



*Honoring Wyoming's 100-year-old farms and ranches*

**2008-2009 WYOMING CENTENNIAL FARM AND RANCH HONOREES**



**ARTS. PARKS. HISTORY.**

Wyoming State Parks & Cultural Resources



# Table of Contents

Letter from Governor Dave Freudenthal .....	3
<b>2008 Centennial Farms and Ranches</b>	
The Bruner Ranch, Inc., Charles Bruner Family.....	6
The Bunney Ranch, Gerald and Patsy Bunney .....	12
The Collins Farm and Ranch, Robert and Peggy Collins Family .....	15
The Raymond Hunter Farm and Ranch, Roger Hunter & Lynne Hunter Ainsworth Families....	17
The King Cattle Company, Kenneth and Betty King Family .....	20
The Lost Springs Ranch, Charles and Mary Alice Amend Engebretsen .....	23
The Homestead Acres, Inc., Ron and Bette Lu Lerwick Family .....	26
The Homestead Farm, Jerry McWilliams Family .....	29
The Meng Ranch, Jim and Deb Meng Family.....	33
The Quien Sabe Ranch, William Thoren Family .....	34
The Teapot Ranch, Billie Jean Beaton and Frank Shepperson Family.....	38
The Shepperson Ranch, Frank Shepperson Family .....	42
The West Cross V Ranch, Doug and Betty West Family.....	45
Alta Land and Livestock, J. Meredith Wilson Family .....	46
The Wilson Ranch, Fred & Clara Wilson Family .....	50
The Wright Ranch, Wright Family.....	58
GZ Livestock, Gary and JoAnn Zakotnik .....	59
Other Centennial Ranch 2008.....	62
<b>2009 Centennial Farms and Ranches</b>	
The Jackplane Ranch, Hermanetta, John & Marsha Christian.....	64
The Cole Family Ranch, Janet Cole Lake Family .....	68
The Dilts Ranch Company and The Bridle Ranch, Dilts Families .....	70
The Diamond Tail Ranch, Stan and Mary Flitner Family .....	72
The Graves Ranch, Wayne Graves Family .....	75
The Greet Ranch, Vernon Greet and John Greet Families .....	80
Eugene Hanson and Son, Inc., Eugene & Georgia Hanson Family .....	83
The Heward's 7E Ranch, Ron & Linda Heward Family .....	88
The EY Ranch, Rod Johnson Family.....	95
The Lyon Family Farm, Lewis T. Lyon Family.....	98
The Macy Farm and Feedlot, Kenneth Macy Family .....	103
The Milleg Ranch, Bob and Sandra Milleg Family .....	107
The Cora Valley Angus Ranch, Carroll David & Antonette Noble Family .....	108
The Prager Ranch Inc., Lawrence Prager Family .....	113
The L W Bar Ranch, Darrell and Marilyn Repshire Family .....	124
The Russell Ranch, Russell Family .....	127
The Smith Ranch, Nels Smith Family .....	128
The Tadewald Ranch, Herb Tadewald Family .....	130
The Green River Livestock Company, Bill Taliaferro Family .....	133



## Office of the Governor

Dear Centennial Ranch Award recipient,

Congratulations on the recognition of a century-long commitment to the State of Wyoming and our western way of life. In a world where change is often considered progress, your family's long-term dedication to the state's historic agricultural industry is a remarkable distinction.

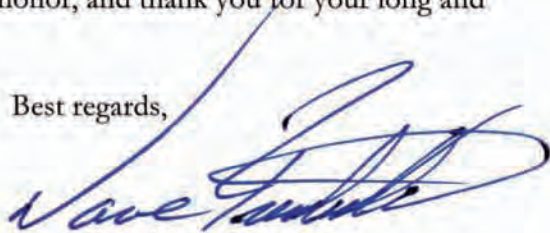
There are very few of us in this great state who do not feel a special and significant attachment to the land where we live. Your family has been fortunate to remain so connected to the land and can appreciate more than any of us the significance of our ranching heritage. Operating a farm or ranch in Wyoming is not an easy lifestyle, and you have endured harsh conditions including droughts, manmade and natural disasters and the growing pressure to sell your land for development.

Wyoming's ranch and farm lands are critically important elements to our landscape. They preserve open space and provide habitat for wildlife and livestock, while contributing to the state's economy.

We appreciate that your family continues to find value in maintaining your historic property – it is an admirable achievement to have been able to operate your ranch through the generations.

Again, congratulations on a deserved honor, and thank you for your long and historic commitment to Wyoming.

Best regards,



Dave Freudenthal  
Governor

DF;jlm



# 2008 Centennial Farm and Ranch Awardees



Photo courtesy Wyoming State Archives, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources

# The Bruner Ranch, Inc.

## Converse County



Sen. Mike Enzi, Bruner Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal

As told by James Bruner

**T**homas Green Bruner and Martha Whaley Bruner, along with their three children, arrived in Douglas, Wyoming in 1901. They made the trip from Iowa in a Chicago and Northwestern boxcar along with a team of mares, a milk cow, a Shropshire ewe, the pet dog and cat, a buggy, and numerous household goods. (The sheep was trained to walk a treadmill that ran the cream separator.) Thomas (46) and Martha (54) had been married in 1885 and had three children, Hazel (b. 1886), Mary (b. 1889), and Ferris (b. 1897 to Marie Larsen, and adopted in 1898). At the time of the marriage, Martha was a widow whose husband, Charles Whaley, had been a Civil War veteran who died in 1882. Martha, who had taught school from the age of 15 until she had married in 1867, went to Chicago to study nursing and midwifery and then returned to run her father's farm near Dow City, Iowa. In the course of her career as a midwife, she delivered over 200 babies; most of these were in

Iowa, but around 1904 or 1905, at the age of 57 or 58, she rode a horse in stirrup-deep snow from the Mill Creek valley to a ranch nearly 20 miles away to act as a midwife for Mrs. Joe Starr. She was also the attending midwife at her grandson Charles' birth in 1920, at age 73. Thomas had been working at farms in the Dow City area, including Martha's, when they were married.

The Bruners had been obliged to leave Iowa due to the fact that Martha had lung trouble which was worsening. The doctor advised her to move to a higher, drier climate. It must have been sound advice, since she lived to be 98.

Upon their arrival, they hitched their team to the buggy and enlisted the help of Willard Saul, who hauled their belongings out to a 404 acre place on LaBonte Creek. They had purchased this, along with about 100 head of cattle, two mules, and two saddle horses, from Dwight Cole. Later on they shipped in a carload of registered Shorthorn cattle along with the remainder of their furniture.





August 1901 Move

In 1902 Martha purchased the Sam Cummings place on Mill Creek for \$1,800. This 240 acres adjoined the Cole property and included a large spring and a one-room house.

This property is the nucleus of the present ranch. In 1904 Thomas filed on a 160 acre homestead and they both filed 40 acre Stone & Timber claims for a total of 240 acres near the foot of Mill Hill, six miles up Mill Creek from either of the other properties. They moved to the homestead claim to prove up on it, and built a two story house there before moving back to the Cole place in 1905. Between 1905 and 1909, Thomas took care of the hay meadows here and the Cummings place and also improved the Cummings place ditches and meadows. He also enlarged the Cole house in 1907 and 1908 and put on the second story. He re-surveyed the north upper ditch on the Cummings place to include more land above the Sand Draw and also built a flume across the Sand Draw and extended the ditch out to just north of where the house now stands. George Mundy built most of this ditch. He also extended the south lower ditch around the bank in the Sheep Pasture to cover the field south of the barn, and also over towards the Strock Forty. The north lower ditch was also surveyed and built and a flume was built across the Sand Draw to cover the field east of the barn. All this new ground had to be cleared of sagebrush and then plowed with four horses and a breaker plow. Some fences were probably changed during this time as well as other improvements made. In 1909, due to the heavy workload at the Cole and Cummings places, and Thomas' health, he leased these places and moved back to the Timber place.

While Thomas was selling bridge timbers and ditch posts, Martha sold eggs she had waterglassed to sheep camps at 75 cents a dozen; she also ran trap lines in the winter from the time they arrived in Wyoming. From 1904 until about 1920, Thomas was also the telephone line repairman for the LaBonte Telephone Company, which was formed in 1903. It is possible he was a charter member as he had 100 shares of stock dated 1904. In 1912 the mill closed and Thomas and Martha returned to their original place on the LaBonte. Their

daughter Hazel had died in 1902, Mary had married a local businessman, Billy Gerlach, in 1911, and Ferris started high school in Douglas in 1912. He contracted Scarlet Fever in either his first or second year and lost so much time that he dropped out of school and began working, first at neighboring places and then with his father. In the meantime, the children of the people who had leased the lower places burned down the old small house at the Cummings place and the barn and a couple of other buildings at the Cole place and Thomas and Martha decided to build a new house by the spring.

In 1916, construction began on the log house that is still present at the Cummings Spring. Thomas and Ferris, who was now eighteen, started to cut logs at the Timber place and peel them for the new house they planned to build. They were hauled to the Timber place on a bobsled. For the next year they worked mostly at that job. The logs were peeled, and then one side was flattened with a broad ax. They were then hauled to the Cummings place on wagons.

In the spring they moved the bunkhouse from the Timber place to the Cummings place. This was done by placing it up on two log skids, then hooking a team of horses onto each log. By pulling evenly, they could move it a ways, then rest the horses, then continue again. Ferris told that at the end of the first day they had entered the upper end of the Foxton meadows. They unhooked and took the horses back to the timber for the night. Now it seems as though where they stopped for the night was on public land of some sort. Well, anyway, early the next morning Jack Foxton was out riding and saw this strange house setting on their operation. He rode pell-mell for the headquarters to tell his brother, Harry, and sister, Clara, that some squatter had settled on the upper end of the meadows: had a house all moved in and everything! He said there was even smoke coming out of the stovepipe. Harry and Jack made haste in going up to see who their new neighbors might be and they arrived just about the time Thomas and Ferris got there with the teams. Foxtons were so glad to find out what the deal was that they brought up two more teams and, with eight horses pulling, speeded up the move quite a bit. The Foxtons were good neighbors. Martha

had bought the schoolhouse from the Mill Setting – Ferris said for ten dollars. They dismantled it and hauled it down to the Cummings place also. It was then reassembled. While building the new house at the Cummings place, the bunkhouse was used for cooking and the schoolhouse for sleeping -- or the other way around, no one is quite sure.

Originally intended to be a two-story dwelling, Thomas realized during construction that he and Martha were getting too old to be climbing stairs (They were 61 and 69.) and he had the bedrooms built in a wing out to one side instead of putting them in a second story. He got the doors, window, and flooring from the old courthouse in Douglas that was being torn down and this makes the appearance to this day rather distinctive. He had indoor plumbing installed, utilizing the flow from the nearby spring to operate a hydraulic ram that pumped the water to a cement cistern on the hill behind the house. Although the rams have been changed out, the water in the house is still supplied this way. He also had an acetylene generator installed in the root cellar that was dug into the hill and was part of the house. The gas generated supplied gas for lighting the rooms and also for a small stove in the kitchen that was used during the summer to keep from having to cook with the wood stove. The gas lighting was replaced by a bank of batteries that were charged by a windcharger in the 1930s, and the REA came in in the 1950s.



