and the branding started. This method took less help and released all hands for the actual work. Jim, the wrangler, took care of the fire. Johnny ran the irons and cut and earmarked [while] either Charley or Walter did the roping. The rest were wrestlers. Our best record was sixty-six calves in sixty minutes without changing ropers. Charley was roping, and he missed two throws out of sixty-six.

This particular spring the weather was nice, the grass was good and the cattle were moving up the country faster than we could keep up with them, with the result that about three or four hundred head had gotten by our last corral and were several miles further up the mountain. We hated to bring the cows and calves back down for branding, so Johnny and Charley decided it would be better to build a new corral farther up. We had finished everything below and were then camped at the cabin on the big bench about three miles below where it was decided to build the new corral.

It was rainy and very nasty that morning as we saddled our horses to go up the mountain to build the corral. Johnny had dropped off a bunch of tools there several days before, and as there was no real work to do on horseback, we were all riding our worst broncs. That is, all but Buff; he only had gentle horses with him. Crying Baby was in the bunch, although he hadn't been saddled since we had given him up a month or more earlier. And to my surprise, Charley dabbed his rope on him. He said, "This is a good time to give the Son of a Bitch one hell of a ride in the mud."

We all mounted up in the corral. There was some bucking and then everything settled down. Jess snubbed for Charley, and he kept the Baby snubbed when the gate was opened, and we started out. We had only gone a short ways when Charley told Buff to turn him loose. We had him pretty well in the middle of the bunch anyway. But the minute that horse was loose, he knew it. He ducked his head, whirled right around and started bucking down that hill. Buff tried to pick him up, but the Baby was a quick one. No one else was in a position to help, for we were all sitting on eggs.

I knew Charley was a goner from about the second jump, for he just went limp and started leaning farther back until the back of the saddle caught him in the back and he was thrown clear over the Baby's head and he lit like a rock. When we got to him, he was out cold. Buff caught the horse and we finally brought Charley around. He said he had been caught off guard and the swell of the saddle had hit him in the groin. He had fainted before being thrown. But boy, was he mad! And he insisted on getting back on. Buff snubbed again, and this time he didn't turn him loose. Charley was pretty sick all day. We made him a shelter with some slickers and built him a fire. He laid there and the rest of us built the corral.

It was just above a very thick patch of timber and we used poles from the timber. There was a big down tree which we used for one wing to help steer the cattle in, and we put up poles along the edge of the timber for another wing. It was about three o'clock when we finished. Still raining, and a thoroughly miserable day. We were all a little uneasy about our mounts, for they had been standing there shivering in the rain all day. The ground was slick and we were riding downhill, all bad.

By now Charley was so stiff we had to help him to his feet and he was worried about his right arm. He was afraid maybe it was broken. Charley was no kid anymore, for he was about forty. No one wanted to ride the Baby, and Charley couldn't. In fact, he couldn't ride any of the colts, so Buff was in a spot. His was the only gentle horse that Charley

could ride. Johnny wasn't along, of course, he always stayed in camp when the weather was bad. Buff was a good rider, but like Charley, not a kid any more. He was probably thirty. He broke lots of horses, but we always tried to keep them from bucking when we could. But Buff was game. "He saw his duty and he done it."

We helped Charley mount first, then one after another of the rest of us got aboard. We could not use the corral for it was a temporary job, and [had] too many snags as well as stumps. Everyone was up but Buff, and he was ready. He hitched up his chaps, tightened his hat, grabbed the Baby by the cheek of the bridle and pulled his head in close, then stepped up. He had the horse down close to the timber where there was no place to go but up the hill, so that is where he went. He broke and ran about fifty yards up the hill then wheeled and bucked straight down. When he was about to hit the down tree we had used for a wing, he set the brakes and tried to turn, but the grass was wet and all four feet went out from under him. He lit flat on his side, but Buff was above and in the clear except the front of his chaps had caught on the horn. Buff saw his predicament and he grabbed the horn with his right hand while still having the reins in his left, and he came up with the horse. Gad, I was scared he was going to be killed right there. Fortunately, the horse was shaken up a bit and that gave Buff a chance to get set before he took off again. This time it was down the trail toward camp, bucking and running with us all in pursuit, but under the circumstances, none able to keep up.

From this point the trail followed down a narrow rather open ridge. On the right was a steep timbered slope clear down to Deer Creek a half mile below. On the left it was not so steep and more or less open timber, but no place to ride a bucking or stampeding horse. The trail itself was bothered somewhat by big and branchy trees, as they are wont to be where the timber is thin.

The last we saw of Buff, he was dodging trees right and left and putting up a wonderful ride. We were hurrying down this slick and treacherous trail as fast as we dared in pursuit. It was perhaps three quarters of a mile below and we hadn't seen a thing of Buff when I heard a noise behind and stopped, and there came Buff and the Baby, up out of that real steep timbered slope on the Deer Creek side. Buff had no hat and his face was bleeding till he looked like he had been through a barb wire fence.

As soon as the Baby hit the trail and comparatively level going again, he broke open and went right through us, hell bent, and on down the trail out of sight. When we came out in the open where we could see, we saw Buff and his bronc heading for the cavy which Jim was just bringing in, and with Buff in the bunch, he corralled the horses where Buff was able to grab a corral pole and get off.

That was probably the wildest ride any cowboy ever took, and I take off my hat to Jess Howe. I would like to see any world champion cowboy take the honors away from that one. I asked Buff how in hell he ever made it down that steep slope without getting his neck broke, and he said, "Well, I never would have if I hadn't been riding a hell of a good horse."

Later that year, when we were on top of the mountains with the cattle, there was just Charley and Walter and me. Our range lapped over the top and there were no fences or natural boundaries to prevent mixing with the cattle from the other side. We were continually on the watch to keep our stock from going too far over and the others from getting too far over our side. Then there was salt to pack out, bulls to move here and there, late calves to pick up, and just something to do all the time.

There were other cow camps along the mountain and we used to visit once in a while in the evening. There were also a few sheep camps nearby. Usually a sheep herder is beneath the notice of a cowboy, but one who was close by was merely a good cowboy, temporarily herding sheep. His name was Sim Emmett and he was from down Lovell way. He was a good friend of the Howe boys and he sometimes rode over our way. Somehow Sim mentioned he would like to buy a young horse. We told him that Johnny would probably sell one of the colts we had. At least we would find out. We asked Johnny and he said he had more than he wanted, tell Sim he can have any that you boys want to let go, his pick for forty-five dollars.

So the next time Sim came over, we ran the bunch in. We cut out our pets and said, there they are, your pick, $45. First thing Sim did, he picked the Baby. But we couldn't let him take that horse, for he would get killed. Next he picked Rocky, and we told him his history. He would almost break at least once for every ride, but not when you expected it. And he was pretty rough to ride, but once his buck was over, he was all right.

Well, Sim liked his looks and told us to catch him. Walter had been riding him some, so he tossed a rope on him and saddled him up. We let the rest of the horses out into another corral and Walter got on. Rocky never made a bad move and Walter rode him around the corral. We were all sitting on the top pole and as Walter rode by me, he said, "Slide on. Let's see if he will ride double." So I slid a leg across back of the saddle and eased on. Boy, did that horse ever blow the cork! He whirled and bucked straight across that corral and slammed into the fence on the other side. I lost my hold on Walter and rolled backward right down that horse's rump and into a puddle of mud, while Walter and Rocky went on around the corral. I scrambled to my feet and up the fence as they made the second lap, just in time for Walter to use my landing spot.

But Sim bought the horse anyway. He said he didn't think he would have bucked if we hadn't tried to ride him double. So we changed, and Sim put his saddle on and rode him around the corral. He didn't do anything and [Sim] rode off for his camp leading his old horse.

And the next we heard of Sim, he was in the hospital with a broken shoulder, and that horse was never really ridden after that. Sim got home all right, and he put Rocky on picket. It only took a few days to picket-break him, and Sim had plenty of oats, so he started graining Rocky and making a pet of him. He was a little afraid to turn him loose, for fear he would not be able to catch him and likewise, he was afraid to try to ride him for fear he would buck him off and pull out with his saddle and bridle. That was the idea behind the oats and the petting; get him good and gentle so he wouldn't break.

Sim would saddle him every day, fool around with his feet, pull his tail, and Rocky seemed to like it. He got as gentle as a kitten. Sim said he even would jump on him bareback, but not actually ride him. And so it went for a couple of weeks and it was about time for the camp tender to come by. He wanted to show his new horse off then, so one day when Sim had saddled Rocky as he had every day, he just slipped a bridle on him and after fooling around a bit, he eased up onto his back.

Mind you, Rocky was picketed by the front foot, but as well picket-broke as he was, he forgot that time. He stood still for just an instant, then bogged his head and turned on the steam. And when he hit the end of that picket rope, horse and rider both took one awful spill. Fortunately for Sim, that was the very day that the camp tender showed up.

Soon after, a horse buyer came by looking for 'bad' horses for Cheyenne Frontier Days, and both Rocky and the Baby were chosen to go. Rocky turned out to be the best of the two and for a good many years was one of their big attractions. And I had the distinction of having been the first to ride him as well as the first to be thrown from him.

Waldo

Then came Waldo. Waldo was a Nephew of Johnny's. He was about nineteen, a big overgrown sissy, a softy as well, and as gullible as they come. He was straight from Savannah, Georgia. Tall, skinny, thick glasses, and a southern drawl that we could scarce understand. Waldo's coming had been a complete surprise to Johnny and he made no secret of the fact that the sooner he left, the better it would be. But Waldo worshipped Uncle John, and was obsessed with the idea of becoming a cowboy. He felt sure that someday Uncle John would get used to having him around and one day his chance would come and he would prove his worth and be taken to the old man's bosom, and from that day on he would be like a son, and of course, the happy ending to all of this would be to take over when Johnny was no longer able to carry on.

But Johnny hated the sight of the kid, and openly accused him of spying for his mother, who was Johnny's sister. I think the thing that irked Johnny the most was that this boy was the only tie between his now and his past. He had had no traffic with any of his past since he left Georgia, and he didn't like this link. According to Waldo, Johnny had been his mother's pet, and she had kept track of him all these years unbeknownst to Johnny, and now she was worried about him being away out here and getting old with no one to look after him. Johnny couldn't stand him, yet the kid followed him like a pup. He had taken riding lessons before coming out here and he thought he was already well on the way to being a cowboy.

Transcriber's Note: Here Dad crossed out what was probably a great little vignette about Waldo, out on the trail with Johnny and needing to 'use the bathroom', but apparently he decided it was too coarse for publication. More unfortunately, his crossing out, with large amounts of ink, bled through to some other pages in the original journal and obliterated some of the text about turkeys to follow, which I will have to improvise as best as I can.

When Johnny got tired of the kid following him he would say, "Now listen. I am going after a bunch of wild horses. You wait here where the trails fork and when you see them coming, head them down this trail toward the ranch." And he would ride off and leave the kid there. Sometimes he would return that way, and sometimes not. And once the kid stayed out all night. Johnny bawled him out for not having sense enough to come in before dark and after that there was a limit to his waiting.

Waldo always wanted someone to give him a job to do that was real ranch work. He tagged Dad around a lot, and he said one day, "I think I have been here long enough now, I should have a regular job." Dad said, "OK, I'll give you one. We have a lot of turkeys on this ranch, but they are pretty wild. They have been nesting out and now they have their little ones. You go out there in the [afternoon, gather them up in a herd and drive them here to the yard. If they scatter, round them up again and go after them. Now go on]." Of course, the turkeys Dad had reference to were sage hens and he expected the kid to see the joke and come back after a while. But the poor dude took it all serious and didn't know they were really wild birds. He fooled around until he found a bunch all

right, then when they flew he followed and flushed them again and again, all day long, but probably with different bunches, for there were lots of them. Finally they flew across the canyon where he couldn't follow, and he came to the house with tears in his eyes and confessed his failure.

Everyone on the ranch jibed Waldo, and poor kid, he could do nothing but take it. He was tagging Charley and me around one time, and we were taking a bunch of cows up a steep draw. It was hot and they were fat and getting pretty tired. There was an old fat bull in the rear and Waldo was prodding him along. Charley said, "Jump on him, Waldo, and sock him with your spurs. That's the way real cowboys do." And a moment later we heard a commotion and for just a second Waldo was on that bull. The next second, he was on his head in a sagebrush.

This went on all summer, and in some ways the kid began to catch on a little. It was almost fall roundup time and Waldo had come up to the cabin on top where Charley and Walter and I were. We told so many bear stories that we had Waldo almost afraid to go outside at night. One day, just before dark, Charley and Walter were coming down the trail to camp, which was just at the edge of timber. I wasn't in yet, and Waldo hadn't gone out that afternoon. The boys thought they would have a little fun with Waldo, so when they came close to camp, they took out their six-shooters, spurred their horse to a run and dashed down by the cabin door, firing back up the trail and when Waldo came, wild eyed to the door, they hollered, "it's a grizzly, Waldo, run for your life." And they dashed on down the trail still firing back behind them. When they were out of sight in the timber they pulled to a halt and waited for results.

As I came up from below, I said, "What's all the shooting about?" "Just a gag on Waldo," they laughed, as they peered around the trees. But Waldo didn't show up.

We waited a while, then rode back up the trail. In front of the cabin, we hollered, but Waldo didn't come out. "Gosh," said Charley, "Do you suppose that fool kid took off down through the timber?" And we were pretty uneasy, for it was getting dark.

We went to the corral and unsaddled and turned our horses in the wrangle pasture. We hollered several times but no reply from Waldo, so we went to the cabin. I was taking off my spurs and chaps outside and as Charley struck a light, I heard him say, "Oh, my God!" And I stepped inside to see what was the trouble. There lay Waldo on the bunk. His eyes were closed and his chest was a mass of blood. He was breathing all right, and he opened his eyes.

"What in the world?" said Charley. And Waldo's voice came faint and weak, "One of your bullets …" he said, and his eyes closed again.

Then a smile spread over his face. We figured he was about to go, but then he busted out laughing. "This time the joke is on you guys!" Son of a gun! That kid had caught on first thing. He had torn the red cover off a cracker box, ducked it in the wash pan and the color had all come off in the water and this was the 'blood' he was soaked in.

We shipped Waldo that fall when we took the beef out, and damned if we didn't kind of hate to see him go. So far as I know, Waldo never came to Wyoming again. That was a tough summer for him, but one he will never forget, I'll bet.