Ranch House 1937 Hand tinted

The Cole place was sold in 1919 (and again in 1929 when the first buyers went under), and the Timber place was sold in 1935. A section of state land was acquired north of the original Cummings patents and Ferris, on April 24, 1924, traded a large seven passenger Buick to Lloyd Harrington, in part at least, for some land that Lloyd had proved up on. This was all just west of the Esterbrook Road and east of the Range 72 W line, out in what we now call the North Pasture. He had previously homesteaded a section of adjoining land to the

south in 1919. After acquiring a forty section homesteaded quarter from Leonard Strock some time in the 1930s, the ranch reached its maximum size of 1440 acres.

Ferris went into the army telegraph service in 1918, but contracted the flu during training and was discharged soon after. He returned to the ranch and married Mary Dunn in June of 1919. Thomas and Martha left the ranch in 1923 for a place near Pomona, California and remained there for most of the next ten years. They celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in 1935 at the ranch. Thomas died in 1939 and Martha in 1945.



Martha, Thomas and Daughter-in-law Mary, Nov. 1938



Ferris & Mary 1923

The third generation of Bruners to live on the ranch began arriving in 1920 with the birth of Charles Philip on March 31. He was followed the following year by Archie Thomas on the second of April and then on May ninth, 1924, their sister, Sibyl June, arrived. Charles and Sibyl were born at the ranch, but Archie was born at Fort Fetterman where his maternal grandparents were living. The children were all raised on the ranch and attended school either in the Bruner Bunkhouse or, later, in the Black Bridge School on LaBonte Creek a little over half a mile away. Their mother, who had been a school teacher before she married Ferris, taught some years, but mostly there were other young women who came and boarded and taught.



Charles, Sibyl, and Archie 1928

In 1928, Ferris proved up on the Homestead where he, Mary, and the children had lived to satisfy the residence

requirements. It was also at this time that he sold out most of his cattle that he had in partnership with his brother-in-law Clarence Dunn and went into the sheep business, buying some Hampshire rams from up around Sheridan.

Throughout the years of the Great Depression and the years of drought which came along about the same time the Bruners held on by various means. Mary used to buy hundreds of turkey poulters in the spring and they thrived on the hordes of grasshoppers which covered the dry summer grasses. They butchered the turkeys in the fall as Charles recalls:

“Well, come Thanksgiving time we would have to kill and pluck the feathers off of the birds that were ready. This was accomplished by hanging the turkey by his feet, upside down, to start. Now, this is the bad part! Dad would push a long, small bladed knife up through the beak and into the brain. This killed the poor bird and also drained the blood out. He had a heavy piece of iron tied to a number nine wire with a hook on the other end. He would hook this into the lower beak so as to keep the bird from flopping so bad and, mainly, I guess, to stretch the neck out real straight. By sticking the brain in this fashion, it caused the feathers to loosen, and we could stand there, then, and strip the feathers and most of the down right off. It was all done dry, with no hot water.

When the carcass cooled and aged for a day or two, Dad would take the back cushions out of the Star, load the dressed birds in, wrapped in a tarp, and take them to Douglas. I don't know if they were sold locally, or were shipped to some other city. These turkeys were one of our cash flow crops during these hard times. We raised turkeys for many years.”

Mary also herded the sheep in addition to cooking and keeping house while Ferris was out cutting wood for neighbors with a Galloway woodsaw rig that his father had bought new in 1917, or doing

whatever work he could find. In the winter time he cut ice for all the neighbors as well as his family, first by hand and then with a power saw that Clyde Rogers had built from a railroad handcar. One winter the ice on one of the neighbor's reservoirs was 27 inches thick, the power saw only cut 11 inches so the rest was all hand work. Of course there was always a big garden or two and the root cellar at the house held vegetables through until spring. There was road work on the WPA or other government programs and he also worked on the telephone lines like his father before him. In addition to shearing his own sheep, he also helped the neighbors shear, first by hand and then with power clippers. Through some of the years they raised hogs and sold the meat in town; and Ferris had a thrasher or grain separator and thrashed for the neighbors as well as some of their own grain.



Ferris on old McCormick Binder July 25, 1938

In 1937, Charles graduated from high school and remembers his folks giving him half of the few sheep they had left: “I think it was nine or ten head. (I don't

think many parents give their boy half of what little they have left for graduating from high school.)” That spring the government also had some major surveying work planned and Ferris and Charles got work there:

“Now that spring, the government had a deal going; they were going to “plane table” survey all the cropland in the county, state, and, I suppose, the whole country. Just before school was out, word got out that they would need high school graduates, and others, for chain boys. There would be a school to teach the Plane Table Operators and their two chain boys how to do it. Many of the schoolteachers -- men, that is -- would be the operators. But there were not enough teachers; somehow Dad's name came up and he attended the sessions and was hired.

Glen Edwards and I were his chain boys. We used the Dodge, and camped out without a tent all that summer of 1937. We surveyed most of the crop and meadowland south of Douglas, up the LaBonte, Wagonhound, Upper LaPrele, Boxelder, and Deer Creek. We really had a ball that summer. There were lots of dances, and we made them all. Dad had bought a Model T Ford truck somehow or other. He must have bid two bits for it at some sale and got it. Anyway, we used it some that summer.”

During these years, Ferris continued to work on improvements, especially adding a dam higher on Mill Creek that allowed him to run a ditch down and irrigate more cropland. He also added a few dikes through the government programs of the depression years. On the negative side, much of the pasture land was over grazed during the drought and has never fully recovered.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Ferris and Archie kept the place going. Charles had left in 1940 and was gone for most of the war years. In 1945 he returned with his wife, Mary Brankin, a “city girl,” whose first home at the ranch was a sheep wagon and whose second was the old bunkhouse that had come down from the Timber place. When they arrived they brought their first-born, James Ferris, the first of the fourth generation to live at the ranch. His brother, William arrived while they were helping run the ranch. Mary learned to drive and handle the harsh conditions and primitive lifestyle very well and proved herself a pioneer at heart. In 1947, Charles and Mary left the small Mill Creek place to pursue other opportunities.



Thanksgiving 1948, Charles & Mary and Ferris & Mary, Jimmy and Billy

By the end of the 1950s, Ferris was back in the cattle business and wintering his and Art Fawcett's cattle on the ranch and driving them up to Art's place in the summer.

Charles and Mary's children, the fourth generation, were spending their summers helping out by this time. By 1970 Archie was running the operation by himself and continued running cattle just on Bruner range until 2002.

Ferris and Mary, long active in both Farm Bureau and Homemaker's Club, left the ranch in 1970 to become caretakers at the Ayers Natural Bridge Park and remained there until 1973 when they moved into Douglas to live at Charles' and Mary's house, which was empty at the time. Mary died in 1973 and Ferris died in 1988. Charles and Sibyl, in 1989, bought out their brother Archie's share in the ranch, incorporated it with themselves and spouses and children and spouses as shareholders; they then leased it back to Archie for a nominal amount. Archie sold his cattle out in 2002 due to declining health, but continued to live on the home place until his death December 31, 2003. In 2006 the two families sold the southern half of the ranch, including Ferris' homestead and the Strock 40, to Wagonhound Land & Livestock with the express purpose of buying out Sibyl and her children's share of the property.

Since that time, Charles (now in his ninety first year) and his five children have worked diligently to restore the range land by spraying weeds and sagebrush and installing stock tanks in the remote North Pasture, supplied with water from the reliable Cummings Spring. The irrigation system has been worked on and upgraded and the ranch house is being restored. The last two years there have been four generations working in the hay fields and helping with chores. The fifth generation is evincing a strong desire to develop agricultural roots, and the sixth is learning from the example set by their great grandfather. The next hundred years is well on its way!



Fourth and Fifth Generation Haying 2009.



Haying 2009 Fourth and Fifth Generations. Sixth Generation riding shotgun.



Charles "Raking Scatterings," cleaning up!

# The Bunney Ranch

## Crook County



John G. Bunney, Sr. (also known as Jack)



John G. Bunney, Sr., 16 years old



Bunney Ranch

### From Pioneers of Crook County

John Going Bunney was born February 19, 1855 in England. When he was a young man he immigrated to the United States. He worked in the mines at Silver City, Colorado. After a few years he moved to Lead City, South Dakota and worked in the Homestake gold mine.

On February 12, 1891 John filed on a preemption claim of 160 acres, five miles northeast of Aladdin. On November 3, 1892 he filed on a homestead of 160 acres that joined his original claim.

John Bunney married Margaret James Bunney who was the widow of John's brother, Tom, who was killed in the Homestake mine in 1890 at age 31. Three sons were born to them: John, Arthur, and Ernest. John, Jr. was born at Aladdin in 1892 and was the oldest of the three boys. John's boyhood was spent on the original homestead, five miles north of Aladdin and helped in the family's livelihood of sheep ranching. He went by horseback to school in Aladdin and studied to be a veterinarian at the University of Wyoming.

John Jr. married Loretta Evans on September 1, 1917 at Deadwood, South Dakota. She was born in 1895 in Deadwood. She taught school in the

Alzada, Montana vicinity for several years and was later the telephone operator in the Aladdin store. John and Loretta's first years of marriage were spent on the original Bunney homestead. Their first son, Robert John, was born in 1918 in Belle Fourche, South Dakota, that was the time of the flu epidemic throughout the country. Loretta was stricken and almost lost her life. People were dying from the flu so fast the funeral home in Belle Fourche was hardly able to keep a supply of caskets.

In 1923 they moved to Dry Creek, the old Evans ranch west of Beulah. They lived there for the next five years. During that time two more sons were born, Raymond Orville in 1923, and Kenneth James in 1925.

It was in 1928 when John and Loretta and the three boys moved to John's own homestead, six miles north of Aladdin. This was during the Depression. The main source of income was from farming and raising sheep. A winter's supply of wood was cut at the Bear Lodge and brought to the ranch by horse and wagon. All water was hand pumped from a well and brought to the house by the bucketful. Outside toilets and wood-cooking stoves and kerosene lamps were standard.

Mr. Bunney had a crystal set radio with ear phones. The neighbors would come to his house to listen to it. William Edmund, the fourth son, was born at the ranch in 1933.

At this period of time there was a drought, money was very scarce and living was made by milking fifteen cows and selling the cream and butchering lambs and selling them in Lead, South Dakota. Due to the lack of feed the Government bought cows for \$20.00 a head and calves for \$10.00 a head. Any stock not in A-1 condition was shot.

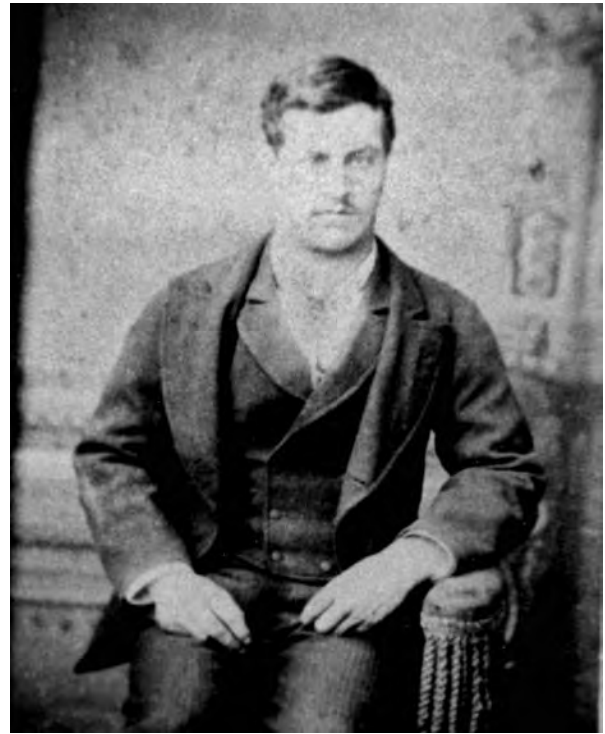
The fifth and last child, Gerald Evans Bunney, was born in 1939 in Spearfish. All five boys, in their time, attended the rural school called the Bunney school.

World War II broke out; the three older boys joined the service. Raymond was killed on Corregidor in 1945.

In 1943, a tornado hit the ranch and the family took refuge in the basement. The tornado took the garage, hen house (killing all the chickens), the granaries, and the wind charger. It took all the shingles off the house and took out the windows. All the neighbors came afterwards and helped rebuild and repair the damage.

After the war ended materials became available and electric lights, running water, and indoor plumbing became a reality to the farming families.

John Bunney continued ranching and farming until 1965 when Gerald Bunney took over the ranch. John Bunney died in 1965. Loretta continued living at the ranch with other children until the time of her death in 1975. Gerald Bunney and his wife, Patsy Tanner Bunney, still live on the ranch. They have five children, nine grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. Gerald Bunney has been participating in dog trials for the past 18 years.



Tom Lowery Bunney, killed in Homestake mine, 1890



John G. Bunney, Jr.



John G. Bunney, Jr., taken on home ranch, Aladdin



Original Bunney homestead house



Gerald & Patsy Bunney, married Sept. 24, 1957



Gerald Bunney with dog



Patsy & Gerald Bunney, July 4, 1958



John, Jr. and Loretta Bunney, June 1961



John G. Bunney, Jr. with Loretta, and 4 sons



# The Collins Farm and Ranch

## Platte County



Alfalfa Hay-Home buildings in background; Glendo resevoir

As told by Peggy Collins

**I**n the beginning, there were seven brothers coming to the United States from Ireland in the late 1800s. Some of the brothers went on to Montana, Oregon, and Oklahoma.

1906 July- George (23) and Queen (18) Collins were married in Oklahoma. They came west, as many others did, to find land. George worked at the Sunrise mine in 1907-08 and Lost Springs, then on to Glendo where he filed on a homestead, which was signed by President Woodrow Wilson. George and Queen raised a large garden, hogs, chickens, sheep, cattle, and horses. Also, his parents, Benjamin and Elizabeth, had filed homesteads.

To this union, 12 children were born and all but one (Melvin who died of dysentery as a young child) grew up to help their parents survive: Charles, Bill, Woodrow, Fay, Henry, Virginia, J.B., Margaret, Crip, Robert, and Una – all are deceased.

The four-room log house was erected in 1909-10 from logs George would haul from Esterbrook. George took the running gears (still on the ranch), a team of horses, and food – the trip took a week. They added on to the four rooms in the late 1940s and had electricity and running water. They had a pump house which had running water through a trough to keep the milk, butter, cream, and eggs cool. The well was dug by a horse going in circles and it is still used today for the house only. The house is 100 years old where Peggy still lives.

World War II came along and Henry, J.B., and Crip served their country. J.B. did not survive; his fighter plane went into the ocean near Santa Barbara, California. Bill was in the CCCs. Charlie purchased a 1020 Case tractor with iron lug wheels and started plowing up some of the land which they planted into wheat, potatoes, and barley. Prior to the purchase of the tractor, the plowing was done by a team of horses and plow. They also raised hogs and sheep. George did carpenter work



Sen. Mike Enzi, Collins Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal



Jay, Peg & insurance agent in hay field

around the Glendo area. He built a water wheel for Wormwoods on the Platte River. George sheared sheep every year on ranches near Casper.

Robert “Buck” purchased the ranch in 1964 where he, Peggy, and sons, Jay and Larry, lived. Buck passed away in 2002. He and Peggy had a construction company and both worked on the construction of the Glendo Dam from start to finish.

Jay and Larry and their families continue to have a cow-calf operation, putting up alfalfa hay from a center pivot. Jay operates the construction company.

# The Raymond Hunter Farm and Ranch

## Goshen County

As told by Lynne Hunter Ainsworth

Arthur (Artie) Charles Hunter was born October 6, 1878, to Samuel and Elizabeth Hunter at Grant City, Missouri. He was married to Ella (Lisle) May 24, 1903 in Grant City.

Arthur's brother, Clyde, and wife, Susie Belle, also lived in the Grant City area. After several years of crop failures and floods, the brothers decided to locate in a new place. In 1907 the Hunter brothers left Missouri and rode west. Clyde located a homestead relinquishment, and Artie a homestead across the road. The properties were about five miles southwest of Torrington, Wyoming, near what is now the Veteran Highway in the Cherry Creek community. Returning to Missouri, the brothers made arrangements to venture to their new land with their families and belongings. Each family had an emigrant railroad car that brought west a team of horses, milk cow, chickens, some farm machinery, and their household goods. It took more than a month to arrive in Wyoming in the spring of 1908. Artie's wife, Ella, along with son, Lloyd (4), and Clyde's wife, Susie, along with their children, Effie (5) and Eddie (3), all lived in a small two-room house on Clyde's relinquishment until additional housing could be built for Artie and his family. In November 1910, Raymond was born to Artie and Ella.

Around 1919, when the irrigation canal system arrived, times on the farm began to get better for the farmers. Both brothers helped dig the all important water canal systems using their horse teams to move the dirt for the canals. With the arrival of the irrigation system, farmers in the area were able to expand their crop base and they began to raise corn, small grain, sugar beets, beans and alfalfa.

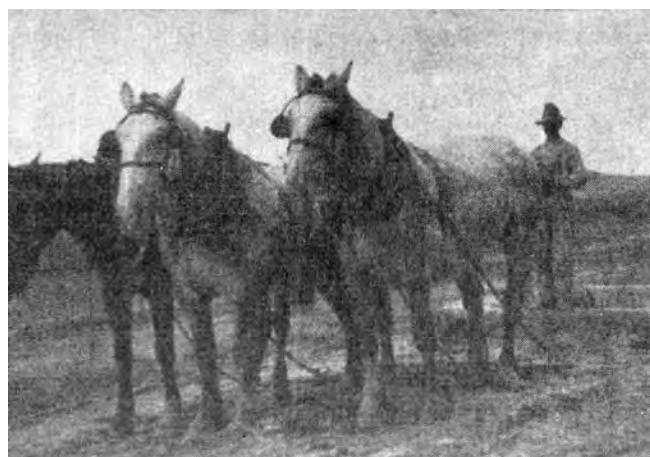
Raymond attended Cottier school in the vicinity of the family farm and later graduated from Torrington High School. He continued his education by



Hunter Family, Artie, Ella, Grandpa & Grandma Hunter, Susie, Clyde, Raymond, Lloyd, Effie, and Eddie



Ella & Arthur Hunter



Working on the canal



Ella Hunter

attending the University of Wyoming for several years.

Raymond and Lois (Sawyer) were married June 1935. When they were married it was the joining of two of Goshen County's pioneer families. Raymond, like his father before him, was a concerned, civic-minded citizen who gave of himself through service on the Torrington School Board as well as the College board. For over 20 years, Raymond served in the Soil Conservation Board and was a member of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association. Raymond and Lois had three children: Frank, deceased in 2002; Roger; and Lynne (Ainsworth). Raymond passed away May 2004 and Lois in January 2010.



Cottier School

Roger and Lynne are currently managing the family farm and ranch. Raymond passionately loved the land and raising Hereford cattle. We are in awe of the tenacious spirit and dedication of our grandparents and parents. It is our honor and duty to continue this inspiring legacy.



Lois (Sawyer) & Raymond Hunter  
Wedding 1935



Raymond Hunter Family, Frank,  
Raymond, Roger, Lynne, Lois



Frank, Lynne & Roger Hunter



Sen. Mike Enzi, Hunter Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal



Raymond & Lois

# The King Cattle Company

## Laramie County



Original Homestead, 1910 John, Caroline May, & son Lester King

John C. King was born in Vinton, Iowa, but spent his boyhood in Virginia and Nebraska. In 1908, at the age of 37, he was living on a rented farm near Wheaton, Illinois, rising at 4 a.m. to milk 18 cows and ride the milk train into Chicago, where he worked 10 hours boxing newsprint, then returning to milk his 18 cows again.

Under such a routine, he found the promise of free land in the West alluring, and in late summer he came to Burns, Wyoming (then called Luther) to look around. Land agents frequently met prospective homesteaders at the depot or at the hotel and offered them transportation by horse and buggy to look for homesteads - that is, homesteads near land that they had for sale. So it was that John filed on 160 acres, 11-1/2 miles northeast of Burns, and agreed to buy another quarter with a 10 foot by 10 foot shack from the land company. He also made arrangements to buy an adjacent relinquished homestead. Thus, he started with three 160-acre parcels.

He returned to Illinois where he quickly sold the livestock and machinery he felt unable to transport, loaded his wife, Caroline May, his six year old son, Lester, a few horses, milk cows, and a minimum of machinery into an "emigrant car" (possibly two cars) the railroads had for such purposes at that time, and came west.

There were no fences between the ranch and Burns, and no bridge across Lodgepole Creek, either. Colonel Thomas Rider was already well established eight and one half miles north and one mile east of Burns. John King hauled all his water in vinegar barrels from the Rider place for about a year.

William R Black and his parents, James and Emma, homesteaded in 1907; John King in 1908; and George Fuller and his family about the same year. Tom and Charley Meredith, originally from Wales, came to Burns by way of Wisconsin a year or two later and bought railroad land. These four families, from widely separated backgrounds, came into

rather close association to overcome the frontier problems, of which the biggest one was lack of capital.