After the fall roundup and the beef were shipped, I came back to the ranch with Charley and Bill, but I didn't stay long. My folks had already gone home and I didn't care about spending another winter there. I helped gather the stragglers from the east side of the mountains and start the cattle toward the winter range. It was about the middle of October when I bunched my belongings, gathered in my own horses and took off for home. I hated to see Bill stay there another winter, but I guess he didn't mind. Charley was staying and there was a new man.

That was the end of one of the most interesting chapters in my life. Oh, I was back there several times in the next few years, to help with roundup, or once on a surveying trip, but only temporary, and always with the knowledge that it wouldn't be for long. Eighteen months is a long time for a kid to be away from home, away from friends and away from fun or entertainment of any kind. Oh, yes, the folks were at the ranch and I saw them occasionally for a few months, but aside from that, I saw practically no one except the boys I worked with. I could count the women or girls that I had seen in all that time on the fingers of one hand. But I learned a lot, and I guess I never was a boy again.

I came home that fall by way of the old Sioux Trail, which crosses Devil's Canyon quite high up. Here the canyon is fifteen hundred feet deep, and the trail from the M-Y climbs up over a high bench then down Hannan's Coulee into the canyon, and from there it tacks back and forth and almost straight up very steep series of ledges for the full fifteen hundred feet. The creek here is a wild one, full of boulders and about twenty feet wide. There is barely room for a small camp by the stream and some grass for horses among the trees.

Because of having trouble finding my horses and packing up, I had got off to a late start that day. I knew I would be very late getting home for it was almost dark when I [crossed] the creek in the canyon, so I decided to camp for the night [on the far side].

I had six horses in all, and for a while I turned them loose with their halter ropes down, so they could graze. I rolled my bed under a big tree and built me a fire. I didn't have anything to cook, for I hadn't planned on this, but I did have a sandwich or two. It was a fine moonlight night but with a good stiff chill in the air.

I sat around my fire and kept an eye on my horses until about nine o'clock, then I caught them and tied them all up and crawled into bed. It was just breaking day when I woke up. I knew it was a short day home, so I decided to turn the horses loose to graze for a while before I started out. The grass was white with frost and there was ice in the edge of the creek.

I had slept in my underwear, so I hustled on my boots and let the horses loose. Then, because I had no breakfast to get, I pulled my boots and crawled back in bed, intending to keep an eye on the horses for about an hour, then get up and pull camp.

But darn! I fell asleep, and the thing that woke me was the horses crossing the creek back toward the M-Y. Sam, my saddle horse, had a long rope, one of my pack ropes, dragging and only two of the horses had crossed the stream. Sam was the last in line, but all were headed that way. I grabbed for my boots and put them on, then being as careful as I could, I eased out of bed and made a sneak through the brush to intercept at least one of them. But a man in his underwear and boots must not look too natural coming out of the brush. At least those gentle old plugs acted like a devil with two tails was after them. I made a wild dash, but I missed the end of that rope by about a foot as it slid into the water.

The trail on the other side climbed a steep bank and then went around a point and started up a steep draw. I knew they had to follow the trail and travel single file, and just as Sam got across, the horses ahead of him stopped and so did he. And there was the end of the rope, just in the edge of the creek on the far side. Ha! I would slip across there and grab it before the other horses made room for Sam to go on. Gosh, that water was cold, and those rocks were slippery. I was in a hurry and cowboy boots never were any good in slick rocks. The water was only above my knees when I stood up, but that makes it pretty deep when you sit down.

I splashed around and made such commotion that the horses took off and I missed the rope by two feet that time. I was mad as a wet hen. Yes, and as wet as one too. And cold, boy! I don't think I was any colder when I got dunked in the Bighorn. Now I was on the same side of the creek with my horses, but still afoot and my clothes were on the other side. I didn't dare stop now to go back and dress, for there was nothing between those horses and the open range and the wild bunch.

I had visions of walking back to the ranch in my underwear. I didn't dare take my boots off to empty the water, for fear I would never get them on again, so I hoisted my legs, one at a time as high as I could and let the water out that way.

The horses had gone out of sight around the bend and I hurried after. They weren't far and I soon came close, but they moved on. I was within a step of the end of that rope at least a dozen times in the next two miles, but never quite close enough. I would give out and stop to rest and the horses would stop and graze from the steep bank on the upper side of the trail, but as soon as I moved, they went on. I think they thought I was driving them back to the M-Y.

I was almost out on top and in the wide open, when we came to a little flat place where there was lots of grass and room for them to spread out, and here they settled down to feed. I gave them time to quiet down and, step by step, and with a fervent prayer, I held my breath as I finally reached down and got the end of that rope. I don't think a drowning man could possibly have been more relieved to grasp a rope than I was that one.

I wasn't cold any more, for the sun was high by now. I was hungry enough to eat a horse and I would gladly have eaten any one of them. My heels had blisters as big as bird eggs. I made a war bridle for Sam and climbed on and started the bunch back down the trail. What a picture: A cowboy in the middle of the morning, on the open range, on a horse, bareback, and in his underwear!

The trail was steep and Sam was the raw-boned type. Before I got to the creek, my seat was too sore to ride and my feet were too sore to walk, but by suffering first one, then the other I did make it.

The sun was shining high over head before I was packed and ready to start. Twenty miles home and nothing between. My guts were as empty as my head had been when I started from the ranch without provisions. But luck was with me on that score, for as I reached the rim of the canyon, there about a half mile ahead, by a spring was a tent. And best of all, there was smoke coming from the stove.

As I came close, who should part the tent flaps but Jess Howe, 'Buff', none other. "Hi, Boss," he said, "Get off that horse and eat a bite." As I said, I learned a lot that chapter of my life, and the one lesson I shall never forget is, never set yourself afoot in camp. A [ride] is better than a trek any time.

From Book 4: The Pete Garvey Incident

Pete Garvey was a sheep herder, but not the usual kind of herder at that. You might say Pete was a sheepherder only because he herded sheep. I make this distinction because herders as I knew them at that time were old broken down ranch hands, unable to do the ranch work anymore, or sometimes they were the hermit type who just naturally preferred the company of sheep rather than people. Most herders soon became completely indifferent as far as personal habits were concerned.

But Pete was different. In the first place, he was young, he was able, and he was, even in camp, clean and very presentable. Pete had come from the city somewhere in the east. He came west with the definite idea of finding a piece of land and homesteading, but you had to have a little money saved up, and you had to find the right piece of land, and Pete was a little too late to get a good homestead. So it served his purpose to herd sheep for a few years in order to save some money and he hoped by keeping his eyes and ears open that he might find a likely piece of land.

Winters were spent on the salt sage flats of the Bighorn Basin, and summers in the high cool country of the Bighorn Mountains. After several years of transferring from the mountains to the bad lands of the Basin and back to the mountains again, Pete decided the mountains were the place for him and furthermore he had his eye on the exact spot.

Each spring, after shearing and when the lambs were about a month old, usually about May first, all of the bands of sheep in the northeast part of the Basin would start to move toward the Bighorn River, cross by ferry, and proceed via Little Mountain on up the ridge and out onto the Bighorn proper. This move took weeks and it was usually June before they reached their ultimate summer range.

Now as the stock left Little Mountain to climb out onto the Bighorn Mountains, they were pinched in by Devil's Canyon on the northeast and by Cottonwood Canyon on the southwest, making it necessary to follow a comparatively narrow ridge. It wasn't a real hog's back, but a round grass and timber ridge about a half mile wide. This was at the top of a rather steep climb of a thousand feet or so and here the country changed considerably. Below it was quite open and rocky. The grass was poor, and stock was dependent on the dwindling snow banks of spring for water. But at this point, known as The Neck, all of a sudden there was good grass, there were several springs, and lots of nice evergreen timber. And so it was a haven for the weary herder and for the cattlemen with their herds as well. And it was an unwritten law that no one, be he cattle man or sheep man, allow his stock to linger longer than necessary at The Neck while passing through. To do so would have cleaned up the feed completely for those who would follow.

This was the piece of land that Pete had picked to homestead. True, no one could possibly farm it. It was steep and rough, cut up by ravines and over half timber. It was completely inaccessible by wagon or any wheeled vehicle, and for months on end each winter the snow was two to four feet deep. All of this together probably accounted for the fact that

no one else had ever laid claim. Probably another reason was that it had so long been considered common property for all, that no one dared claim it for his own.

But Pete did. This was the most beautiful spot in the world to him, for he had come from the city. His parents had been land-hungry peasants from the old country who had never owned a foot of soil in their lives, and Pete had inherited their hunger to someday own a piece of land of his own. He was not a sheep man, nor was he a cow man. I guess you would say he was a "dude" sheep herder. So he went quietly about looking up the survey stakes until he was sure of the location of the land he wanted, then he made application and filed on 160 acres. Happy was the day when he received word from the land office in Cheyenne that his claim had been allowed. The notice came about the first of the year and Pete kept quiet about it and kept on with his job until the first of April, then he drew his pay and went into town and bought a whole new outfit of clothes, and the next day he took the train for home.

It was about a month later when Pete returned, and now he had with him a bride. Nellie, her name was. And those who saw her said she was a pathetic little thing, young, of course, and dark, with jet black hair, and eyes so dark you could scarce make out the pupil. A pretty little thing in the face, they said, but it was her leg that everyone noticed, for she was badly crippled, whether from birth or polio she never said, but one leg was short and weak and when she was in a hurry she took an extra hop on the good one to save the other.

No one got really acquainted with Nellie that spring, for Pete bought three horses and took Nellie and went to his claim. There they set up a tent camp near one of their springs. It seems Nellie was a childhood sweetheart of Pete's, and she had shared his dreams of a home in the west, and when he found it, he returned and brought her to share it with him. How she managed to ride that 80 miles with that crippled leg was a surprise to everyone. And this was the first that anyone knew of his homestead.

At first people thought they were crazy to go for a honeymoon in the mountains so early in the spring, then word got around that Pete was making regular trips to town, and packing such things as windows, short boards, and even a dismantled cook stove up the mountain. And then it dawned on some of the stockmen just what Pete was up to. He had staked a claim in The Neck, and if he fenced it, it could mean real trouble; trouble for the stockmen and probably trouble for Pete. So several of the stockmen got together and they sent a delegation to talk to Pete. But whatever Pete's plans were they didn't find out. He simply acted glad to see them, introduced them to Nellie, and when they left, he asked them to stop by anytime. To this day, no one knows whether Pete planned to make trouble or not, but they do know that he didn't.

Under the homestead laws, the Homesteader agreed to put a certain amount of improvements on his claim within three years. He also agreed to make it his home. Thus a house of some sort was necessary and a fence usually came next. These two improvements were usually considered the minimum, but sufficient to allow a man to prove up on a claim. Until these provisions had been met and until three years had

elapsed, the title or patent, as it was called, remained in the hands of the land office. Frequently, claims were filed and proved up on where the Homesteader had skimped [on] these requirements, even to the point of spending one night a year in his shack and fencing his claim with one wire, which was soon removed once title was received. The next move was to sell the newly acquired land to his boss, for whom he took it in the first place.

But Pete, whatever his plans were for the future, planned to take no chances for the present. He didn't intend to leave room for someone to contest his claims. So when the law said live there, he planned to live there. All that spring and summer he busied himself toward that end, and when fall came, he and Nellie had a pretty comfortable cabin built for themselves. It was only one room, and the floor was hard packed earth, the roof was split poles and sod, the cracks were chinked neatly with split poles on the inside and daubed with cow dung mixed with grass on the outside. There were three small windows, and sufficient home made furniture to be quite comfortable. Pete had made a large lean-to shed on the side where the door was, and each day he added to the wood supply until it was stuffed full.

In one corner of the room there was a hole some three feet square and about as deep, and in this they had stored their potatoes and a few other vegetables which they had raised in their first garden. Although they were at an altitude of about 8 thousand feet, some hardy vegetables did real well.

When October came, and the cattle and sheep were going by every day on their way to the valleys below, Pete and Nellie were making themselves ready for the long winter they knew to be ahead, and Nellie had not once left the claim since she first set foot on it. She said she didn't care to make the long trip and she had no friends at the foot of the mountains anyway. Pete brought the mail when ever he went down and that was all there was for her. She had Tiny, Pete's little glass-eyed sheep dog for company, and there had been little time to get lonesome for in spite of her handicap, she had been a great help in building and fixing up their new home.

When the word got around that Pete and Nellie were going to stay on their claim all winter, folks shook their heads and said, "Just like a crazy dude. Anyone should know better." And everyone said, "Poor Nellie! How can she stay in a place like that crippled as she is?" And occasionally one of the stock men coming by would try to reason with Pete that they were foolish to attempt such a thing, but Pete was stubborn and he was also suspicious that someone might manage in some way to get his claim if they should leave, so after one final trip with the pack horses to bring in the last load of supplies, Pete finally sent the horses out by a friend who came by and thus they cut themselves off from the valley below for the winter.

Pete killed a deer and hung it in the shed as part of their winter food supply, for there would be no chance later. All game would leave soon for the foothills. And then the snow came. It snowed all day and all night and before it cleared, there was over two feet on the ground. But Pete and Nellie loved it. They were snug and warm in their log cabin and the

snow only helped to blanket them. It was November now, and Pete made himself a sled so that he could cut and haul posts to be used next spring. He took advantage of the snow to slide the posts out along the line where the fence would be. He had had the good sense to provide himself with a pair of snow shoes and now they were coming in handy. In fact, he would have been unable to get around without them. They had only the one pair, for Nellie being crippled as she was wouldn't be able to use them. And then fate stepped in to deal her first blow. Nellie discovered that she was pregnant.

At first this was quite a shock and they were both scared. Pete was all for going out then to get the horses and take her out. It still would have been possible. But both Nellie and Pete had come from sturdy peasant stock, where having babies was nothing to get excited about. The baby wouldn't be due until June and by that time, or long before, Nellie could be in town to await her time.

Christmas came and went, and then the New Year. Pete busied himself with his post and log cutting when ever the weather would permit, and on nice days, Nellie would get out around the cabin and follow the packed trails, and in this way she was able to get some exercise. There was a pair of Clark's Crows (camp robbers) which would follow from tree to tree wherever she went, and if she would put a scrap of food on her head, they would dart by and grab it and then there would be a noisy scuffle to see who got to eat it.

Sometimes on clear quiet days, they could even hear the whistle of a train far, far away, down below in the valley. It seemed to bring the outside world a little closer. So far, all was well, everything seemed to be working out fine. Nellie had had no trouble and even felt better than ever before. Of course, she was beginning to feel the burden of carrying her child, but her health was good and her spirits high. She had Pete, and they had their land, and someday, somehow, it would be worth what they were now doing in order to secure title to it.

There was one small worry, though. That was the food. It wasn't quite working out as they had planned. They still had plenty of flour and potatoes and beans. The vegetables they had stored in the hole in the floor had kept pretty good, although they were getting low, but the big thing was the meat. Pete had figured that he would be able to kill a few rabbits, a grouse now and then, and maybe even a deer. However, this hadn't been so easy, and once the deer he had killed in the fall was used up, they found they had to rely more and more on their supply of bacon and salt pork.

By late February this situation had become rather acute. Pete decided he must make a desperate effort to get some venison. He had been watching the country on the far side of Devil's Canyon where it was a southwest slope, and the snow was beginning to thin a little, and with his glasses he had been able to pick out several bunches of deer. It wasn't really so far, perhaps a mile and a half as the crow flies, but he would have to go up country a short ways to where the old Sioux Trail crossed Devil's Canyon, then down the switch-back trail in order to cross over. It would be a hard day, but he knew he could do it.

By watching one bunch of deer for several days, he observed that they traveled very little. They always spent the middle of the day lying in the sun in a little coulee and with his glasses he picked out the exact approach he would make once he was on that side. It was necessary to do this in order to save time and energy so as to make the trip in one day. Pete told Nellie of his plan. He gave her all of the details so that she would not worry. He would start early the next morning and not to worry if it was late before he returned. It might even be necessary for him to lay out all night by a campfire if he found he couldn't make it.

The next morning Nellie watched Pete as he fastened his webs and slung his gun on his shoulder, then taking his stick, he struck off toward the Canyon. Tiny whined, for she wanted to go too, but Pete sent her in the cabin, telling her to look after Nellie while he was gone. And Nellie closed the door, never to see Pete alive again.

When it started to grow dark, Nellie lighted the lamp and stuffed the stove with wood. She tested the bean soup which was boiling there and added a pinch of salt. The table was set as she knew Pete would be tired and hungry when he returned. Tiny kept cocking an ear and watching the door, but there was never a sound except the wind in the pines, for it had turned colder, and just before dark it had started to snow. Nellie remembered what Pete had said, and she tried not to worry, for she had confidence in his ability to take care of himself. But the weather had changed for the worse rather suddenly and she hated to think of him out there in the storm. Maybe, as he said, he would even have to stay out all night.

So they waited, Nellie and Tiny. Along about ten o'clock Nellie gave up for the night and after eating her bowl of bean soup, she filled the stove again and went to bed. But it was well on toward morning before she finally went to sleep.

When Nellie woke the next morning, the cabin was cold and she could hear the wind howling outside. It no longer whispered in the tree tops, it screamed, and when Nellie looked out the window, she couldn't even see the nearest trees, the air was that full of snow. Now, suddenly, Nellie was filled with terror, for she knew wherever Pete was he was in danger and he could never make it home in a storm like this. She was so scared that it was all she could do to climb back in bed and pull the covers around her. She didn't lie down but sat there, with her back against the wall, shivering with cold and with fright. But finally, she told herself she must be calm, she must get a fire started, and warm the cabin, for Pete might stumble in out of that storm any minute. She must be ready with hot water for coffee, and somehow she did these things. Pete had left the big wood box behind the stove full of wood and kindling. The water buckets were still full, and once the fire was going good, it didn't take long to warm the place up. Nellie wasn't hungry but there was a pot of prunes on the stove so she dished some up and forced herself to eat them.

Nellie spent that day first stoking the stove then standing by the window peering into the storm, then back to the stove to warm up a bit and add more wood and back to the window. She looked so hard that her eyes began to play tricks on her and when the wind

would slack for a moment she was sure she saw Pete, but it was only a bush. Once she was so sure that she shouted his name and rushed to the door. But when she flung it open it was not Pete but the blizzard that rushed in.

When dark finally came again, Nellie slowly turned from the window and went and sat down by the fire. She dropped her head in her hands and gave way completely, for she now realized what she wouldn't admit before, that Pete wasn't going to come home. Two days and two nights in that storm – it was too much to expect.

Then, for the first time, she thought of her own plight. What would she do? It was only the first of March; it would be two months before anyone would come there. She knew she could never walk out of there through all of this snow and she wasn't even sure she could find the way, for she had only been over the trail once, and that was in fair weather and bare ground.

Nellie sat by the stove the whole night through, completely overcome with grief, fear and despair. She forced herself to rouse when she got cold to fill the stove once in a while. She hadn't even bothered to light a lamp and her only light was the glow of the coals from the open draft on the stove.

Finally daylight came and Nellie got up to let Tiny out. When she opened the door, she was surprised to find that it was a beautiful morning. The wind had quieted and the sky was clear. The sun would soon be up and except for the large snow drift in front of the door, it was hard to realize how bad the storm had been.

With the dawning of a bright new day, Nellie's hopes began to rise. She told herself Pete would be home today. Of course, he couldn't make it during the storm, but now he could, and he could be coming any time. But while she told herself these things, deep down she knew he wouldn't. Pete would never leave her alone that long in such a storm, she knew he wouldn't.

Nellie reached in the box for another stick of wood and suddenly it dawned on her that the box was empty. She held in her hand the very last stick. In the box there only remained an accumulation of chips and bark and dirt. This was the first time since they had moved into the cabin that the box had ever been empty, for it held sufficient wood for several days and it had been Pete's habit, each day, to split and carry in a fresh supply so that the box was always piled high. Although the shed was full of wood, it wasn't split fine enough to go in the stove. It was all in huge blocks sawed from large fir logs. But she knew she must do something right away, she dared not wait. So she bundled herself up, for although it was clear, it was very cold, and she opened the door once more.

Pete always kept the shovel and the ax just out side the door. At first glance she could not even see the wood under the shed; it all looked like one big bank of snow. By taking the shovel and prodding around she was able to uncover the first tier of chunks. She managed to get one of these into the kitchen, then after removing her wraps, she took the ax and tried to do as she had seen Pete do so often. It looked so easy when he swung the ax and

split the wood, but try as she did she was unable to make any impression on that chunk of log. And so after ten or fifteen minutes she just had to give it up. There wasn't any use.

Now this was a real emergency. One that must be dealt with now, not one that she must face some day, but now. Nellie went back outside. She looked the wood rick over more closely and decided there were a few pieces which were small enough to go in the stove without splitting and so she set to work sorting these out and putting them in the wood box. She knew these hard round sticks would not burn very well, and would be no good at all to start a fire, but at the moment she could think of nothing else.

During the next few days Nellie suffered more than any woman ever should. She cried until her eyes were swollen almost shut, and she prayed, oh how she prayed. She had never been too concerned about religion, although as a girl she had attended Sunday School rather often, but now she felt the urgent need for prayer. She hadn't the strength to meet all this trouble alone.

Her grief for Pete was crushing, but added to that was her fear for herself and for their child. And she was completely bewildered. But now that her tears had finally run dry, she was becoming obsessed with the idea that some how she must get out and get help, not for herself, but someone had to find Pete and she must save his child.

By this time she had burned every stick of wood she could get in the stove. She had even burned the wood box and there only remained the table and benches and the boards over the vegetable hole. Two more days at most.

During these days Nellie had eaten very little but now she knew she must eat if she was to have the strength to go for help. There was plenty of bread, dried fruit and beans, and although she had no appetite for any of them, she did eat, and she began to lay her plans. She knew from what Pete had told her that the Flying M Ranch lay at the foot of the trail. It was only about five miles distant, but the difference in elevation was some four thousand feet, and the fact that the snow drifts made horse travel out of the question accounted for their isolation. Nellie also knew that the trail dropped steeply all the way and that long before she reached the bottom the snow would thin out and eventually the ground would be bare, but what she didn't know was how long it would take her to get down the mountain, or even if she could make it at all. But she must try. To stay was impossible.

For two days Nellie worked on the clothes she was to wear. She cut off and otherwise altered a pair of Pete's wool pants. She made warm mittens from some of Pete's heavy wool socks. They were left long so that she could pull them over her coat sleeves to keep the snow out. Her trousers were to be tied at the ankles for the same reason. While the weather had remained clear, it was still very cold each night and only slightly warmer in the days.

It was on the morning of the eighth day of Pete's absence that Nellie finally left the cabin to try to make her way down the mountain. She had forced herself to eat a good breakfast

of cornmeal mush with bacon fat, a dish of dried fruit, and bread. She saw to it that Tiny also had all she would eat. Then Nellie filled her pockets with dried fruit and what bread there was left. She put some matches in a bottle and put these inside her shirt pocket and buttoned the flap securely.

On the evening before, Nellie wrote a letter telling the details of her plight, her intentions, and all she knew about where and when Pete had gone. She had made a copy of this letter and one she left in the cabin, the other she now placed in another small bottle and fastened with a string to Tiny's collar. It was her hope that if she failed to reach help, at least Tiny would. Now, after all these preparations, Nellie spoke to Tiny and lifted the latch on the door and they stepped out into the early dawn.

What a surprise they received, for instead of the bitter cold of the last week, there was a soft gentle breeze blowing. It had no bite or sting at all. It was as though fate, having tested her to the very limit and beyond was now ready to lend a hand and Nellie thought this must be the answer to her prayers. And so she started out. She detoured [around] the largest drifts to some shallower place wherever she could. She didn't have as much trouble locating the trail as she had feared, for actually it was a series of trails and some of them were always visible between the drifts. Then she discovered that most of the larger drifts would hold her weight except at the very edge, so instead of avoiding them, she made use of them. It was sometimes very hard for her to get to the crusted part, but once there, she could make pretty good time for a short ways, then the crust would give way and she would find herself mired in snow sometimes to her knees or as much as to her waist. It was often necessary to crawl or roll until she reached solid footing again for she could not lift her crippled leg very far, and her pregnant condition made matters even worse. But she was making some headway, slow though it was. Tiny thought all of this was great fun, and when Nellie would roll down a drift, she would romp and bark alongside.

It was necessary for Nellie to rest often and each time she would look longingly back at the cabin and after two hours she could still see a friendly smoke drifting up through the trees and how she longed to be back there preparing a meal for Pete.

By now the sun was high in the sky, but off to the north and west clouds were beginning to appear. They were not the gray snow clouds of winter, but more like the billowing clouds of spring and summer, and now Nellie found that for the present at least, she was dressed far too warm and she was perspiring a good deal. Her garb did not permit much adjustment to compensate for the changes in the weather.

As Nellie sat resting and looking on down toward the foot of the mountain, she was almost overcome with despair. It looked so very, very far and she had made such little headway, and already she was so tired she could hardly move. Her leg was like lead and almost more of a burden than help, but she forced herself to get up and push on.

By noon she had gone perhaps two miles, but she had come a long way down and the snow drifts were much farther apart now and not nearly so deep, and she told herself it was a good thing for she could not have battled like that much longer.

Close at the side of the trail there was a large fir tree. She was nearing the last of the timber and from here on it would be rocks and sage brush with an occasional Juniper bush, and she crawled over to the tree and sat with her back against its trunk. Her body was wet with perspiration and her clothes were soaked from the outside from having wallowed in the snow drifts so long. And she was tired, oh so tired! Tiny came and sat by her side and Nellie laid her arm around her and from sheer exhaustion, and in no time at all, they were both sound asleep.

While they slept, the clouds thickened, the sun disappeared and when Nellie woke with a start. It was beginning to sprinkle. She didn't know how long she had slept, but she was cold and stiff and could hardly get to her feet and she felt as though the baby weighed a hundred pounds.

Ahead, the country was less steep for the next mile while she crossed over to the brink of Little Mountain, and because there was less snow and no timber, the trails were swept practically clear. Now, although walking was hard for her at best, she did find that she could make much better time and she hurried to cross this open country before dark. She knew now that she would have to find some sort of shelter for the night very soon. It was raining now, not hard, but steady, as though it had come to stay at least all night. It was cold and at times the wind freshened and drove the rain in her face. Tiny kept close to her side; she no longer thought it fun either.

When Nellie reached the brink of Little Mountain, she could see the trails tacking back and forth for miles until they finally reached the flats below and way out there she could see the Flying M Ranch. How she wished she were there! However she knew that her problem now was to find the driest place possible out of the wind where she could wait for morning for she could go no farther and could not trust herself to travel after dark anyway.

Along the brink of Little Mountain there is a limestone ledge and this is full of caves and overhangs and pockets of various sizes, but Nellie didn't know this, and so she considered herself very lucky when, without much trouble, she found a small room-sized pocket with a good overhang and facing away from the wind. She looked no farther but huddled there in the dry and shelter. She didn't sit long before she began to feel cold. She had never started a fire in the open in her life and she wasn't sure she could, although she had become quite expert at starting one in their stove in the cabin. That was much different, though, than starting a fire in the outdoors on a rainy night.

Wood wasn't a problem, for there were lots of juniper bushes all around and where there is juniper there is always lots of dead wood. While it was still light she forced herself to gather a pile and put it inside her shelter. Then she got out her matches. She broke off a handful of twigs and tried to light them, but they were damp and although she held the

match among them until it burned her fingers, they would not start. She tried again and again but the results were always the same, some smoke but no fire. She used up most of her matches and she was getting colder and colder. Finally she gave up in despair and burst into tears. It had been days now since she had allowed herself to cry, but life was too cruel; she felt she just could not go on. How could she live this night through? She was near exhaustion, wet and chilled to the bone, she could not get a fire started and she was too discouraged even to try to eat the dried fruit and bread which she had in her pockets.

So Nellie prayed. Her prayer was short, "Oh God, help me." And then she lost consciousness for a while.

In the mountains there are lots of pack rats. They like to build their nests in crevices in the rocks quite a ways up on the side of a ledge where they are safe from bobcats or coyotes, and another favorite place is in a cave or under an overhang. They sometimes build their nests in the very roof of such a place where it doesn't seem possible. If they have room they will pile up a bunch of sticks and grass as large as a washtub. This pile is usually well mixed with pads from cactus or prickly pear. I think this is just another precaution against predators.

When Nellie blacked out, she had fallen over. She wasn't out very long, but when she came to she was lying on the ground and all she could see was the roof of the overhang. She couldn't recall where she was for a bit, and then remembered she was trying to start a fire. All of a sudden she sat up with a start, got to her feet and grabbed a stick, for there was her kindling, right up in the roof over her head – a packrat nest! Dry grass and bark and twigs. She pulled down a big bunch with her stick and with one match, she had her fire started.

Nellie used her wood sparingly and as the warmth from the fire began to creep into her body, her courage and spirit also began to return. She ate some of her food and she dozed until the fire burned low, then after putting on more wood she dozed again and her clothes began to dry some too.

By morning Nellie was ready to move on. It had been a long night and she had not rested well, but she did have some of her strength back. It was still raining lightly outside and she hated to leave her fire, but she knew from yesterday's experiences that she would need all of this day if she were going to reach help. She also knew it would be today or never. She would not have the strength to survive another night in the open.