In 1918, King, Black and the Meredith brothers bought a threshing machine and George Fuller put his tractor on it and took the responsibility for operating the threshing run. Every man wanted his straw stack near his barn for winter feeding. (Wheat straw was fed, rye straw was for bedding.) When the fields were within reasonable distances of the straw stack, this machine required eight racks, two grain wagons, and both an engine man and a thresher man. The owner usually tried to hold himself free to serve as an extra scooper, bin fixer, water boy, etc. The Fuller ring held together into the early 1940s, though as the combines came in, the threshing began to be mostly oats. There was also a branding-vaccinating ring built around the same men.

About 1910, King, Black, Merediths, and Fuller had their farms connected by telephone wires run on the barb wire fences. Two years later, with the help of Charles and Lewis Lyon, they had organized a telephone company, changed to smooth wire, and extended the line into Burns. This group of individuals also participated with others in organizing the Shipping Association, which shipped many a railroad car of hogs and cattle out of Burns, allowing the owners to sell at the terminal markets

instead of to local buyers. The same shipping company brought in coal and sold it off the car at cost plus handling. King and Black, although not really financially able to do so, also bought shares to help start the Farmers Elevator. This eventually went under and passed through other hands before merging with the Shipping Association which later became the Burns Farmers Co-op.

With the coming of World War I, farmers were urged to produce as much wheat as possible. John King bought a section of railroad (Wyoming Syndicate) land. Wheat went to \$2.50 and at one point to \$3 per bushel. The land was half paid for by the end of the war, but it took twenty-four years to pay the balance. 1928 must have been a good year for crops and livestock and John had enough money to pay off what he owed, but in 1929 built a large cement barn instead. In 1941 John paid off all of his farm debt and bought a new Ford 9N tractor still in use today.

With the war came Liberty Bonds, which unlike World War II, were not redeemable by the government until maturity. Local committees assigned businessmen and farmers a quota to buy, according to their supposed financial ability, and many borrowed money to buy their quota of bonds rather than appear unpatriotic. Later, when the agricultural pinch came, many sold these bonds at half price. The Depression hit the farms a full nine

or ten years before the general Depression of 1929. World War I years seem to have been years of fairly good weather and high prices. The Twenties were years of lower prices and occasional hail disasters. The Thirties were years of still lower prices, drought, and grasshoppers.

John's son, Willis King, was born in 1913 in the homestead house. In 1939 he married Frances Parsons of Des Moines, Iowa and purchased a quarter section located one mile west of John King's. In 1941 he bought Bill



Overview of King ranch



Sen. Mike Enzi, King Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal

Black's property and settled down on the farm, building a house adjacent to that of his father. On the death of his father in 1945, he took over the operation of the family farm. In 1949 he purchased 640 adjacent acres from C.O. Lyon.

Willis' son, Kenneth, is the third generation to live on the ranch. Ken and his wife, Betty, presently live in the original homestead house built by John King. They have two daughters and five grandchildren.

The present King holdings include six original homesteads: James Black, William Black, Charles Parsons, Henrietta Cornick, Lew Davisson, and

John King, plus one section of Wyoming state land, a total of 3200 acres. In 1966 an irrigation system was developed on the quarter section which John King homesteaded, now producing irrigated pasture and crops for cattle. In 1967 the farm was incorporated under the name King Cattle Company. Ken and Betty King live in the house built in 1908. In the mid-1920s John bought a surplus, one-room schoolhouse located one mile away, moved it and added it to his house. It has three more additions.



# The Lost Springs Ranch

## Converse/Niobrara Counties



Original Barn built 1918 on Lost Springs Ranch

As told by Mary Alice Amend Engebretsen

**T**he Amend families and the Giess families were German by Russia immigrants who left Saratoff, Russia for America on June 19, 1893 when living conditions had become unbearable under the Russian Regime. They were among the fortunate ones who left early as they had the consent of the Russians to go to Canada where an 1872 law allowed a homestead of 160 acres for ten dollars, or to America where the Homestead Act of 1862 opened up the Midwest to settlement. After a month's ship voyage they landed at a Canadian port where they took the railroad to Quebec, Canada arriving July 8, 1893. Heinrich Amend and Anna Giess were married in Lincoln, Nebraska on January 11, 1900. They lived there for eight years working on the railroad. Their first four children were born in Lincoln: Katy on June 4, 1901; John on October 27, 1903; Henry on September 27, 1905; and Marie on October 28, 1907. On March 30, 1908 Heinrich Amend declared his intention of becoming a citizen of the United States of America in the District Court, Lancaster County, in the State of Nebraska. He became a citizen on June 24, 1914 at Lusk, Wyoming. Anna became a citizen at a later date.

Heinrich's dream of owning his own land was finally realized when he moved his family by railroad from Lincoln to Keeline, Wyoming where

he purchased a homestead of 160 acres, five miles southwest of the town. He moved his family from Lincoln on the Chicago North Western Railroad. Anna and her small children were the first to arrive at the Keeline depot where they were met by their new neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Bopp, where they stayed for three weeks until a one-room house could be built on the homestead. The journey from Lincoln took Heinrich several days longer since he came on the immigration car with their household goods and livestock. His late arrival caused much concern for Henry, age 3, who cried those several days thinking he would never see his father again. April 2, 1908 is the official arrival date of the Amends to Wyoming and they remained for the rest of their lives. After moving to Keeline, Fred and Emma were also born. On May 10, 1909, a General Land Office shows an additional application by Heinrich Amend for 160 acres in Section 26 was made at \$1.25 per acre plus ten dollars for filing fees and six dollars for the commission. A patent for these homestead rights was granted for 320 acres on January 17, 1913 by President Woodrow Wilson. Forty acres were later purchased for \$200 in 1942. This final addition brought the total acres of Heinrich Amend's place to 360 acres.

Henry Amend and his siblings attended the Prairie View School and he worked on his parents' homestead as a young boy. In 1927, Hank, as he was better known, helped to drill one of the first wooden rotary drilling rigs in the discovery of the huge Lance Creek Oil Field. He married Gladys M. Sims, daughter of Albert and Della Sims who owned the Twenty Mile Ranch north of Lost Springs. Gladys was a school teacher, having attended the University of Wyoming for two years prior to their marriage on May 31, 1930. The young married couple went into ranching with the Sims family for about three years. They applied for and received their brand, the Double D, or as it is also known, the Lazy S Bar, on August 27, 1931. The brand was for left rib cattle and left hip horses. The earmark is a notch on the bottom of left ear cattle.



Hank with son Marvin 1943, Lost Spring Ranch



Hank & Gladys 1946 at Wyoming State Fair. 4 couples rode matching palomino horses and did a square dance routine.

The dry years of the 1930s forced Hank to seek his former employment in the oil fields. They lived in Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming. While working in these states they were constantly moving with the drilling rigs. They continued to follow the oil field work during the Depression and before the war.

Hank and Gladys had been saving their money for a ranch and in 1938 they purchased the Harry B. Card ranch one mile south of Lost Springs, Wyoming. The historic ranch had gone into receivership, and Frank Barrett, a Lusk attorney, made the sale. The two main buildings of the ranch were: a huge two-story barn which measures 30 feet by 80 feet and a long log bunk house and cook house combined that was used by men who worked the ranch. The barn was built in 1918 for the many teams of horses that were used in haying the meadows. The original

Lost Spring is located below the barn and is the head of Lost Creek, which rarely flows except for the spring.

Gladys' brother, Cecil Sims of Manville, wintered his cattle on the newly purchased ranch for a while, but in 1941 Hank had purchased enough cattle to stock the ranch. They quit the oil field work and moved into the log house until a two-story house could be moved into the ranch from the town of Lost Springs.

Hank and Gladys continued to increase their land by purchasing adjoining property. The purchases included early day homesteads of such people as James Brink, Walter Galbraith, Moses Galbraith, William Bohenkemper, Albert Brink, W. R. Bridgroom, Delford McGrew, Raymond White and others. In 1959 the Heinrich Amend homestead was also purchased. In 1987 the Engebretsens purchased the adjoining Wilmer and Twinkle Baars' place. The land now lies in both Niobrara and Converse Counties.

Hank and Gladys had three children: Mae Ann, born in 1932, and married Robert Manning on February 11, 1951. They purchased the Twenty Mile Ranch from her grandmother, Della Sims, in 1952. Marvin A. was born in 1941. Marvin was killed in an auto accident in July 1970. Mary A., born in 1945, married Charles Engebretsen on September 5, 1965 and they have two children. Merritt and Lisa Engebretsen live in Casper with their children, Kassondra, Jessica, Austyn, and Christopher. Marlisa lives in Veteran with her husband Shawn Hall and twins, Harrison & Jadyne.

Chuck and Mary presently live on the Lost Spring Ranch at Lost Springs.

Gladys Amend passed away in 1963, and following Hank's death in 1970 the original brand was transferred to Mary on May 11, 1971, and to Charles E. and Mary A. Engebretsen on May 14, 1971.

Mary served as Wyoming State Cow-Belles President in 1986-1987.



Sen. Mike Enzi, Engebretsens Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal

The Engebretsens have been Wyoming Stock Growers Association members for over 30 years. Chuck was elected to four consecutive five-year terms as WSGA Executive Committee for Converse County and served a two-year term as Wyoming Stock Growers Association Region III Vice-President. Chuck is currently serving as the treasurer of the Converse Tourism Board and Mary is the 1st Vice-President of the Wyoming Pioneer Association.

# The Homestead Acres, Inc.

## Laramie County



Gus & Hattie, wedding portrait

As told by the Lerwick Family

**T**he history of the Lerwick farming families began with two Norwegian immigrants, Gus (August) Lerwick and Hattie Olsen. August Lerwick homesteaded three-and-one-half miles west of Albin in 1908, and Hattie Olsen only a mile east of Gus in 1911. Gus and Hattie had met in Iowa where Hattie lived with her family. Gus had more recently worked his way over on a ship and was eager to work his way west.

Gus worked for some time helping to build the brick buildings on the military base in Cheyenne before

coming 45 miles back east to Albin to homestead and farm. At that time, the railroad was already built and there were train stops in Albin, Lindbergh, and Pine Bluffs. The early crops planted were wheat, cattle for beef and milk, chickens, and forage crops for winter feed.

When Hattie homesteaded, she borrowed \$300 to build a small square wood-framed house with a stove in the middle. This house, now with many improvements, is the center of Ron and Bette Lu's house. Gus and Hattie were soon married and Gus sold his quarter section of land and bought another quarter adjacent to Hattie's. To this union were born four boys - Orville, Melvin, Glen, and Harold - and four girls - Verna, Mildred, Dorothy, and Esther.