When Nellie left her shelter that morning, she encountered a new hazard. Now instead of snow it was mud. Not deep mud, for the trail was too rocky for that, but nevertheless sticky, slick mud. She slipped and slid down the steep trail, favoring her crippled leg and relying on her staff to help her keep her feet. She hadn't gone far until she slipped and fell. She got to her feet covered with mud, and that was but the first of many falls that day, for the rain continued to come down relentlessly. It was nothing short of a miracle that she reached the foot of the mountain at all, let alone without breaking any bones, but

she did, and it was after she reached the foot of the hill that she finally fell for the last time and had neither the strength nor courage to rise again.

Dick Barnett, who worked for the Flying M happened to be riding out that way that day, and he heard a dog bark. It was half bark and half howl, and he thought someone's dog was probably caught in a coyote trap, so he rode over toward the sound. It was Tiny, and that's how they came to find Nellie. Dick said she was so covered with mud he almost missed seeing her at all, and wouldn't have if the dog hadn't tried to lick her face.

Dick jumped off his horse and tried to rouse her, but he thought she was dead, so he raced as fast as his horse could go to the ranch a mile or so away. There they got a spring wagon and went out and brought her in.

It was a full day before they brought her around, but they found the message on Tiny's collar and four men went to look for Pete. With the help of Nellie's message, it wasn't too hard to find him, and from the signs they figured out just about what had happened.

Pete had reached the bottom of Devil's Canyon in good shape. There he took off his webs and left them under a tree because there was very little snow on the far side of the canyon. He had stalked the deer as he had planned, but the one he shot had not fallen on the spot. Instead it had climbed much higher before finally falling. That was one of the delaying factors. Pete had dressed it and dragged and carried it in one piece to the bottom of the canyon, however at that point he was some half mile or more down the canyon from where he had crossed on his way over, and that far from his webs. In the bottom he found the snow a couple of feet deep and he needed the webs badly. He cut the deer in half and took only the hind quarters.

It was evident that he had had quite a time struggling through the snow with that half deer. And then the storm must have struck and he missed his snow shoes. He struggled on up the bottom part where he should have started to climb out of the canyon. Finally he cut the quarters in two and hung one in a tree, taking the one and going on. Then he tried to climb out of the canyon in an impossible place. They found him there face down with a quarter of deer across his neck, and they called it exhaustion, or maybe heart failure. And that is what they had to report to Nellie. A few days later she lost her baby and as soon as she was able, she said goodbye to everyone and went back to the city.

Photo: 25 - Pete Garvey's headstone; here spelled "Gervay" in the Kane, Wyoming cemetery.

A footnote: This, I would like to say, is basically a true story, as to

the name of Pete Garvey and the location of his claim, and the details of his death, and the ordeal of his wife after his death. As to her name, I do not know it, but it was not Nellie. As to details, I have had to use my own imagination for some of them, and I know I have done a poor job as far as English goes, but I have long considered this one of the real true life stories of which I personally know. I knew Pete personally and all of this took place close to my home. I had to write it. W.G.S.

Journal of Wylie Grant Sherwin, December 11, 1960

From Book 3: A New Family Begins, 1916 – 1919

Wylie courts Mildred Huntington

When I returned to our own ranch that fall, I found that Lissie was teaching as private teacher for the Hough children in the Dry Head, George was working for one of the neighbors, and, of course, Jim was still in school.

Mildred Huntington had finished [high] school in Kansas and was now teaching at the home school on Crooked Creek, although the old log school house had been torn down and a new frame school put up. The new building was down near the creek and quite nice. It was lighted well, and warm, but it had no "heart", no character, and I feel sure it never was to its children what that old log room was to those of us who were privileged to live and learn there. Had I known then what I feel now, I should have liked to see that building preserved for posterity. Not that it turned out any Lincolns or Boones or Crockets, although others like it have, but it would have given the boys and girls of today a vivid picture of a very recent past.

And now Mildred was teaching in the new building. Mildred and I had been school-time sweethearts and we had kept up a correspondence all the time she had been away to school. Although lots of the time mail was rather difficult where I was, I always knew there would be letters from Mildred when the mail did come.

That was a wonderful winter, and we had lots of fun. There were dances at the school house and horseback rides, hay rides and dances over on the Stinking Water. There wasn't enough to keep us all busy at the ranch that winter, so I put out a string of traps. I did pretty well, and on the side, I had taken three colts to break. Horse breaking didn't pay much, but as long as I was trapping and riding every day anyway, I had just as well be riding colts.

Dad had got the idea of taking up a claim in the Garvin Basin, and in April the next year, we went back there and surveyed it out and at the same time we surveyed a ditch. This was a "desert claim" and in order to hold it we would have to put water on it. Later that summer, after the first cutting of hay was up at home, Dad and I returned to work on the ditch. It was necessary to take a plow and slip and other tools, and there was no road from our side of the Bighorns into the Garvin Basin. We took a team and light wagon, loaded in our camp and tools, and I rode a saddle horse to scout the way. We crossed the Bighorn River and went up over Little Mountain and on to Medicine Mountain, then Duncan Mountain, Sheep Mountain and finally came to the road that came in from the Sheridan side. It took us five days and it was probably less than 50 miles, but most of the way there was no road at all and where there was, it was only a sheep wagon track.

I remember crossing over Medicine Wheel. We stopped there on top for a while to look at the wheel. At that time, no one had thought of preserving it but it was in pretty good

shape. Going down the far side of that cut was one of the adventures of the trip. We knew it would be tough for it was necessary to drop off about fifteen hundred feet down a very steep slope where there was no road and lots of big rocks. The team could not possibly hold the wagon back and it would be dangerous to attempt to ride in the wagon for fear of being thrown out or tipping over.

There was no timber on top of the mountains, but we had cut two short stout pieces about twelve feet long on the way up and brought them with us. So now we took the back wheels off and put these logs over the front axle, one on each side, and under the back axle, lashed them securely, loaded the wheels inside, and then with Dad mounted on one of the team horses, and me with my saddle rope fastened in the rear to help hold back, we started down. It was a rough trip, and about a mile down that hill, but we made it. After all that we didn't get much time to work that year, but we did get our supplies in there anyway.

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In looking back over my work, I see that it has been almost eight years since I started my memoirs, and two years since I started this book. I had better get busy now and try to bring it a little farther along.

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It was the spring of 1915 when Mildred and I decided to get married. We were only twenty, but both of us were much more mature than our years would indicate. Mildred's mother had died when she was nine. There was her brother Burt a few years younger, and Ted, who was only two years old. Grandma Huntington came to help out so Mildred and the boys were raised by their father and the old lady. Mildred being the oldest took the situation very seriously even at that age, and she tried to be mother to the boys and companion to her dad. She loved horses and stock and so spent many long hours in the saddle helping with the cattle, and she became very good. Her Dad, being the easy going kind, let Mildred have more and more of the responsibility around the place until by the time she was 15 years old she could pretty well handle any situation that came up. But then her world tumbled in on her. Her Dad, whom she had come to look upon as her special charge, and upon whom she had showered a double measure of devotion since the death of her mother, went to Kansas and returned with a new wife.

The children were not properly prepared. Their father had only told them just before he left that he was going to bring home a new wife. He had met her while on business in Kansas City and they had never seen her. The shock to Mildred was one which she never recovered from, and it was very difficult for her to accept Eva into her life. The word 'mother' would stick in her throat and she never learned to use it with ease.

To make matters worse, Eva resented Mildred even more than Mildred did her. Eva was no horsewoman, and she never would be. She tried for a while, but after seeing how efficient Mildred was, and how helpless she was, she could not stand the sight of a horse. Mildred had her dad to herself while they were riding, only to suffer for it when they returned to the house. That's how it happened that Mildred went to Kansas to go to High School. Of course, there was no High School closer than Lovell anyway, and Mildred's

Grandmother had gone to Kansas to live after Cecil got married, so Mildred went there for three winters, completing the four year course in that time.

Mildred returned to the ranch each summer. She hated Kansas, but had little comfort at home except to mother the boys, for it wasn't long until there were two families. Eva was not young when married, and child bearing was not something that she could take in stride, although she had three boys rather close together. She [suffered] poor health most of the time from then on, and she welcomed Mildred home so that she could do the cooking and housekeeping and look after her brothers, for as I said, it was always two families.

After Mildred finished school and returned to the Creek to teach, she again stayed at home. It was only a short way to school and there was no place to stay [closer]. The boys needed her and she loved her Dad very much and would not hurt him if it could possibly be avoided. Even so, staying home was not easy, for she was expected to do most of the cooking, washing and housework, even though paying twenty-five dollars a month out of the sixty she received as salary, for board and room. The balance she spent very sparingly on herself, but mostly to provide clothes for the boys.

As for myself, I had no serious problems at home, only that we were always hard up, what with paying off the mortgage and providing for a family of six, there just never seemed to be enough money to go around. And except for a little for clothes and enough to buy a new Hamley saddle, I gladly turned all that I was able to earn into the family treasury. I had been working at home for a year but aside from food and clothes, the place just didn't pay any cash dividends.

Getting Married

Mildred and I had a tentative date set to get married, but it would hinge on when we got the hay up. We usually could count on July 1st, and that year I wanted to help as many of the neighbors as I could, as well as getting our own hay up, for that was to be my stake to get married on.

Mildred had gone up to Powell a few days earlier to stay with her Uncle Roy and to have Aunt Mattie help her with her wedding dress. It was July 3rd when I put my new saddle on my best horse, Sam, and with $45 in my pocket and high hopes in my heart, I rode off to get married. I went to Powell that night, thirty-five miles, and stayed with Uncle Charley. Of course, I stopped off to see Mildred. The next day I rode to Cody where I would have to get the license. July 4th was a poor choice of day, of course, I knew I would have to stay all night and that I planned on, but I hadn't had any experience with the Cody Stampede, which in those days was really wild.

It was late evening when I rode into town and I headed straight for the Keystone Barn, one of the two main livery stables there. I had to do some pretty good talking to get my horse in, for they insisted they just didn't have room. Every stall was full and the big lot in back was so crowded that less than half the horses were able to get to the feed rack. In the barn and in the office up front, there were almost as many cowboys as horses, but I didn't know any of them. I was quite a way off my home range, and not a rodeo hand either.

I finally bought a feed of oats for Sam, and after standing by until he ate them, the barn boss agreed to let me turn him into the big lot. I know he never got a bite of hay, but I paid one-fifty, just the same. And now the problem was to find a place that I could sleep. I tried a few places, but no one had a bed anywhere. I finally wound up at the Hart Mountain Inn. It was just across from the Keystone. I would have gone there first, but everyone said there was no chance, for that was where almost all the cowboys were staying. The woman who ran the place said she had a half a room that she could rent. She said there was already one man in it, but he had agreed that she could rent the other half, and so she took me upstairs to show it to me. I was somewhat surprised to find that the room had but one bed and when I told the lady so, she said, "You didn't expect to have a whole bed all to yourself on the Fourth of July, did you?"

Well, I paid my two dollars and signed up for my half of the bed. I might have considered going back to the barn and sleeping with the horses if there hadn't been so many, and I could have asked to sleep in the hay loft, but I am sure that was full. I went up on Main Street and found a place where I could squeeze up to a counter and get myself a bite to eat. I stopped around by Wolfville for a few minutes, but I had no money to spend on celebrating, so I returned to the room rather early. There was no one there, so I pulled my boots, took off my hat, shirt and overalls, and crawled into bed.

I was very tired and I must have gone right to sleep. I know it was the small hours when my roommate came in. Apparently he had been warned that someone else was in the

room, for he came in quietly and without lighting the lamp, shed his boots and outer garments and crawled in on the other side of the bed. In the morning, when I awoke and got up and dressed, he was still sleeping soundly. His face was to the wall and to this day I do not know who I slept with that night.

The town was pretty well deserted that morning when I got out on the street. I went first to the barn to look after my horse. I caught him and grained him again, and as one stall was vacant at this time, I got permission to put him there where he could get some hay. Then I found a place to eat and at nine that morning I got my license, and as Park County had only been established in 1912, mine should be among the first few hundred to be issued there.

After the courthouse, I went up town to Dave Jones' Clothing Store and bought a few clothes, including a pair of Justin boots, a shirt, some socks and underwear. I had left my suit at Uncle Charley's on the way up. Then I stopped by the Finkern Jewelry Store and bought a plain gold ring. There was very little of the forty-five dollars left in my pocket when I tied my bundle on Sam and rode back to Powell.

At nine in the morning of July 6th, Mildred and I were married by Reverend Wardlaw, and with Mildred on her little buckskin mare, Topsy, and me on my favorite horse, Sam, we started back to the ranch on Crooked Creek.

The First Winter

By this time Lissie was married[34] and George had gone off to work and there was only Jim, the youngest, and myself left at home. To the little old cabin on the ranch we had added another bedroom, so that now there was a fairly large kitchen, a smaller living room, and two small bedrooms. Just outside there was a framed tent with a board floor and a heating stove for winter. This tent had been the bedroom for us boys, when we were home, for a long time. Now Mildred and I had the one bedroom while Dad and Mother had the other.

I remember that in our room the floor was old and the boards were not very even, and in a few places the knots had fallen out leaving holes where mice could come in. It was a nightly practice in the fall of the year to set traps by these holes to keep down the mice, when they were looking for inside quarters for winter. It was as good as either of us had been used to, and with a few hand-made rugs on the floor, we felt quite cozy.

However, before settling down to the everyday life on the ranch, Mildred and I took a ten day honeymoon. Naturally, we could not afford anything that cost money, so we took a couple of pack horses and roamed around the Bighorn Mountains, visiting most of the places where I had camped and worked, and seeing some of the places I had never had time to explore.

We all got along very well at home. Of course, it was a bit crowded for two families, and the income was altogether too small, but with Dad trapping in winter and me working out whenever I could, close to home, we did manage. Mildred applied for the school, but because Dad was on the board and her being in the family, the other board members felt it would be a family affair, so they said no.

I did some trapping myself that winter and quite by accident I found out that the meat market in Red Lodge wanted to buy Cottontail Rabbits. They were paying 15-cents each. I sent them a box full, all nicely skinned, dressed and clean. Not a shot up one in the bunch, for I had killed them all with a twenty-two rifle. And if there was a badly damaged one I threw it out. To my surprise, when I got the check back, it was not for 15-cents each, but 20-cents each, and they would take all I could send them. It seems they were used to having their rabbits shot with a shotgun, and with the fur on, and mine were in much demand. Rabbits were plentiful and lots of days I would come in with eight or ten. These I would skin and care for and place them in a box to freeze. When the box was full I would send them off to Red Lodge.

Feeding cattle, getting and cutting wood, putting up ice, doing chores, traps and hunting, that's the way the winter went, and there was to be a baby by July. In June, I found a job on a farm near Powell. It was the Wendell Phillips [farm] and Wendell had been called with the National Guard to go to the Mexican border to help with the Mexican trouble down there. There was room in their house for both of us, and Mildred would be near a doctor. And so it was there on July 2nd, 1916 that Virginia was born. Mother and child got

[34] She married Jim Cles, a long time Powell farmer whose spread was just west of town.

along fine, thanks to Dr. Lewellen, and when the baby was ten days old, I returned to the ranch. I would come to Lovell a few days later with the spring wagon to get my family. They would come from Powell to Lovell by train.

It was July 16, the day I was to meet Mildred in Lovell, and from the ranch to Lovell was 11 miles. That is, it was 11 miles if I went by the ford on the Stinking Water [Shoshone] River. If I went by the bridge at Kane, it was twenty-one. High water was pretty well over, and I was sure I could ford. It happened that Jack Snell came through the yard the evening before on his way home from Lovell. I stopped him to ask how the ford was, and he said it was fine, barely hub deep, no trouble at all. So I wasn't worried. I could drive over there in about three hours with the mares and spring wagon. The train was due about noon. I would plan to be there a little early, deliver the cream and do a little shopping and be ready to return as soon as they arrived.

It was about ten that morning when I arrived at the river. The old Studebaker spring wagon was a real sturdy rig, and the mares were a rangy, well broke pair, and they could travel. On the spring wagon I had a cream can, 5 gallons and almost full, a case of eggs, and a basket to put the baby in. The latter Mother had fixed up for us, and it was real pretty, all lined in pink and with soft pink blankets. I had the cream can up front where I could watch it to keep it from tipping over. The basket was in the seat beside me.

As I started down the hill to the bar, I didn't like the looks of the river. It didn't look low to me, and although I hadn't crossed here for over a year, still there were unmistakable signs. The water was muddy and there was trash floating by. To be sure, I could see the wagon tracks where Jack had crossed only yesterday evening, but still, I was sure the river had risen considerably since then. It might be even too high to cross. But it was seven miles down to the bridge and eleven back up the other side to Lovell, and I was almost there. It would take four hours to go around and the train was due at noon. There would be no one there to meet Mildred, and her with a two-week old baby. I had to cross!

I sized the river up good. I could see by the tracks that I had to go as far up the bar as I could and even then I would have to angle upstream in order to avoid deep, swift water on the far side, where there was quite a high bank that would make it impossible for the team to climb out.

I gave the mares a few minutes to rest, then drove in. I hadn't gone thirty feet until I knew I was in for trouble, but I couldn't turn back. It takes room to turn a wagon like that, and I didn't have it. I kept the horses turned upstream, but when the current got well up on their sides, they were forced sideways with every step. The water was coming through and over the bed of the spring wagon and I could feel it being shoved sideways, and then we dropped about a foot. The mares were just teetering between swimming and wading, and only because of the heavy iron on the spring wagon did it touch bottom at all. We were only about half way across, but right there I could see we were being carried well below where there was a chance of getting out.

And things were beginning to happen in the wagon. First the eggs floated out of the back end, then the cream can tipped over and while I was rescuing that with one hand and driving with the other, the basket bounced out of the seat. I held the cream can with my feet and grabbed the basket. It was filled with muddy water but I rescued it.

Oh, well. You know I got out, or I wouldn't be writing this, [and] God only knows how, but I know why. I had to meet that train.

When we finally reached the shore and the mares got good footing again, it was then and only then that I noticed we were coming out directly into the mouth of a draw. The opening had been covered with brush until we were fair into it, but I believe those mares knew it was there all the time. We crowded past the brush screen and into the draw, and there we stopped on firm dry ground. The mares stood there, water running off them and the harness and the water running out to the spring wagon. The water had been clear up in the seat and I was wet almost to my waist. I pulled my boots and emptied the water, then took off my pants and wring the water out of them as best I could. But I knew I would have to stand most of the rest of the way to town in order to dry out.

By scouting around a little, I found a place where we could get out of the coulee and back onto the road. They called that the Hooker Crossing because the road came out in Mr. Hooker's yard, and as I came to the house, Mr. Hooker called out. He met me and said, "My God, man! You wouldn't try to ford that river today would you?" I said, "No, I sure wouldn't, but I did!" We decided that someone up at the dam had pulled a plug; there was no other reason for the sudden rise in the river.

I arrived at the station on time, and we took the long way home. Mildred was quite tired for we hadn't planned on such a long trip, and we had to get a few dry things in Lovell to refix the basket. That was one time that the basket was wet and it wasn't Virginia's fault.

Once back at the ranch we soon were settled back in our room. We fixed a low bench for the baby's basket against one wall and close to the dresser where we kept the coal-oil lamp so it would be handy when we had to get up to do the necessary chores at night.

The Baby and the Rattlesnake

It was sometime in late August, or early September, I believe. Anyway, Virginia was about two months old. We had all been in bed long enough to be asleep when I suddenly awoke to the tune of a rattle, and it wasn't a baby rattle, although it came from the direction of the basket. I knew immediately it was a rattlesnake in the room. All was pitch dark. The sound came from under the basket or under the dresser, and on the dresser was the only light and matches. It was only a step from my side of the bed, but who wants to step out of bed in the general direction of a rattlesnake? I called to Dad in the next room, woke him up and told him to bring us a light.

All this time the snake kept up a continuous rattle. I knew this could only mean that he was disturbed in some way, and [that] usually indicates a readiness to strike. It seemed like an hour before Dad got there with that light and we were able to locate our prowler. He had come in by one of the knot holes in the floor and had managed to get caught in a mouse trap. He was trying frantically to get back out the way he had come in, but the trap being clamped securely to his middle was holding him. I was able to make a hook from a piece of wire and get him out of doors and kill him. We were all pretty scared and excited except Virginia who never even woke up.

Needless to say, I did a little floor patching the next day.

A New Cabin

Mother and Dad were wonderful to us and we all got along very well that fall and winter, but it was pretty crowded and a baby does bother older people. We had never planned to live always this way, and so in the summer of 1917 Mildred and I began to plan on a little cabin of our own. And by that time we knew there was to be another baby, come fall.

We didn't plan to leave the ranch. Dad and Mother wanted us to stay, although there really wasn't enough money coming in to keep two families. But Dad wasn't too strong. He had only one lung and one leg was two inches short due to having been shot in the leg while a young man. Jim was now about sixteen and quite a bit of help, but not able to do a man's work. Down on the lower end of the ranch there was a small grove of trees. During the summer the ditch ran close by and there was a red bluff on the north which gave good protection from the wind, and here we planned to build our cabin.

Between hayings that summer, I found time to cut and haul the logs and on the Pryors where I got them there was also a small saw mill. By cutting and hauling some logs to the mill I was able to get some rough lumber. It was $8 per thousand board feet[35] if I furnished the logs and $12 if not, so naturally I hauled the logs, even though I only needed one thousand board feet.

It didn't take too long with Dad's help to lay the logs and we built it in one room 16 x 20 [feet]. Then as I was able to find the time, I put in the floor of the rough lumber from the mill. I installed the windows, and the roof was of rough lumber covered with tar paper and then about 8 inches of dirt. The doors were of rough lumber and I still had a few choice boards which I had saved back. These I hand planed to make a table and dish cupboard.

At about this time there were quite a lot of people around Lovell who were putting gas in their houses and I was able to get a pretty good wood cookstove which, although used, was a real dream to us. The room was too small for two stoves and we planned to make the range do double duty. We brought the bed and dresser from the main house, and Mildred had an old trunk which served also as a sort of seat. [We had] one old rocking chair and some handmade benches for the table. There was a wall shelf for the water buckets and under that, a bench for the wash basin, and behind the door a roller towel. In one corner we had hung a curtain around to make a clothes closet. It didn't have to be so big for there wasn't too much to go into it. I believe, except for the little four by four privy out back, I have truly listed all of the comforts which we possessed.

By all standards of the modern day and maybe even by the standards of that day, we were poorly housed, under fed and under paid. Yet, as long as there was no one to keep telling

[35] A board foot is a volume measurement of lumber. One board foot is a board 1 foot wide and 1 foot long x 1 inch thick, or any multiple that comes out to 144 cubic inches. It could be 4 inches wide and 3 feet long x 1 inch thick, or 6 inches wide by 1 foot long x 2 inches thick. A standard 2 x 4 is roughly 2 inches by 4 inches by 8 feet long, so a stack of 200 of them is about 1066 board feet. This is about what Dad needed for his cabin.

us so, we didn't know it and we were very happy. We had high hopes, lots of courage, and ambition, unrestricted freedom, we knew our whole future lay ahead of us and we asked no help from any man. We knew we could, with God's help, solve our problems and work out our own destiny.

We had lots of fun as well as plenty of hard work during those early years. I am reminded of one incident which I shall relate here. It was the fall after Virginia was born. There was to be a Thanksgiving [square dance and it was] to be a masquerade. We didn't have too much to work with, but we decided to go as Pilgrims. I mean much as the Pilgrims went to the first Thanksgiving. Mildred and Mother ripped up old things and pieced and sewed until they came up with some pretty good costumes. Dad always called the square dances and acted as sort of floor manager, so he and Mother didn't try to compete very much in the costumes. They simply put on some old outdated things and let it go at that. As said, Dad sort of took charge of things like this, so he and Jim and Mother went early.

It took Mildred and I longer to get ready and we had the baby to think of also, but finally I brought the team and spring wagon around. We put Virginia in the basket and tucked her in good and then I put a head of cabbage at the foot of the basket and some carrots and beets around the sides, just as though it were a basket of freshly harvested garden things.

It was quite late when we got there and the dance was in full swing. There was a big crowd and you could hardly tell whether one was [young or old], they all looked like strangers to me. We cleared a place on one of the desks, parked our basket and got into the dance. It turned out to be the dance before the Grand March, to decide the prize winners.

When the dance ended, Dad announced that we would have the judging while everyone paraded around the room. We happened to be right by Virginia's basket and although she hadn't made a sound, we were afraid she might, so we took the basket of "produce" with us on the march. First one couple, then another [was] taken off the floor until we were the only ones left, and then we took off our masks. And some of the neighbors said, "But what did you do with the baby?" We laid aside the carrots, the cabbage and the beets and there she was! Still sound asleep.

But to get back to the cabin. I finally got things to the point where we could move in about the middle of September, and really none too soon for it was the night of the first of October that we had to have Dad go to Lovell to get Dr. Olson. Dad had bought his first Ford automobile in preparation for this very thing. It was midnight before the Doctor arrived, and our first boy was born about four-thirty in the morning of October 2nd. After everyone was taken care of, I well remember walking out into the clear frosty air with Dr. Olson. It was beautiful. Frost sparkled everywhere and the sun was just tipping the Bighorn Mountains. All was well and peace surrounded us. I was a happy man. Teddy [Ted] was named for Mildred's younger brother, [Ted Burton Sherwin[36]].

[36] Ted's name was actually Ted. People kept trying to upgrade him to Theodore most of his life.

I find I must back up a little here in order to clarify a few things. Of course, the war was on [WW I] and until now I haven't mentioned it. Really so far it had not made too much of an impact on our lives. I had been called for classification, given a 3-F rating, and told to return to the ranch to contribute my efforts there. George tried to enlist in the Navy, but was too tall for his weight, and too young, and of course Jim was not old enough. The same was true of Mildred's brother, Ted, who by now was in Cody working for his room and board and going to high school. But Burt [Huntington], who was then eighteen, enlisted in the Marines in 1916.

Lots of things were hard to get and I remember white flour was one of them, and for every pound of white flour you were required to buy an equal amount of dark flour, such as rye, barley, or even oats. Sugar was another scarce commodity and we had to use honey. This however was not too hard in our case, for Dad had been raising bees as a side line for some time and now that honey was a real good price, he decided to go into it in a bigger way.

It was during this winter of 1917 that I got a chance to rent the Raymond place. It was only a couple of miles up the creek. It had good crop land, good improvements and a nice orchard. I had my choice of a half and half crop deal, or I could rent it for one thousand dollars cash, to be paid after fall harvest.

I talked the deal over with the folks and they agreed I should take it. I had my own work stock and a small bunch of cows and it didn't look too bad. Dad advised that I better play it safe and share the crop. But Mildred and I talked it over and decided we would rather do it on a cash basis. The war was causing farm prices to look much better than in the past. So it happened that we only lived in our one-room cabin from September until the following March. Then we moved to the Raymond place where we had two bedrooms and a large kitchen and living room. As the Raymonds had bought a place in Powell, they left most of their old furniture in place.

We hired a man as soon as spring work got underway. He was a good man, and we all worked like dogs that year, but we were well paid when fall came. We had raised fifty acres of oats and the hay crop was very heavy. The orchard had provided us with a lot of fruit and some cash, and Mildred canned all the fruit and garden things she could find jars for. On top of that, she raised 20 hand fed bum lambs[37]. Our two sows each had fine litters of pigs, and to top it all off, prices were high. It took less than one fourth to pay our rent, but we had really done too good, and Dad Raymond was furious. He felt he was cheated and refused to rent to me another year on any basis.

In the meantime, Dad had gone into the honey business bigger than ever and in order to provide plenty of feed for his bees, and partly because he and Jim couldn't handle the place alone, they decided to let the alfalfa go to seed.

It was a wise decision and he did very well both from the honey and the seed. But now he had to find more bee pasture and as I was going to be out of a place to farm, Dad offered

[37] A bum lamb is an orphan.

me the home place on the same basis that I had had the Raymonds place. He and mother had decided to buy a house in Lovell and so we made a deal. Again I preferred the cash deal.

And now the war was over and in March of 1919 we moved back to the home place. This time just before our third was born. And so Clifford was born on the ranch March 21, 1919. Dr. Olson again was the doctor, and about all I can remember about that day was that the frost was going out and the mud was so bad in the yard that Dr. Olson got stuck and we had to get the team to pull him out.

The End

Additions to Wylie's Journal by Russell F. Sherwin

I had started several times over the past 20 years to read Dad's journal in the original longhand, but had stopped after a couple dozen pages each time. I was working then, and busy with other interests, and it was a lot of work to read. I even started to type it into the computer once, but that didn't go anywhere. This time, being retired and with little else to distract me, it finally took root. I spent about 80 or 90 hours keying it all into Microsoft Word.