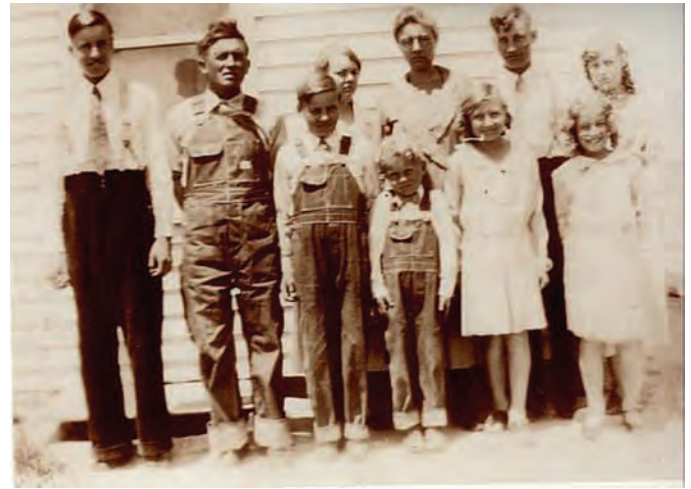
As the family grew, so did the operation. When the youngest child was ten and the oldest was 21, Gus died of Parkinson's. Hattie never re-married and continued to raise the children and let the boys take on the farming. During this time, which was also during the Great Depression, the family worked hard and never suffered for lack of the basic necessities. Over time, the four girls married and raised families in Wyoming, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Iowa. Three of the sons, Orville, Melvin, and Glen, stayed to farm while Harold joined the military. Orville and Glen eventually settled near the original homestead in Albin, and Melvin moved to a farm they had purchased south of Stegall, Nebraska. All three boys married and raised families of their own.

In the 1960's, Orville and Glen divided their operation with Glen and wife Phyllis retaining the homestead. Orville and wife Ada raised their family on a farmstead one-and-one-half miles to the south and west. To those two unions were born 12 children. For one year (1960), all 12 children were in the Albin public school at the same time! Meanwhile, Melvin and wife Gladys raised three children on their farm south of Stegall. Of those 15 children, five of the boys returned to start

farms of their own, with Glen and Phyllis' sons, Jim and Ron, purchasing the original homestead in the 1980's.

Jim and Ron continued farming and ranching together until 2001 when the operation was again divided. Today, there are over 20 descendant families living in the Wyo-Neb-Colorado area and most are involved in agriculture. Currently, Ron and wife, Bette Lu, are living on the homestead, and in 2008 hosted a Lerwick family reunion to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the Lerwick farm. Incredibly, over 160 family members attended to celebrate their farming and ranching beginnings in the State of Wyoming. While most had never lived on the original farmstead, many had spent time working there and all had returned to visit.

With the homestead incorporating both farming and ranching, it has been easier to separate the operation as each generation comes along. This has ultimately allowed individual families to further build their own operations as they see fit. Today the separate families work together but usually only in an informal manner.



The Lerwick Family 1928



The four Lerwick boys



Lerwick family reunion



Ron, Bette Lu, and Monte Lerwick



Sen. Mike Enzi, Lerwick Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal

# The Homestead Farm

## Laramie County



Wilber Bowser, ca. 1906



Marie Ellenberger, 1902

Excerpted from Calico Hill, published by the Jolly Dry Farmer's Club, 1973, with 2010 update

**W**ilber and Marie Bowser were married in 1906 in Kittanning, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania. The first of this family to come to Wyoming was Mrs. Bowser's sister, Nancy Ellenberger. She had moved from Pennsylvania to Iowa to teach school, and because many in Iowa were moving to Wyoming to homestead, she, too, decided to try her luck on the western prairies. Her father, back in Pennsylvania, fearing for her safety, sent his son, Curtis Ellenberger, out to protect her from the Indians and other hazards. They both filed on homesteads. Nancy later returned to Iowa while Curt remained in Wyoming for his lifetime.

In July of 1908, Wilber came by train from Pennsylvania. His brother-in-law, Curtis Ellenberger, had a Ford automobile, one of the few in the country and met Mr. Bowser and helped him locate his homestead. He made his filing and returned to Pennsylvania where he made preparations to move his family to Wyoming. Wilber had been an enameller by trade and learned the trade in New York City. His work was applying the enamel finish to bathtubs and lavatories but the fumes from the application of enamel on red hot iron proved to be a health hazard and he realized he must not continue in that line of work. So in spite of the fact they had a nicely furnished home, some cattle, and were getting a good start in farming, they decided to make the long move to Wyoming.

Mr. Bowser arrived in Hillsdale, Wyoming on October 8, 1908, with an immigrant car containing two horses, two cows, a dozen hens, a good supply of meat and canned fruit, some furniture, a plow, harrow, and wagon. Also on the railroad car was the lumber for their house, all cut and ready to set up.

Standing on the railroad track at Hillsdale when the Bowser car arrived were 13 or more other cars, representing other families who had come to make their homes in this new country.



Wilber Bowser, plowing



Bowser farm, late 1920s



Bowser farm, 1939



Homestead Farms, 1965

Many of these families grew discouraged by the hardships of pioneer life and moved away, some even before proving up on their land. The Bowers were more determined and for 56 years worked together and made of their homestead a real home with plantings of trees and good buildings.

Their first home was the 12-foot x 18-foot one-room house built by Mr. Bowser in the fall of 1908 while awaiting the arrival of Mrs. Bowser and baby daughter, Thelma. They arrived by train on December 24. It was a cold day and the wind was causing a ground blizzard so Nancy Ellenberger sent a heavy comforter to cover Mrs. Bowser and the baby. They stayed a few days with Nancy who was leaving soon to go to Iowa to teach school. Since the Bowser house had no stove for cooking or heating, they waited to move until Nancy had gone so they could have her stove. For about five years, all of the water for household use as well as for the livestock was hauled from Antelope Camp, some two or three miles away.

Three more children were born to the Bowser's—Martelle, Curtis and Kenneth. Wilber Bowser passed away in 1964. Marie continued to manage the ranch until 1975. From the humble beginnings of homesteading on a quarter section of land, the Bowser operation eventually encompassed about 8000 acres. Much of the land was sold following the death of Marie Bowser in 1976.

---

## 2010 Update

With the passing of Marie Bowser in 1976, title to the original homestead land passed to her four grandchildren. Jerry McWilliams and family have been only the second occupants on the property other than hired help in the hundred years of family ownership.

Jerry, son of Thelma (Bowser) and Dana McWilliams, attended school in Hillsdale and graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1967. He served in the Wyoming Air Guard for six years and worked as a regional farm and ranch real estate broker based in Denver for six years, returning



to the parental ranch in 1974 and taking over management of the Bowser property about a year later. He and Diane Tooman of Ohio, a registered nurse working in Denver, were married in 1978 and they raised two sons, Scott and Justin. Scott graduated from Burns High School in 1999 and the University of Wyoming in 2006. He and Megan Green of Cheyenne were married in 2008 and are parents of son Joshua, born in 2010. Scott is employed as a DNA forensic scientist by the State of Wyoming.

Justin also graduated from Burns High School where he was a 12-letterman in sports. Accepted into the Air Force Academy, he graduated with the class of 2006 and was commissioned as an officer in the Air Force. Following pilot training in Texas and Oklahoma, he was assigned to Charleston Air Force Base in South Carolina and flies the C-17 jet transport aircraft.

The current farm and ranch operation consists of a commercial cattle herd, irrigated crops, and dry land wheat. In 2006, the original 12' by 18' homestead house was moved to the Texas Trail Museum in Pine Bluffs, Wyoming where it is on permanent display.



Main House



The McWilliams family, back Justin, Jerry, front Scott, Megan, Joshua, Diane, 2010



Homestead Farms



Sen. Mike Enzi, McWilliams Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal



Bowser homestead shack, 1909



Feb 2006



Homestead shack being moved to Texas Trail Museum, 2006



Texas Trail museum

# The Meng Ranch

## Niobrara County



Sen. Mike Enzi, Meng Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal

# The Quien Sabe Ranch

## Fremont County



Quien Sabe Ranch buildings approx. 1946

As told by William Thoren.

**T**he Quien Sabe Ranch has a long and colorful history beginning with the three English cattle barons - Harry Jevons, Richard Ashworth, and Richard Berry - who established the ranch around 1883. The headquarters was located on Hoodoo Creek and their cattle roamed as far as Nowater Creek in the Big Horn Basin south to the Wind River and Copper Mountain. The story goes that Mexican caballeros, who lived on the Quien Sabe ranch before the Englishmen purchased it, were engaged in the sale of stolen horses. The name of the ranch, Quien Sabe, means “who knows?” in Spanish.

The Quien Sabe switched hands sometime in the 1890s and Tom Osborne became the new owner. Legend has it that Butch Cassidy once owned the ranch; while the connection cannot be verified, what is true is that the Quien Sabe was a gathering place for rustlers and outlaws during the late 1890s and early 1900s. The ranch was homesteaded and patented in 1906 by Johnnie Johnson.

In 1907 Emil Thoren acquired the Quien Sabe Ranch. It has remained in the Thoren family since that time. Thoren came from Kansas to Sweetwater County in 1892, then moved on to Fremont County in 1904. He married Elsie Crowley, whose family homesteaded on nearby Tough Creek. Their son, Dennis, continued to operate the ranch after Emil’s death. Dennis and his wife, Fern, had two sons, William and Donald, who managed the ranch after Dennis died in the 1940s.

In 1983, William and his wife, Frances, purchased Donald’s half interest in the Quien Sabe. They built a new home on Tough Creek (the Crowley homestead) about four miles west of the historic Quien Sabe.

The Thoren family has restored a number of log buildings on the ranch, including a three-room log house and two bunk houses. The Quien Sabe Ranch was officially listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1991.



Quien Sabe Ranch group, 1936



Quien Sabe Ranch stacking hay near old barn



Dennis Thoren, Elsie Crowley Thoren in front of old barn approximately 1914; Tom Welch on right.



Dennis, baby Bill, & Fern Thoren 1936, Quien Sabe Ranch



Bill Thoren (right) & Grandfather James Scott (left) 1948



Back Bill Thoren, Gene Shipley-hired man, Eddie Mudge. Front Don Thoren, Bob Mudge, 1952

The Quien Sabe Ranch limited partnership was established in 1995; Bill, Frances, and their five children are partners in the ranch operation. As in many families, the children have scattered. Tracey VanHeule is living in Thermopolis, Alissa Bucher in Littleton, Colorado, Daniel Thoren in Brighton, Colorado, Bruce Thoren now living on Tough Creek, Shoshoni, and Scott Thoren in Burbank, Washington.

The Quien Sabe ranch manager is now James VanHeule, a Thoren grandson. William and Frances have retired in Thermopolis and say “quien sabe?” who knows – and life goes on.



Frances & Bill Thoren 1993



House built 1983 - Laugh Creek



Quien Sabe Ranch buildings 1990



Quien Sabe Ranch, re-roofing bunk house



Bill Thoren & James Van Heule 2008



James Van Heule (grandson) on Jones Creek



Quien Sabe log house, refurbished 2007



Sen. Mike Enzi, Thoren Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal



Quien Sabe stucco house refurbished 2009



Winter at Laugh Creek

# The Teapot Ranch

## Natrona County



John Beaton from Scotland,  
1903

Grace Gordon Beaton from  
Scotland, ca. 1903-1908

As told by Billie Jean Shepperson Beaton

Every year Teapot Rock erodes a bit more from years and weather conditions, but before any of us can remember, it has been the symbol which give the area, adjoining creeks and the ranch its name.

Both Grace Gordon (1885-1969) and John Beaton (1878-1961) emigrated from their homes in Scotland soon after 1900. Grace came to join her uncle, Rory Gordon, who was engaged in the sheep business in Natrona County. She took up a homestead at the foot of Teapot Rock. John Beaton worked for various sheepmen until 1903, then homesteaded north of Teapot Rock on Teapot Creek, near the Narrows, where the town of Teapot was eventually built. Both of their adjoining homesteads were crossed by freighters and camp mover's trails to the Salt Creek Oilfield. Grace and John married in 1911 and continued in the sheep business along with several of John's brothers and loyal employees of Scotch and Irish descent. Many of these fellows lived on their homesteads a few years, then eventually sold to John. Grace spent 58 years on the ranch, forty of them in very rustic conditions preparing meals for family, crews of ranch hands, and friends. The heating and cooking

were done on a wood stove. There was no electricity or running water.

During the days of the "open range", livestock was herded where grass and water were most plentiful. John and the herders trailed the sheep many miles depending on the seasons. Sometimes they were around the Casper area, Deer Creek, Douglas, Pumpkin Buttes, or the Big Horn Mountains, living in sheep wagons. Much of the time they were away from their families and homesteads to save the grass around home for the winter. The Teapot range contains many hills and rough breaks which make shelter and bed grounds for livestock.

The children all started their education in Casper where a home had been built. After highways were improved from the old freighters' trails, the family moved to the ranch permanently so that more time could be spent improving living conditions for the family and also caring for the livestock. The children then attended school at Midwest. Originally all of the buildings were moved onto the ranch from other places. Depression, fire, and a cyclone took their toll. The present home was built in the oilfield as a small hospital near Lavoye and moved twice to its present location.

The Beatons had several children, three of which survived. Johnny, the oldest son, was born in 1914 and died in 2004. When he was 13 years old he pulled a herd of sheep to the Big Horn Mountains. He graduated from Midwest High School. He spent all of his life on the ranch working -building corrals, sheds and barns for the lambing, along with the usual ranch work.

Mary, the only daughter, was born in 1918. She graduated from Midwest High School, then Colorado Women's College and Stanford University. She was an accomplished pianist. She married Everett Johnson Coil and they raised two children, Ann Begley of Casper, Wyoming and Reverend Douglas Coil of Lilburn, Georgia.



Bruce (1925-1990), the youngest son, graduated from Midwest High School. He was a very hard worker. He worked at a feed store in Cheyenne a few years but returned, devoting most of his life to ranch work.

All of the family had a love of music. Their neighbors would join them for evenings of congeniality and music. Bruce played the accordion and harmonica, Mary played the piano and Johnny played the fiddle. Anyone who played an instrument or enjoyed listening or singing would have an evening of fun, especially during the holidays. Some of the range men and trappers would come horseback or walk miles after dark from their camps and back again, in order to spend an evening visiting and swapping range stories along with the music. One neighbor, Tim Mahoney, ranched south of the Naval Reserve. He loved the music sessions so much that when he interviewed a potential hired man, his second question was “What instrument do you play?”

Lambing was always done at the ranch. Predators such as wolves, coyotes, and bobcats were always a problem. Lambing hands had to tend to each little drop herd of sheep to see that lanterns, flags and scarecrows of some type would keep predators away until they could be combined with the main herd. In the 1920s and 1930's the shearing was done as the herd of sheep trailed toward the Big Horn Mountains for summer. A large shearing pen called the 33 Mile Pens was built beside the North and South railroad track. The pens were named because they were 33 miles from Casper. The North and South Railroad was built through the oilfield to the west to connect to the Burlington and Northwestern, west of Casper at Illco. This railroad also hauled livestock from the old town of Salt Creek to be shipped to Colorado, Iowa, Nebraska and points east.

In the 1930s Teapot Ranch bought cattle and the Heart H brand to run along with the sheep. In the 1950s they started one of the first black Angus cattle herds in central Wyoming. As range help decreased, they decreased the sheep numbers and started increasing their Angus cattle numbers. A small flock of sheep was still on the ranch until the 1990s.



Johnny Beaton branding Hereford calf before he switched to Angus cattle



Bruce Beaton (right) with one of the herders

Billie Jean Shepperson, a neighbor who had known Johnny since high school, married Johnny in 1972. They raised black Angus cattle. Their greatest pleasures came from working with their family, friends, neighbors, and people connected with the livestock industry. Neighbors and family help each other especially at roundups, branding, and shipping times. Ranches are increasingly dependent on the women of the families, not only for their help around the homes but for their capabilities and expertise around livestock and machinery. Billie Jean has three children, all ranchers who always help as time permits. Sally Shepperson Ramsbottom, Frank E., and Jim were all raised on the neighboring Shepperson ranch. After the death of Johnny in 2004, Billie Jean continues to live and work on the ranch. Frank's family is close by and they work together on a day to day basis to do the ranch work.

Johnny always realized that very few people could make a success with livestock in the rough hills unless they knew the terrain, understood the livestock and understood the water conditions during the different seasons. He always hoped that the ranch would continue as a working ranch and not be sub-divided. Billie Jean and her family are dedicated to improving the facilities of the ranch and the quality of the livestock. The whole nature of ranching and farming is changing. The lives of the people through all the years of struggle, hard work, and hard times are to be respected. Most of the pleasures cannot be purchased with money. The wealth lies in the awe, admiration, and respect for the past, present, and future, with God's help to carry them through.



Billie Jean & Johnny Beaton



Johnny & Gary pushing cattle into Stove Gulch



Photo of Teapot Rock, ca 1957 by James O. Tucker, DVM before tornado destroyed the spout



Teapot Cattle in preparation for shipping



Teapot Ranch from the air



Trailing cattle to corrals for branding, 2009



Teapot Rock, Spring 1998

# The Shepperson Ranch

## Natrona County



Ruth Taylor Shepperson & J.L. Shepperson (Les), 1st generation



Ruth Shepperson breaking a horse

As told by the Shepperson Family

**J**ohn Lester (Les) Shepperson came to Natrona County in 1900 from Tarkio, Missouri to join his brother, James W. Shepperson. Les was born October 5, 1878 to John Henry and Elizabeth Roberts Shepperson. John H. was English and had been in the Civil War. Les was working in a feed yard in Missouri and knew he wanted to work around livestock. Arriving in Wyoming, Les tended sheep camps from Casper to the Pumpkin Buttes in the days of open range. In the early 1900s, Les decided to go into the sheep business himself and took up a homestead on Castle Creek. He wanted to homestead at the forks of Castle Creek and Salt Creek, but decided to move further west up Castle Creek. The forks were in the midst of the Salt Creek Oilfield and a person's life did not mean much in those days of claim jumping, oil, and bootlegging.

Les ran sheep over much of Wyoming and was an accomplished horseman and handler of teams. He summered sheep in the Sweetwater country, the Rattlesnake Mountains, and the Big Horn Mountains. After fall shipping, the sheep were brought back to Castle Creek to winter.

In 1914, Les married Ruth Taylor from the Sweetwater country. Ruth was born in Lander on November 28, 1887 to James Baxter (Bax) Taylor and Mary Alice (Oma) Barlow Taylor. Bax Taylor was born January 18, 1856 in Lisbee County, Texas. He and his brother, William Levi (Buck), born November 15, 1857, came north up the Texas Trail with cattle several times. Bax settled in Wyoming in 1877. Buck joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show traveling around the U.S. and Europe and doubled for Buffalo Bill Cody. Oma Barlow Taylor was born December 28, 1862 in Noble County, Illinois and came to Wyoming in 1883. Bax homesteaded on Long Creek, which empties into the Sweetwater River in Fremont County in 1879. Bax and Oma married on November 7, 1886 and had three daughters, Ruth and Frances (Hoffineister), twin girls, and Jean. Bax was killed when he was thrown from his wagon when his team ran away near Rongis, Wyoming in 1897. Mrs. Taylor and the girls sold the Long Creek Ranch and moved to a ranch on Dry Creek in Natrona County where they continued in the cattle and horse business.

Les and Ruth Taylor Shepperson had four children, Frank Lester, Alyce (LeBar), Evelyn (Houser), and Eugene Taylor. All four children were very

capable and good with horses and livestock. Ruth passed away in Casper in 1924. Frances and Oma Taylor helped care for the young children and Les continued his work on the range with sheep and horses. Les married Elizabeth M. Watson in 1926. The sheep business had its ups and downs and then came the depression years. The open range was gradually being fenced in and so in the 1940s Les sold the sheep and went into the cattle business. Les passed away on the ranch June 16, 1956.



Frank L Shepperson & Billie Jean Shepperson, 2nd generation

Frank Lester, the oldest son of Les and Ruth, married Jean Lenore (Billie Jean) Covington Kittleson on September 3, 1938. She is a third generation rancher and was born April 30, 1919. Her grandfather, J.J. Covington, came up the Chisholm Trail with cattle at the age of seventeen and later settled on the 4J Ranch near Guernsey. Billie Jean was raised at the old town of Salt Creek. Frank L. and Billie Jean continued ranching on Castle Creek and added to the original homestead. They raised their children and ran Hereford cattle and horses for thirty years on the ranch. Times were tough and Billie Jean taught school for many years and Frank L. worked hard on the range and in the oilfield at times to make do. They had three children, Sally Jo (Ramsbottom), whose family ranches in Johnson County, Frank Eugene, whose family is on the ranch now, and James Lester, who ranches in Niobrara County. Frank Lester died in September 1969. Billie Jean later remarried to John Beaton of the Teapot Ranch in Natrona County.



Jim, Frank E., & Sally (Shepperson) Ramsbottom, 3rd generation

Frank E. Shepperson married Susan M. (Campbell), a neighboring third-generation ranch girl. She was raised on the Antelope Springs Ranch, northwest of Midwest. They gradually switched from Hereford to Black Angus cattle and have significantly expanded the ranch holdings to provide for a growing family. They have four children: Lynn J. (Mayfield), Lisa A. Shepperson, Frank L. Shepperson, and Amy J. Shepperson. This family, along with Lynn's husband, Justin Mayfield, and two young sons, Kall and Jace Mayfield, are on the ranch now.