It was a labor of love. After I got past the part I had started to read several times, it was all unplowed ground. I got so wrapped up in it I would type for hours, one more page, then another, until my eyes were bleary and my hands ached, because I had to find out how the story ended. And then there was the next episode, and the next.

Unfortunately Dad stopped writing before he got finished. His Book 3 ended with his marriage to Mildred Huntington and the arrival of the three kids, Virginia, Ted and Clifford. No mention was made of Betty who was born in 1920 in Lovell. I don't know why he stopped there; maybe he was tired of it. Anyway, I think a little more should be said. I have added some of my own history of the Trail Shop, and have also included some material contributed by Betty and Ted.

For reference, the approximate coordinates of the place on Crooked Creek are 44.9ºN x 108.4ºW

Russ Sherwin
June 24, 2008

The Trail Shop

About 1921, when Wylie was 26, he moved his family, now consisting of a wife and four kids, to the Northfork of the Shoshone River. The community here is called Wapiti[38], or, more recently, Wapiti Valley, and it extends approximately from where the Shoshone River becomes the Buffalo Bill Reservoir up to the Shoshone National Forest boundary. It is alternately referred to as The Northfork, and it is the road from Cody to the East Entrance of Yellowstone Park, US 20, extending all the way from Chicago, Illinois to Newport, Oregon. There was, and still is, a grade school called Wapiti School just about at the center of the valley that served all the kids that lived there. All four of my brothers and sisters and I attended school there. Wylie served on the school board, and for a time in the 1940's he ran the Wapiti Post Office out of the Trail Shop. It was a contract office, meaning that anyone who lived in the valley and wanted the job could apply for it. It only amounted to an hour or so per day. Incidentally, a first-class stamp was 3-cents.

In 1921, what is now US highway 14/20 through the Northfork and into Yellowstone was nothing more than a graded dirt road and was called The Yellowstone Trail. But Wylie saw potential here in the tourist travel he was sure would develop as the automobile enabled more and more people to travel as they had never been able to do before. The idea was to have cabins, a gas station, and a store selling novelties and leather goods. He named it The Trail Shop.

The Shoshone Forest boundary is 25 miles from Cody, Wyoming, and the forest extends all the way to the East Entrance of Yellowstone. Wylie's objective was to build as close to the forest boundary as he could without actually being in the forest. You could build in the forest, there were already similar businesses in the forest, but there were lots of rules and it was difficult to get permits. Dad was never much for permits. So, using the Forest Service survey maps and data available at the time, he staked out about 10 acres of land, and began building.

And the Forest Service came along about a year later and re-surveyed and decided that the cabins he had started were actually inside the forest. So sorry, our bad, but you have to move. Wylie tore down the cabins, relocated about 100 yards east and started over.

And the Forest Service came along about a year later and re-surveyed and decided that the cabins he had started were actually inside the forest. Wait! Doesn't this sound like the previous paragraph? No, I'm not making this up. This time, the Forest Service was sufficiently embarrassed that they granted him a 99-year lease and enabled him to keep The Trail Shop on about 2 acres just inside the forest boundary. He still had about 10 acres that were rightfully his outside the boundary to the east.

[38] Wapiti means elk; in fact, this is the correct name for the animal commonly called elk in Wyoming.

The cabins and main house were, of course, built out of logs. These were considerably better and more robust construction than the ones on the place at Crooked Creek, but still logs. They had actual finished floors, and fireplaces, and real cook stoves, and real (though mostly homemade) furniture. But they didn't have running water, unless you ran out and got it, and they didn't have electricity.

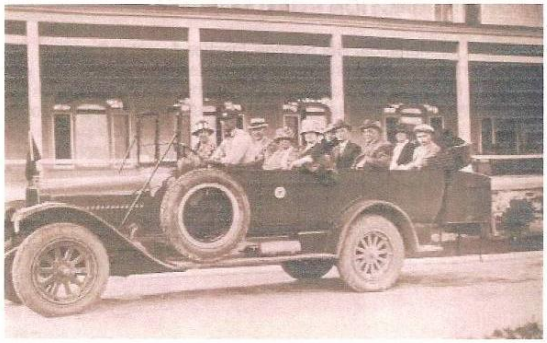


Photo: 26 - 1921-22 White Motors bus

Wylie's judgment about tourist travel through Yellowstone proved correct. The Trail Shop thrived, although the season was only four months long. The Park opened sometime in May, and travel started in earnest after school let out around the first of June. Then when school started again after Labor Day, travel abruptly dropped, and from then until the first snow closed the Park again around mid-October, it was mostly local people. During this 4 month period they had to earn a living for the whole year.

Cody was a passenger railhead at the time, and there were busses that took people on multi-day tours from Cody through Yellowstone, staying overnight at the various hotels and lodges inside the park. The first busses were 1921 White open touring busses like the one shown in the photo at left by the Wyoming State Historical Society. The second generation busses were 1936-38 White chassis with four doors along one side, four bench seats, and a canvas roll-back top. See photo below. We called these the "Yellow Busses." Wylie made a deal with some of the bus drivers to stop at the Trail Shop on their way to and from the Park.


Photo: 27 -1936-38 White Motor Co bus operated by the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company. This is a reproduction of the original with a Ford engine and chassis, but the same body.

It probably was something like free ice cream. Anyway, it worked and after a season or two it became a regular thing for the busses to stop twice a day, once in the morning going up, and once in the afternoon returning. These were very popular tours and it was not unusual to have up to eight or ten busloads of people at one time.

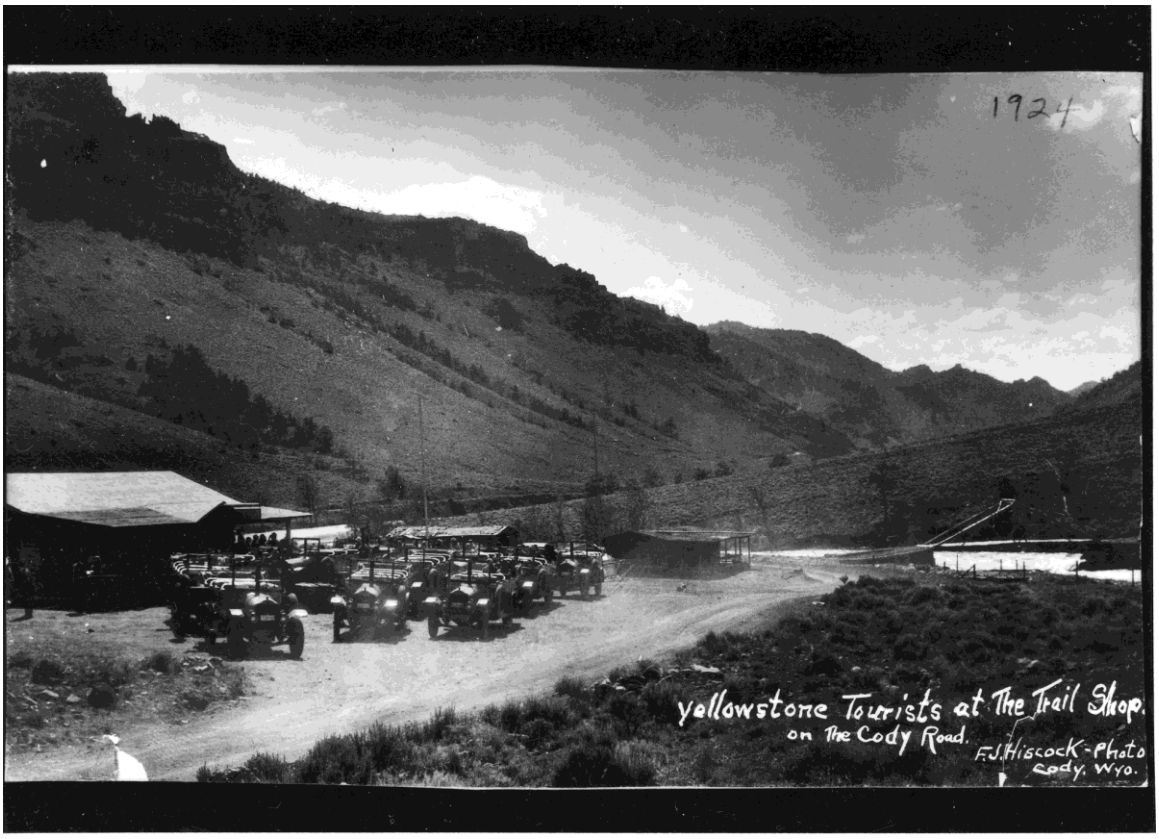


Photo: 28 - The Trail Shop in 1924 with Yellowstone Park Busses of the 1921 vintage out front. Note the dirt road in front. This is the actual "Yellowstone Trail," the only road from Cody to Yellowstone until the mid-1930s.

By the 1930's there were 13 cabins, a Mobilgas station, and a store. The specialty goods sold in the store were leather purses and wallets, made by inmates of the Wyoming State Penitentiary, deerskin leather jackets and gloves, silver and turquoise jewelry made by the Navajo Indians, Navajo rugs, and dolls and blankets made by the Hopi Indians. For a time, they offered homemade ice cream and homemade waffles. The ice cream was made in a 5-gallon can that rotated in a tub of a slurry of ice and salt, identical to the small hand cranked ones you can buy today, but much larger and powered by a belt off the Onan electric generator Wylie had installed.

Betty Gunn's narrative

Editor's note: The following is from Betty Gunn (nee Sherwin) and was sent to me in October of 2003 at my request for more information about the missing period of time in Dad's narrative.

In 1926, Mildred became ill with tuberculosis. She had been caring for Jim Legg's father, who had TB, and contracted it herself. Wylie packed the whole family up in the Studebaker with side curtains and headed off to California for the warmer climate that he believed might benefit Mildred. He got a job through a shirttail relative of the Huntington's picking oranges. When Mildred failed to improve, they went to Salt Lake City where Wylie had heard of a doctor that might be able to help.

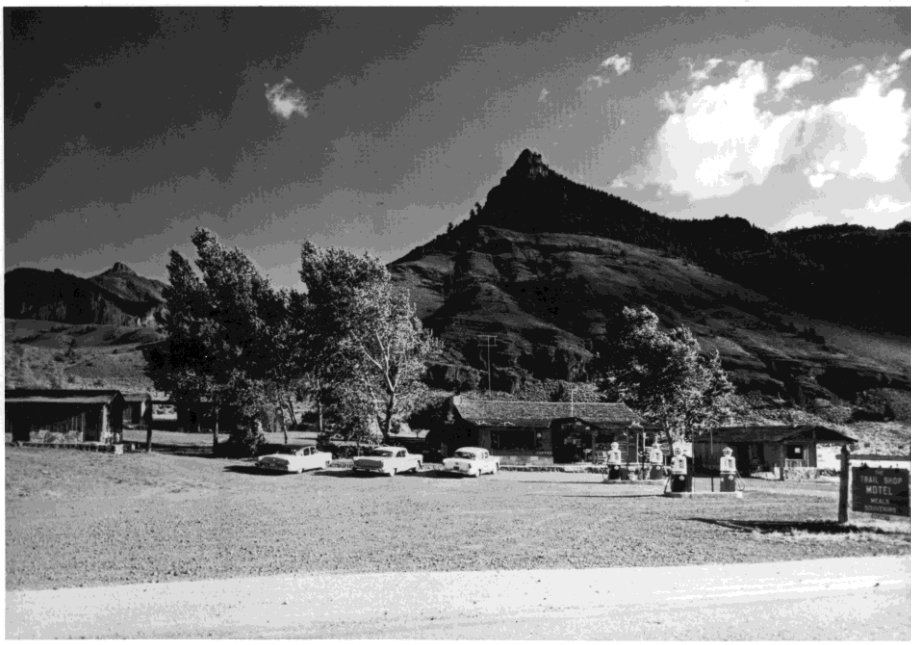


Photo: 29 - The Trail Shop, Signal Peak in the background, about 1953.

Mildred's health continued to deteriorate, however, and in the spring of 1927, Wylie sent Virginia[39], then 11, and Mildred on the train to Lovell, Wyoming to stay with his parents, George and Hallie Sherwin. The rest of the family came back to Wyoming by car. Mildred died in May of 1927, leaving Wylie with four pre-teen kids to raise.

In order to manage the Trail Shop that summer and the next, Wylie enlisted the help of Harry Hyatt Huntington, a cousin of Mildred's, along with Elaine, his wife.[40] During the second summer they were there, Nina Russell stopped by with her sisters, Hildred and Vivian, to visit Elaine, whom they had met in Billings. Nina had lost her job with the Billings Gazette just before their trip, so she needed a job and Wylie needed a girl to help

[39] Virginia, too, contracted TB about the time her daughter, Nina Jean was born. She underwent surgery and survived to live to nearly 80 years of age.

[40] Elaine later divorced Harry and married Willard Rhoads, a prominent local rancher. Their daughter, Jody, and I were the same age, and best friends and classmates at Wapiti School.

with the cabins, laundry and other stuff, so he hired Nina to come and work at The Trail Shop for the rest of the summer.

When the season was over, and just before Nina was to leave, Wylie took each of the four kids aside and asked what they would think if he asked Nina to marry him. They had each also fallen in love with her, and begged him to ask her. So he did, and in January of 1930, they were married and went to Denver on their honeymoon.

Russell continues --

Nina is my mother, and I was born in March of 1937. By then the only one of the four older kids left at home was Betty. Virginia was married with a child of her own, and both Clifford and Ted were in college. One of the neighbors, Cack McClellan, was heard to remark, "Wylie is so lucky. Five kids and not a knothead in the bunch!"

The Trail Shop continued to prosper, although there were lean years when Wylie supplemented his income by guiding hunters, building guardrails in Yellowstone Park, building cabinets and furniture for local people, making souvenirs to sell in the store, and helping some of the local farmers with temporary work as needed. We also had a cow or two, some horses, some chickens, a pig, not necessarily all at the same time, but over the years, and we usually had a garden. We had deer and elk meat most of the time.

I think this is a good place to end the story. I have covered most of the period from when I was born to the present in my own memoirs, "Growing Up in Wyoming." I lived at the Trail Shop and attended Wapiti School through the 7th grade, then Cody Junior High and High School. I attended Oregon State College for two years, then moved to Denver in 1957 and got married.

I am extremely blessed to have had a Dad like Wylie Grant Sherwin. He was certainly one of a kind.

Russell F. Sherwin
June, 2008

Additions to Wylie Sherwin's Journal by Ted B. Sherwin

A Sentimental Journey

On a hot summer day in 1985 I made a sentimental journey back to Crooked Creek on the Bighorn River to visit the place where I was born and where our branch of the Sherwin family began to grow.