Branding Cattle ca. 1940s



Justin Mayfield (R), Lynn Mayfield, Les, Amy & Lisa Shepperson



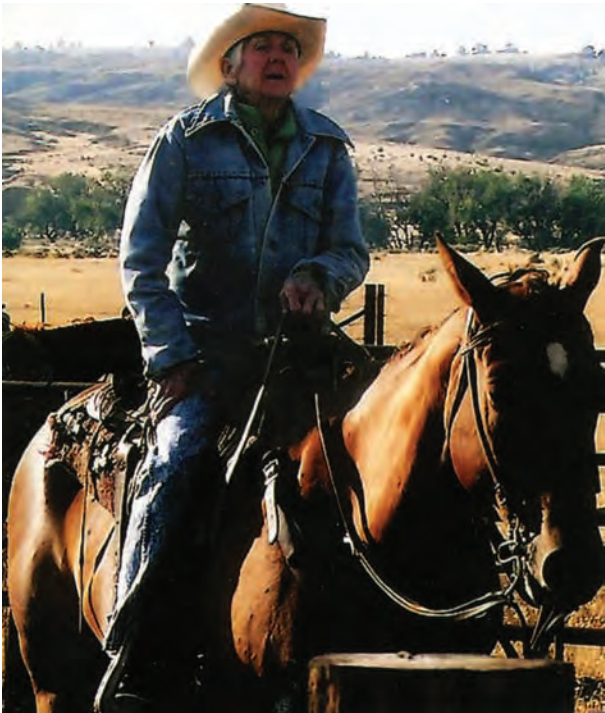
Frank E Shepperson



Susan Shepperson



Jack & Kall Mayfield



Billie Jean Beaton, 91 years young



Sen. Mike Enzi, Beaton-Shepperson Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal

# The West Cross V Ranch

## Crook County



William Ray West, teacher, in front of schoolhouse at Jim Do

As told by Doug West

**W**illiam Ray (1884-1949) and Gertrude West (1888-1979) came to Wyoming from Nebraska in 1906 to homestead. William, my granddad, was a school teacher for several years and was the first teacher in northern Crook County. He also milked cows and hauled freight to Belle Fourche, South Dakota with teams and wagons. William and Gertrude had three children before they arrived in Wyoming and three more after they came.

A son, Roy Bruce West, next owned the ranch. He married Frances Drane and they had six children. Their son, Doug, now has the ranch. Doug is married to Betty Hauber and they have three children.

Our ranch is located in the very northwest corner of Crook County and it has expanded several thousand acres from the original homestead. It was primarily a sheep ranch for many, many years. In the 1970s and 1980s we ran about 2,000 head of ewes. In 1994, I sold all the ewes and went into cattle, mainly because of predators. We now run about 800 head of cows. We hay about 2,000 acres of dry land hay and usually have a couple hundred acres of crops, which are hayed. I bought the land from my brothers and sisters in 2005 after our Mom passed away. There are still three generations on the ranch.

No buildings from the original homestead survive but there is 20-feet by 20-feet by 12-feet deep, hand-dug well lined with pine timbers that still



Grandpa & Grandma West's house, 1938



Rocky Point store and post office owners William Ray & Gert



Sen. Mike Enzi, West Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal

waters livestock. It was dug in the late 1800s. The old Texas Trail goes through the middle of the original homestead.

# Alta Land and Livestock

## Teton County

As told by Meredith Wilson

**T**homas Ross Wilson was born in Salt Lake City, Utah on 16 December, 1857, the son of James Thomas and Isabella Ross Wilson. He married Susannah Musser Sheets, the daughter of Elijah Funk and Susannah Musser Sheets on 1 December, 1881, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Thomas was a graduate of the University of Deseret (University of Utah) Normal Department 9 June, 1876. He taught in Utah schools prior to investigating Teton Valley in June 1888. In July 1889 he brought his family, consisting of his wife, Susannah and three children: Ross, Ada, and Clifford, to Teton Valley. Through the Homestead Act they first settled 3/4 mile north of the present site of Driggs, Idaho. Three years later the family moved six miles east to the present site of Alta, Wyoming. He located on a 320 acre farm and ranch where the soil was deep and fertile.

Thomas was well- prepared and trained as a pioneer, for in addition to his training as a teacher, he, his father, and brothers had wide experience in raising cattle, raising and training horses, and in timbering. Farming and ranching in Wyoming consisted of clearing trees and brush from the land, and growing hay and grain, and in raising livestock. They also developed a large vegetable garden, and grew onions, beets, carrots, potatoes and other vegetables. A fruit orchard was developed as well as current bushes and raspberry patches. A beautiful flower garden was also developed, growing marigolds, pansies, petunias, phlox, sweet peas, poppies of various varieties, bleeding hearts and many others.

A lovely house of six rooms with back kitchen was built. Rows of trees were planted lining the pathways and front yard. A large barn was built for hay storage and side areas for the horses and cows.



Wilson ranch

In addition to farming and ranching, Thomas periodically taught school. He also served as the post master and game warden at various times. He was skilled in taxidermy and mounted heads of elk, moose, ducks, birds, and other animals. Three additional daughters, Irma, Rula and Isabela, were born in Teton Valley.

The Wilson family, along with many other Teton Valley pioneers, were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, (Mormon).

Thomas served in several different positions during his lifetime. There were no doctors at that time in Teton Valley, but Thomas possessed a natural talent and ability along this line and was the means of helping many friends and neighbors as well as his own family members. He was capable to set broken bones, stitch up cuts and lacerations, and provide help in various illnesses. He did this as a service and never charged for his excellent care. He also



had a creative and mechanical mind and was able to repair broken machinery and improve its efficiency. He invented a process for printing pictures faster than by hand. He worked and improved a button machine and fencing machine.

Thomas was a lifelong Republican and served four terms in the Wyoming Legislature: 1904, 1908, 1912, and 1916, from Uinta, then Lincoln, and finally Teton County. He did not want this opportunity just for the honor, although it was an honor, but he was interested in the preservation of the wild game of the state, and also promoted the prohibition of alcohol, and was successful in accomplishing some of these objectives.

In 1921 he was commissioned by Governor Carey of Wyoming, together with P. C. Hanson and W. P. Redmond, for the proposed organization of Teton County. Thomas died 29 September, 1929.

In 1922, T. Ross Wilson, the oldest son, was given the ownership and responsibility for the ranch. T. Ross Wilson was born 2 December, 1882, in Salt Lake City, Utah. He married Alice Cloe Larsen 1 June, 1916. They had seven children: Ralf, Thomas, John Mark, Clyde, Wayne, Grant, Merrill, and Suzanne. Upon the death of T. Ross Wilson 1 May, 1951, the ownership and responsibility for the ranch was given to John Mark Wilson, who married Janice Waddell 23 December, 1953. Their children are: Judith, Lori, Deon, Wendy, John Meredith, Cloe and Larry Scott. During this period of time, the ranch and farm have undergone impressive improvements such as clearing more land, installing a gravity irrigation system, and building new structures for the livestock and poultry, as well as remodeling the family home. John Mark was a veteran of World War II, serving in the Pacific area, and retired as a Captain. He served in many agricultural positions both county and state.

John Mark died 14 June, 1991, and the responsibility of the ranch and farm has been given to John Meredith Wilson, the current owner and operator. Meredith married Dana Marie Holm December 1992. They have six children: Gabriel



Ralf Wilson, T. Ross Wilson & John M. Wilson



John M Wilson



John M Wilson and Secretary of Agriculture

Boone, Isabella Marguerite, Olivia Cloe, Amelia Louisa, Eliza Lucia, and Gideon Maxwell.

The ranch and farm has continued to produce various agricultural crops as well as livestock. The families have been active in community and church endeavors, and have been especially productive in 4-H projects for many years. This family is devoted to each other as well as to the welfare of extended family members and neighbors, to the Church to which they belong, and to the United States of America. They cherish their heritage, and are totally devoted to the maintenance and continued production of this Hundred Year Plus Ranch and Farm.



*To John Wilson with best wishes,  
Cliff Hanson*

Wyoming ASCS Committee Senator Clifford Hanson & John M. Wilson



Wilson ranch



Wyoming State ASCS Committee Feb. 1983



John Meredith Wilson, Dana Wilson & Gabriel Wilson



# The Wilson Ranch

## Niobrara County

As told by Clara S. Wilson

Owen and Katie Shay, natives of Iowa, came into what is now northern Niobrara County, Wyoming from Sioux County, Nebraska in 1896 with a band of sheep, grazing them from one source of water to the next. In 1900, they located on the Cheyenne River at the mouth of Hen Creek. They built a large four-bedroom house with a bay window, a lot of it using cottonwood logs cut along the river.

Anthony and John Wilkinson had emigrated from England in 1873 and 1882 respectively, first coming to Nebraska and later to the Pine Bluffs and Cheyenne area. They were familiar with the grazing land and water sources along the Cheyenne River, having owned some land in the area. They had hired some fellow Englishmen who had newly arrived into America to take bands of sheep north to the Cheyenne River and beyond. They were among the largest woolgrowers in the state at that time, and sheared 10,000 head of ewes at the shearing pens near Merino, now Upton, in the 1890s.

Anthony Wilkinson Sedgwick was born in Kettlewell, Yorkshire, England in 1882, one of eleven children born to John Hayden Sedgwick (1841-1918) and Alice (Wilkinson) Sedgwick (1849-1929). Both parents were born in Yorkshire County also. He sailed for America with his family in 1889, arriving by train in Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory five days after they set foot in the U.S.A. They were met by Mrs. Sedgwick's brother, Anthony Wilkinson. The family went to a ranch owned by Wilkinson, north of Archer, where John worked until filing on a homestead near Grover, Colorado and moving there in 1890.

Pauline Dorthea Thompson, daughter of Henry (1850-1925) and Ida (Stark) Thompson (1866-1958), German emigrants born in Manne and Keil respectively, was born in Cheyenne in 1882.

This is the brand used on the Wilson cattle and horses today. It was first recorded in Weld County, Colorado to Anthony W. Sedgwick in 1904. When they moved to Wyoming, the same brand was recorded here.



left hip cattle  
left thigh horses

Wilson Cattle and horse Brand

THE STATE OF WYOMING  
VETERINARIAN'S OFFICE  
No. 837  
Yardmaster of Railway Co., *Lusk Wyo* 1907  
*Trailed from Grover Colo*  
Having complied with the sanitary requirements of the State of Wyoming.  
*Inspected* *59 Head* *May load* *May* *may load* *Horses* *and depart.*  
No. Cars *trailed* *Harry Rogus*  
Deputy Stock Inspector, for State Veterinarian

Wyoming Veterinarian's office form 1909

Henry had come to the United States in 1868 and Ida came in 1880. Her father was a partner in a general store, Street and Thompson, in Custer, South Dakota in 1875. Mr. Street ran the store, Thompson hauled the freight from Cheyenne with oxen and mules. His scout was the first to discover the Metz massacre south of Custer, and they helped bury the dead. His wagon train was accompanied by prospectors and adventurers, and he hauled their baggage. Later, after his marriage to Ida in 1882, they lived in Grover, Colorado where they owned a general store, grain elevator, farms and other property there and in the Ault and Eaton area. Mr. Thompson was the founder of a bank in Ault.