Nothing looked at all familiar to me as we came around a bend in the bumpy dirt road and glimpsed the remains of the old log farm house in the distance. But that was not surprising as it had been 50 years or more since I last saw it, and that was only a brief visit with Dad, when I was still in grade school.

Others in the party that day, in addition to Helen and me, were Nina [Sherwin], Betty and Harold [Gunn], Dad's elderly cousin, Gertrude Barnett, and Frances Burrell, a prominent local historian, along with her brother-in-law and his wife. Frances had responded to an ad I placed in the Lovell Chronicle a few months previously asking if anyone had any old maps of the Crooked Creek area. When she found out why I wanted them, she became very interested in helping with the research. She also wanted to read Dad's memoirs, which I was glad to arrange. Gertrude also read the book and suggested that a copy be made available to the Lovell Public Library for their Pioneers collection. I had enough extra copies to do that and to send a copy to the University of Wyoming Community College Library at Powell.

Another resident who lives at the end of the road up Crooked Creek, Marian Tillett, had written in response to the ad and had sent several copies of a map of the recreation area landmarks and terrain features of Crooked Creek and the Pryor Mountains, and gave family names for ranches on the creek. She also mentioned in her letter that her family now owns the Sherwin and Huntington ranches.

We parked our cars on the north side of the irrigated field between the low sandhills and the old Sherwin place and walked a few hundred yards to the remaining buildings. The old log barn and other small sheds were standing, and we peered into the remains of the old root cellar, close to the house. The walls and roof of the house were still in pretty fair condition, but the windows were gone and it was obvious that cows would soon be using the house for shelter. All the furnishings and even the partitions were gone, and there was little to show that this had once been the home of a family of six.

I tried to imagine where the kitchen cabinet had stood where I climbed the drawers at the age of two and overturned a crock of buttermilk on my head, almost drowning myself and shattering a valuable crock when we both hit the floor! My memories of those days were based, of course, on stories Dad told us, like the account of my bout with the washing machine powered by a gasoline engine. I looked in vain for the flagstone paved porch where the washing machine had stood. Dad said that when I was about a year and a half old I was crawling around on the floor where the washing machine was running and I reached under the machine and stuck the fingers of my left hand into the rotating gears.

The machine jammed and my screams brought my mother on the run, but she was unable to extricate my hand, and had to run out to the field to get Dad. He was able to turn the flywheel of the engine by hand, reversing the gears of the washer and freeing my crushed hand. They took me into Lovell as fast as possible, and the doctor who treated me (Dr. Olson, of course) said that the knitted red mitten I was wearing was all that saved my hand. He had a job picking the red wool out of the ground up flesh, but when he got the little fingers sorted out, they were only slightly damaged, and in time the hand healed completely, although the scar remained for the rest of my life.

Betty and I exchanged recollections of other things we had been told about and then we left the old house and went to see if we could find any trace of the little 16 x 20 foot log cabin Dad built in 1917, a mile or so from the main house. Dad had written: "Down on the lower end of the ranch there was a small grove of trees. During the summer the ditch ran close by and there was a red bluff on the north which gave good protection from the wind." He described how he and his Dad built the house that summer, furnishing it sparsely with a few things from the main house where his parents then lived.

Dad wrote that the three of them (Virginia was the only little one then) moved into the cabin in September and none too soon, because I was apparently just waiting for a place to land.

"On the night of October 1," Dad wrote, "we had to have my Dad go into Lovell to get Dr. Olson. It was midnight before the doctor arrived and our first boy was born about 4:30 in the morning of October 2." He added that he remembered walking out to the car with the doctor. "It was beautiful. Frost sparkled everywhere and the sun was just tipping the Bighorn Mountains to the east. All was well and peace surrounded us. I was a happy man."

On our nostalgic journey that day, I stood quietly where Dad must have stood, and looked at the blue sky, the red bluff and the hazy mountains in the distance, and felt that I had "found my roots." I was reluctant to leave the spot, although there was no longer any trace of the log cabin, but our trip was not ended.

Editor's Note: Ted is my half-brother. Included below are pictures Ted took that day in 1985 of the remains of the cabins and barns. He was the self-designated family historian and was responsible for the dissemination of copies of Dad's journal to all the family members on both the Huntington and Sherwin side.

Ted also wrote a 76-page history entitled The Sherwins of Northfork which he made available to most of the family members at the family reunion in 1993.

Ted died in the fall of 2006.

Betty, Nina and Helen at the old Sherwin ranch-house on Crooked Creek, summer, 1985

Helen and Harold view the log barn on the Sherwin ranch on Crooked Creek.

Photo: 30 - The George F. Sherwin place as it looked in 1985.

Photo by Ted Sherwin

Remains of the Sherwin ranch house on Crooked Creek, 19

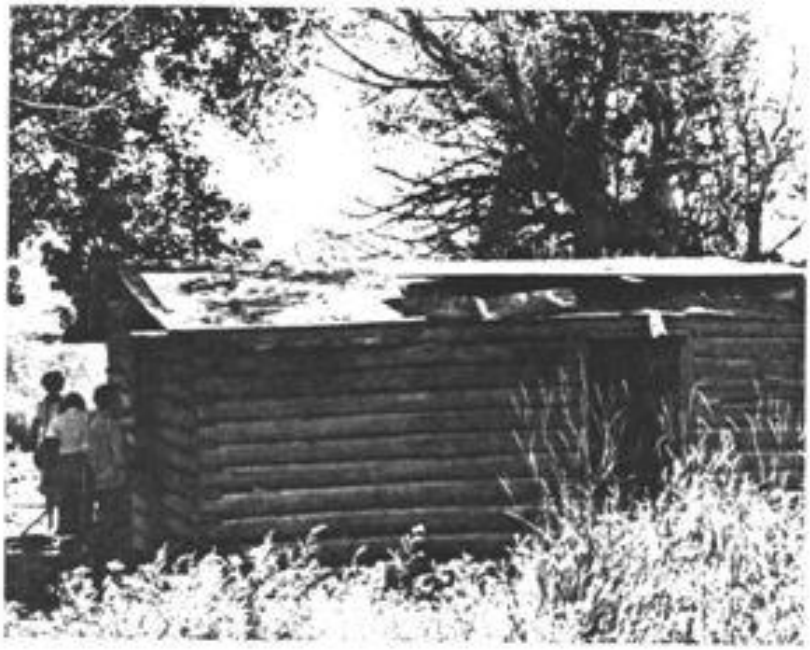


Photo: 31 - More pictures of the Sherwin place on Crooked Creek

Site of the one-room log cabin (above) where Ted was born in 1917.

Entrance to the cellar (below) at the Sherwin ranch house, Crooked Creek, 1985.

Photo: 32 - Photos by Ted Sherwin, 1985

Appendix I – Maps, Directions and Documents

How to get to the Sherwin Ranch Site

From Lovell, Wyoming, take US 14A east toward the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area. Turn left onto State 37 going north. Watch for the sign to Crooked Creek Road, at GPS coordinates 44º 56.9'N, 108º 17.8'W, marked "CR" on post; another sign indicates Wyoming Fish Hatchery, and turn left. Reset your odometer to 0.0. This is a good gravel road all the way to the road into the site. Stay on the gravel road as it proceeds generally northwest until at 1.5 miles you come to the intersection of Gypsum Creek Road, which goes straight ahead, and Crooked Creek Road which goes right. Take Crooked Creek Road right; at 1.9 miles, turn right onto State Road R16 toward Tillet Fish Hatchery. At around 3.3 miles you will notice large double-poled power lines running north and south. You will go under them, top a small rise, make a nearly right angle left turn and start down a grade. Near the bottom of the grade, at 3.5 miles, a small dirt track leads off to the right through a gate toward the southeast. Take that road through the gate and keep bearing right whenever you can, over a steep rocky rise and again to the right around a bluff until you are going nearly west, toward the power lines you crossed under and you can't go any farther. Park at the west edge of the meadow near the ditch and you will see the remnants of the barn within 100 feet to the west. About a hundred yards south in the grove of cottonwood trees is the main ranch house site with the house and a root cellar.

Notes:

1. These directions were verified in July, 2008.
2. The main gravel road is improved, maintained and can be traversed in almost any vehicle in almost any conditions.
3. The spur road off the main road into the cabin site is dirt, OK for most high clearance vehicles in good weather without four wheel drive.
4. Don't try it if it has recently rained or there is rain threatening, even with four wheel drive. You can easily walk from the main road down to the cabin site.
5. As soon as you turn off the main gravel road onto the spur road, you need permission from the landowners who are the Tillets to go through the gate. This is private land. Get permission before driving or walking onto the property.
6. The main house was still standing in 1985, but in 2008 it had fallen in.
7. Mosquitoes are terrible!
8. You can see the grove of trees in which the cabins are from behind the ranger station out on highway 37. As you stand here, Crooked Creek is at your feet. Look to the north-northwest about 1/3 mile.
9. The cabins are no more than ¼ mile west of the main highway 37. You could walk in from there just north of the ranger station along the north side of Crooked Creek. Again, permission to trespass on the property must be secured.
10. Rob or Will Tillet could probably give permission, or tell you who could.

Map of the Bighorn Canyon & Crooked Creek area

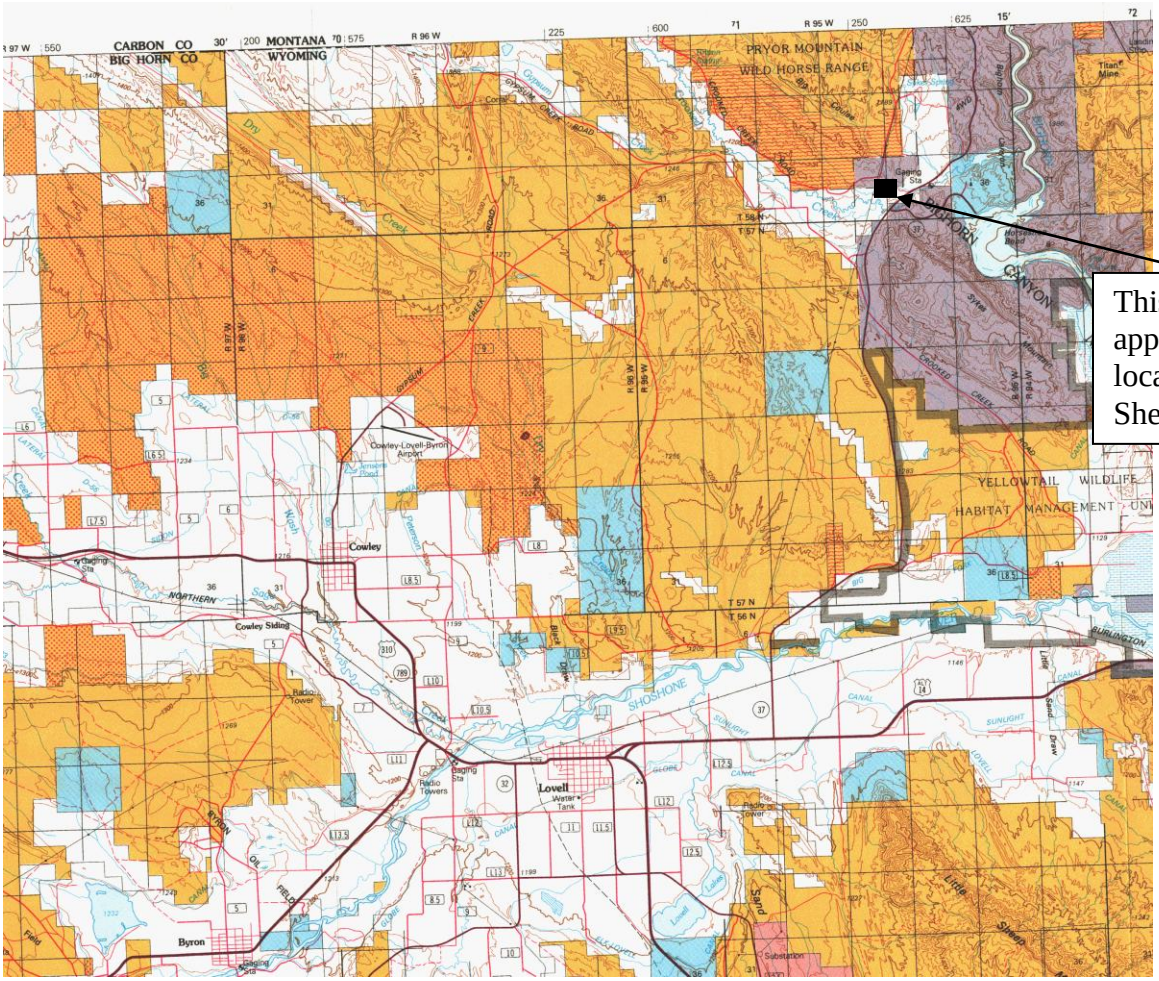
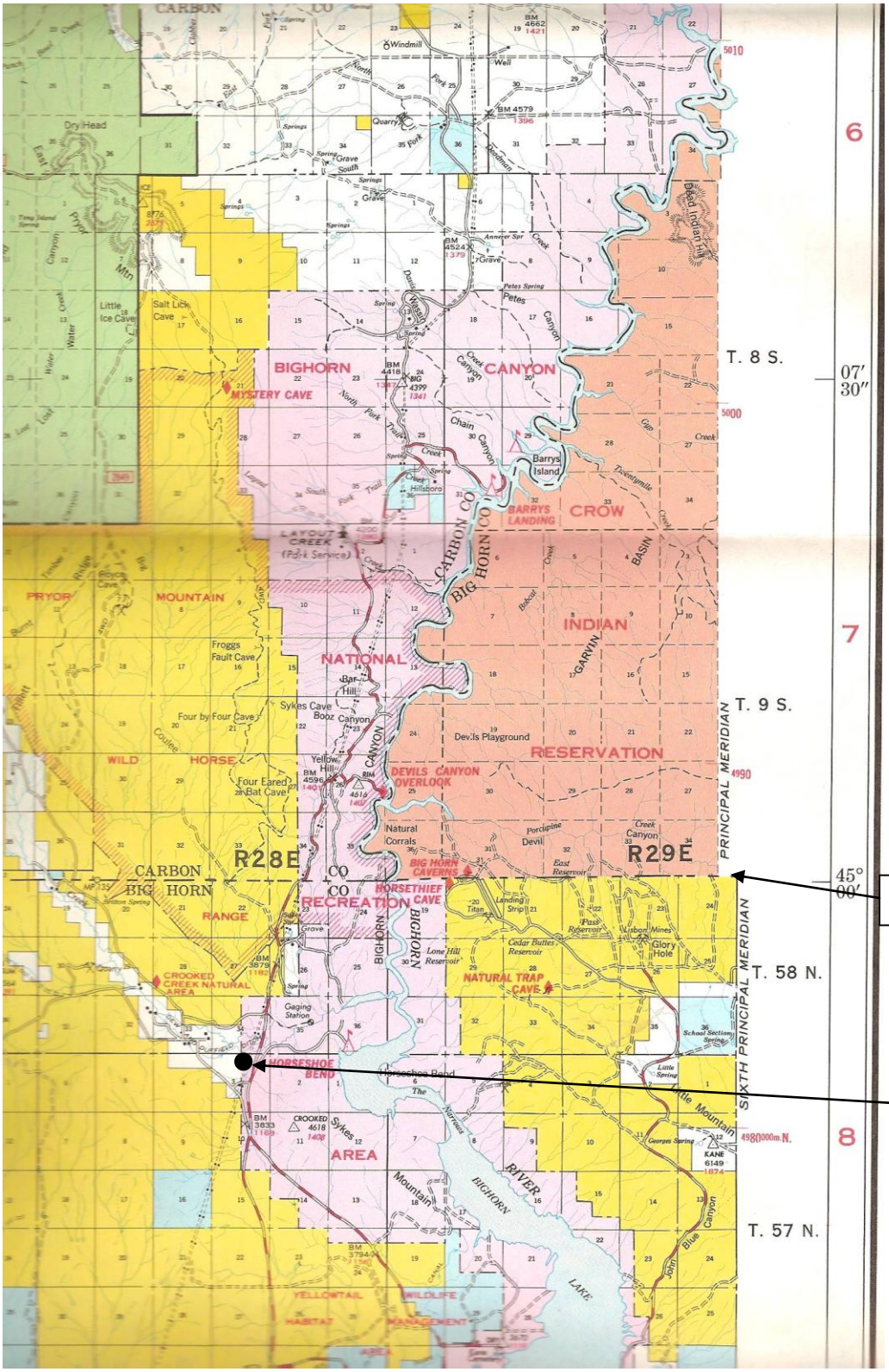


Photo: 33 - Map of Bighorn NRA

The approximate area covered by this map is 30 miles wide x 30 miles high. The towns of Lovell and Cowley are shown. The Wyoming/Montana state line is the top of the map.

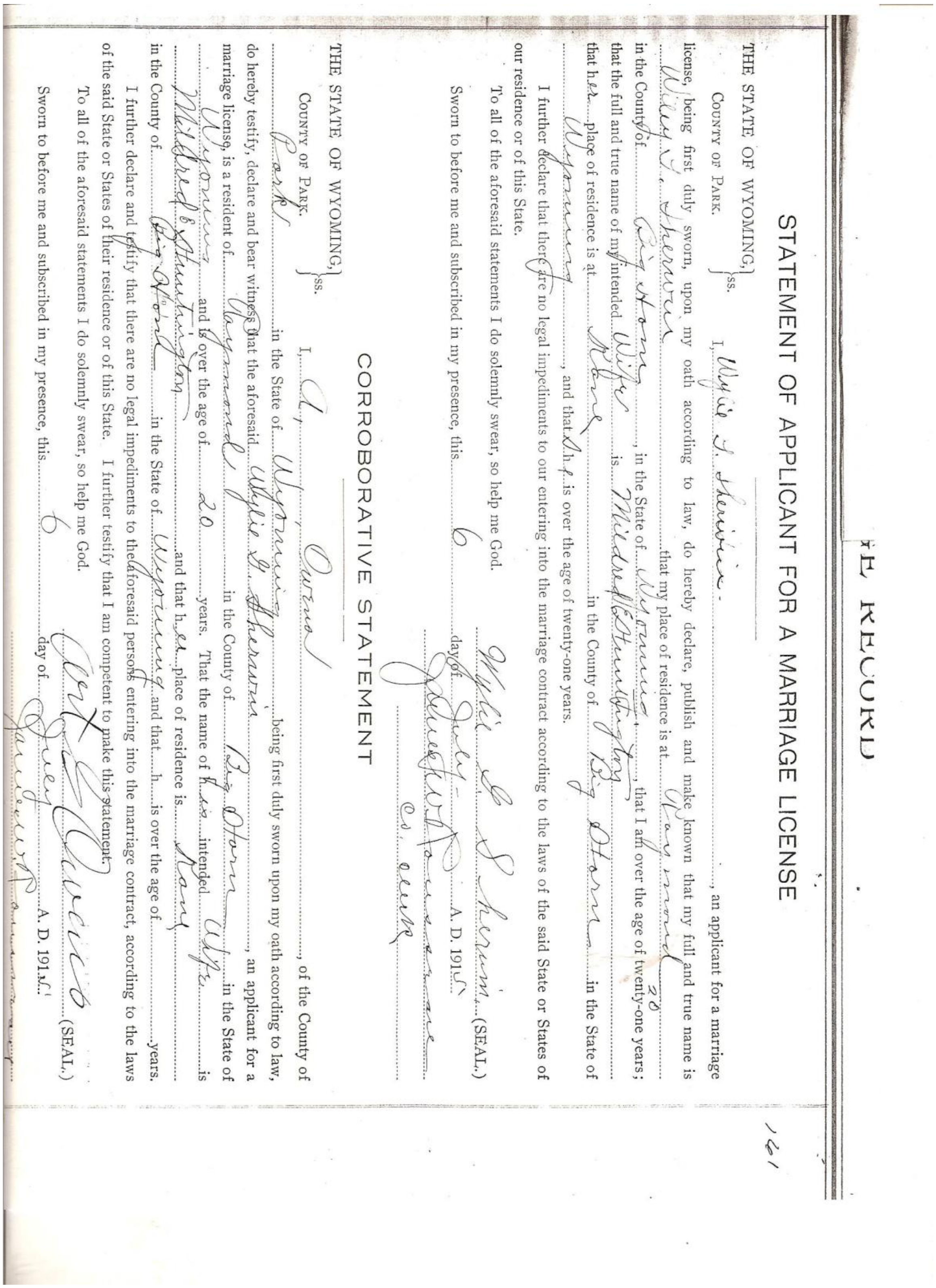
Expanded map of the Crooked Creek area.



Note the place names like Barry's Landing; Syke's Spring, Booz Canyon, Pete's Canyon, Wassin Canyon, Garvin Basin, Annerer Spring, etc. named after real life characters who showed up in Dad's narrative.

Photo: 34 - Expanded map of Bighorn NRA

Wylie Sherwin and Mildred Huntington's Marriage License



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STATEMENT OF APPLICANT FOR A MARRIAGE LICENSE

THE STATE OF WYOMING, } ss.
COUNTY OF PARK. }

I, Wylie G. Sherwin, an applicant for a marriage license, being first duly sworn, upon my oath according to law, do hereby declare, publish and make known that my full and true name is Wiley G. Sherwin that my place of residence is at Raymond in the County of Big Horn, in the State of Wyoming, that I am over the age of ~~twenty-one~~ 20 years; that the full and true name of my intended Wife is Mildred E Huntington that her place of residence is at Kane in the County of Big Horn in the State of Wyoming, and that she is over the age of twenty-one years.

I further declare that there are no legal impediments to our entering into the marriage contract according to the laws of the said State or States of our residence or of this State.

To all of the aforesaid statements I do solemnly swear, so help me God.

Wylie G. Sherwin (SEAL.)

Sworn to before me and subscribed in my presence, this 6 day of July A. D. 1915

James W. Rousseau
Co. Clerk

CORROBORATIVE STATEMENT

THE STATE OF WYOMING, } ss.
COUNTY OF PARK. }

I, A. Owens, of the County of Park in the State of Wyoming being first duly sworn upon my oath according to law, do hereby testify, declare and bear witness that the aforesaid Wylie G. Sherwin, an applicant for a marriage license, is a resident of Raymond in the County of Big Horn in the State of Wyoming and is over the age of 20 years. That the name of his intended Wife is Mildred E Huntington and that her place of residence is Kane in the County of Big Horn in the State of Wyoming and that....h....is over the age of.......years.

I further declare and testify that there are no legal impediments to the aforesaid persons entering into the marriage contract, according to the laws of the said State or States of their residence or of this State. I further testify that I am competent to make this statement.

To all of the aforesaid statements I do solemnly swear, so help me God.

Art G Owens (SEAL.)

Sworn to before me and subscribed in my presence, this 6 day of July A. D. 1915

James W. Rousseau

Photo: 35 - Wylie Sherwin and Mildred Huntington's marriage license application.

Office of the County Clerk. }

This instrument was filed for record in this office at .....o'clock.....M., on the.....day of.....

A. D. 191....., and duly recorded in Book.....of Marriage License Applications at Page.....

Application.....approved and license.....granted the day and date last aforesaid.

.....
County Clerk.

.....Deputy.

MARRIAGE LICENSE

THE STATE OF WYOMING, }
COUNTY OF PARK. } ss.

The People of the State of Wyoming, to any Person Legally Authorized to Solemnize Marriage, Greeting:

YOU ARE HEREBY AUTHORIZED to join in the Holy Bonds of Matrimony and to celebrate within this County the Rites and Ceremonies of Marriage between Mr. Wylie G. Sherwin of Big Horn County and Miss Mildred E. Huntington of Big Horn County, and this shall be your good and sufficient warrant; and you are required to return this License to me within three months from the celebration of such Marriage, with a certificate of the same appended thereto, and signed by you, under the penalty of Five Hundred Dollars.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and the seal of said County, this 6 day of July 1915.

(seal)

James W. Ramsdell
County Clerk.

By.....Deputy.

CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE

I HEREBY CERTIFY, That on the Sixth day of July A. D. 1915, in Powell, Wyoming
I joined in Marriage Mr. Wylie G. Sherwin of
and Miss Mildred E. Huntington of Raymond Wyo.
in presence of Lola Johnson, Margaret Smith of Powell Wyoming.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand, this 6th day of July A. D. 1915

Columbus Waddlaw
Ordained Baptist minister

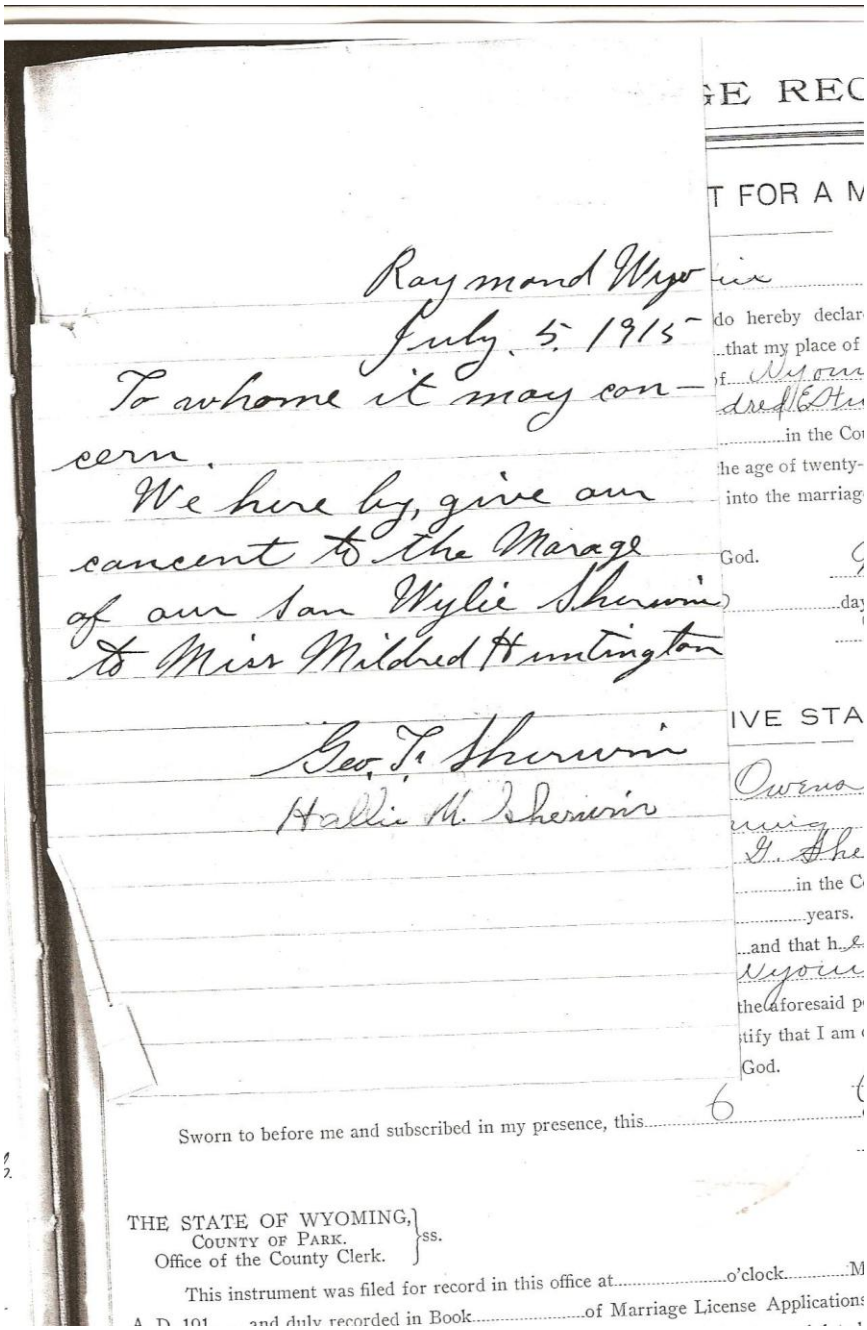
Filed for Record July 8th A. D. 1915

James W. Ramsdell Clerk.

By.....Deputy.

Photo: 36 - Dad and Mildred's actual marriage license.

I found this attached to the license in Book #1 at the Park County Courthouse, Cody Wyoming. This is a note from Dad's parents giving permission for Wylie to wed.



Raymond Wyo
July 5. 1915

To whome it may con-
cern.

We here by, give our
cancent to the Marage
of our son Wylie Sherwin
to Miss Mildred Huntington

Geo. T. Sherwin
Hallie M. Sherwin

GE REC

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God.

Sworn to before me and subscribed in my presence, this 6

THE STATE OF WYOMING,
COUNTY OF PARK.
Office of the County Clerk. } ss.

This instrument was filed for record in this office at ..... o'clock ..... M
A. D. 191 ... and duly recorded in Book ..... of Marriage License Applications

Photo: 37 – Note attached to the application granting permission to marry by Dad's parents.