Pauline Dorthea Thompson and Anthony Wilkinson Sedgwick were married in Greeley, Colorado in 1904. They lived on their homestead east of Grover near the Pawnee Buttes. Andy, as he was known, rode on round-ups every fall in the rangeland between Grover and Cheyenne.

Two children were born in Colorado, Leonard Thompson (1906-2000) and Ida Alice (1908-1994).

Andy and his brother Leonard, or Len as he was called, went to Wyoming to see the Shay ranch in April 1908 and decided to buy it, 960 acres, 200

cows and 3000 sheep for \$45,000. Mrs. Sedgwick's brother, Peter Thompson, went to the ranch to care for the livestock until arrangements could be made to move to the newly acquired ranch in the fall of 1908. This included trailing a large band of horses from Colorado. Mrs. Sedgwick and the two young children came to Edgemont, South Dakota on the train on New Year's Eve that year. They were taken to the ranch in a sleigh driven by Chris Christensen, who worked at the livery stable and had recently arrived from Denmark. He later became a neighbor.

Andy's brother, Len (1875-1913), was also born in Kettlewell, and came to America with the family in 1889. He later went to Alaska and had some success prospecting for gold in the Klondike.

Upon his return to Wyoming Len ran sheep in the Red Desert north of Rock Springs, and later near Sterling, Colorado before moving to the ranch on the Cheyenne River. He took up a homestead adjoining the ranch owned with his brother. He married Myrtle Finch in Greeley in 1910 and they had one son, Clarence, born in Greeley in 1912.

After Len's death due to appendicitis, Andy bought out his share of the ranch from his widow. Other parcels of land were added over the years.

Andy and Lena had two more children after moving to the ranch in Wyoming. Pauline Lucille was born in 1911 (deceased) and Francis (1917-1993). Lena took over as postmistress of the Dale, Wyoming post office until it was relocated and the name changed to Spencer in 1911. The children attended the Bob Cat and later the Hen Creek Schools through the elementary grades.

Leonard acquired the nickname of Buster Brown as a young boy, and was later known as Bus.

Tragedy struck the young family in May, 1920 when Lena passed away from blood poisoning after stepping on a nail while gathering eggs. Andy never remarried. Ida Thompson came to the Wyoming ranch every summer to help with the grandchildren, and later, the great-grandchildren.



Helen & Leonard T. Sedgwick



Steers Crossing the Cheyenne River, 1918



Lena & Andy Sedgwick, 1919



Bus Sedgwick on Fox, riding to school



Sheep Near Red Butte north of Newcastle early 1930's



Bus, Lenny, Clara & Francie, 1949

Leonard, Pauline, and Francis went to live with their grandmother during the winter months to attend high school in Grover, Colorado. After high school graduation, Leonard attended the University of Wyoming, and Pauline took a college business course in Grand Island, Nebraska.

Ida married Everett Smith and four children were born, Dorothy, Marjorie, Joann and Raymond. Pauline married James Marchant and they had Anthony and twins Annette and Jeanette. Francis married Violet Coy Donaldson and they had a daughter, Rhonda.

Bus married Helen Kathryn Petty in Sheridan, Wyoming in 1929. She was the daughter of Artemus and Mabel Arnold Petty of Edgemont, South Dakota. Helen (1908-1980) was born on the Petty homestead in Red Canyon north of Edgemont, one of seven siblings. They had three children - Clara Pauline born in 1938, Frances Marie born in 1939 and Leonard Anthony born in 1941.

Clara and Frances graduated Edgemont High School and Lenny graduated Newcastle High School. Clara graduated University of Wyoming, Frances attended the university also, and Lenny attended Casper College.

Artemus "Art" Petty (1878-1964) was born in Nebraska, moving to Deadwood with his parents in 1878 and then to Hot Springs two years later. His father, Edmund "Ted" Petty, was born in Ontario in 1841, and his mother, Jane "Jennie" Coleman Petty, was born in Ireland in 1846. His father and his brother, Joe, had a road house near Oral, South Dakota, a stage stop for stagecoaches running from Sidney, Nebraska to Deadwood. The city of Hot Springs sits on land included in Ted Petty's homestead. He owned a stage line and livery stable, and served as deputy sheriff from 1900-1904.

Mabel's parents, Emmet and Clara Paine Arnold, were both born in Philo, Illinois. They were married in 1883 and moved to Buffalo Gap, South Dakota two years later. Eventually they homesteaded south of Minnekata. Later they moved to Los Angeles, California.

Art spent eight years cowboying in South Dakota and Montana, returning to Hot Springs in 1901 and going to work for Paine & Arnold near Minnekata. He married Mabel Arnold in 1901, they moved to his ranch in Red Canyon and they had seven children.

Art was elected sheriff of the county from 1932 to 1936. They moved to a ranch west of Edgemont, later purchasing a ranch in Wyoming from Houston Sowers in 1935. They would trail their cattle to Wyoming in the summer and back home in the fall. He sold the Wyoming holdings to his son-in-law Bus Sedgwick in 1960 and moved back to Hot Springs. Lenny has owned the Sowers place since 1965 and leases it to the Wilsons.

The Sedgwick's sold many horses to the US Army during World War I to be used as light artillery horses. Andy liked to tell of one time just before haying, an Army buyer came to look at the teams. He liked what he saw, so Andy put what he thought was a high price on them and asked how many he wanted. The buyer told him he wanted all of them! There were no young, broke horses to hay with, so they hitched an old retired horse with a young unbroke one, put a post through one wheel on the mower and after a few days were able to start haying.

When the demand for Army horses ebbed, Andy trailed a large bunch of horses to the shipping point at Dewey, South Dakota in 1927 and sent them to Grand Island, Nebraska. The young stock brought \$4 a head and the bigger, mature horses sold for \$6.

Andy was a brand inspector from 1915 to 1925, inspecting thousands of cattle and horses being shipped out of the Dewey and Edgemont stock yards.

The Hogg brothers lived west of the ranch and brought in a few registered thoroughbred horses from their homeland in Kentucky. Andy bought two stallions, Hanola Woodward and Little Ethan, from them, as well as a few mares. They made good ranch horses.

Bus remembered a herd of Mexican steers being brought onto the ranch when he was a small boy in

1918 from the Terraza ranch in Chihuahua, Mexico. Many were spotted, all were horned.

The cattle raised on the Sedgwick ranch were Herefords until the mid-1940s. Andy's brother, John, was the buyer of a carload of Hereford bulls at the 1916 National Western Stock Show. Some were sent to the Sedgwick ranch and the rest went to the MW ranch south of Newcastle.

Bus worked for the state poisoning rodents near Meeteese and in the Big Horns in 1927. That fall he came back to the ranch and bought 200 head of ewes, and started ranching with his father. He already had some cattle at the ranch. He and Helen took a band of ewes north of Newcastle for grazing near Red Butte and the Four Corners area every summer for several years.

In 1935 he leased land in the Morrissey community on Alkali Creek, which he later bought. The sheep were then kept there. Bus and Helen bought out Andy's holdings in 1960, and then sold it to his three children in 1965 and moved into Newcastle.

The first Angus bulls were purchased at the 1947 National Western Stock Show from J. E. Barbey of Steamboat Springs, Colorado. These black bulls had all of the neighborhood terrified that they might get in with their Hereford cows. Now it is hard to find a Hereford anywhere in the community. Bus bought five registered Angus cows in 1952 from the Wyoming Angus Ranch in Cheyenne. The children showed some of the offspring in 4-H, doing well at the county and state fairs, and they provided bulls for the ranch. All of the cattle are now black.

Electricity was first furnished for the ranch by the use of a wind charger with storage batteries, a 32-volt set up. The Niobrara Electric brought in power lines into the area in 1952, with electricity for water wells and irrigation pumps as well as for the house, barns and shop.

In the early 1960s, with the help of the Great Plains government program for developing livestock water for agriculture use, about twenty-five miles of underground pipelines were installed serving stock tanks in every pasture. Before this, some pastures



Clara & Fred Wilson

All three of the Sedgwick children were very active in 4-H, a new interest for country youth becoming popular in the 1940s under the direction of the new county extension agent, Si West. The girls went far in 4-H livestock judging, both being on the 1955 reserve champion team, and Clara also being on the champion team the next year. That same year she also showed the 4-H champion Angus bull at the Wyoming State Fair. Bus had bought some registered Corriedale sheep from Art King of Cheyenne in the early 1940s and they did very well showing in 4-H at the county and state fairs. Lenny and other Newcastle FFA Chapter members did well showing sheep bred by the Sedgwick's in state FFA competition. Bus and the Newcastle FFA instructor put together a program to help the students buy some of the Sedgwick purebred ewes.



Fred Wilson Team Roping Sedgwick Ranch

All of the Sedgwick children were competitive in high school rodeo, and all three qualified at state rodeos to compete at national high school rodeo finals.

Frances "Francie" had married Michael "Mick" James, who was in the US Army, in 1957 and went with him to Germany where Michael (1958-1990) their oldest son was born. After they returned, Kelly Jo and Tracy were born. Mick is deceased.



Clara & Fred Wilson, Ty & Lonnie Farella, Billy Soderberg, 2

Francie now lives in Casper, and after retiring from training race horses, and works as a race steward at various race tracks.

Lenny married Ann Caress and they have three children, Kacy Botkin, Amy Adams and Marty, all living in Newcastle. Lenny has leased part of his land, the Sowers place, to Fred and Clara Wilson since 1965. Pipelines and stock tanks have also been put in there.

Clara married Frederick Caryl Wilson in 1960. Fred was born in 1938 in Gillette, the son of Caryl Wendell Wilson (1905-1989) and Cora Mildred Smith Wilson (1907-2005). Caryl was the son of Caryl Wendell Wilson Sr. and Anna Robinson Wilson, born in Minnesota and later living in Idaho before coming to the Gillette area. He later owned a service station in Buffalo, Wyoming. Mildred

were dependent upon rain water caught in earthen dams to water the livestock. If the dams were empty, the pastures could not be used.



was the daughter of Hamilton “Hamp” Smith (1873-1945) born in Goliad, Texas and Laura Gird Lynde(1866-1948) born in Nebraska. They had a ranch near Spotted Horse, Wyoming. The Wilsons had three other children; Mary Eloise Mullins born in 1928, Donald Lee born in 1930, both deceased, and Shirley Ann Kaltenbach born in 1944. Shirley married Charles Kaltenbach, they have three children, Kevin, Carolyn and Dan.

She and Chuck recently moved to the Seattle area after teaching in Alaska for twenty-five years. Chuck managed a doctor’s office in Fairbanks. Shirley got her PhD and taught at the University of Alaska in Juneau for a few years.

Clara and Fred bought the original Sedgwick ranch from her father in 1965, having lived there since 1960. They are parents of one daughter, Lonnie Dee, born in 1962 and one grandson, Billy Soderberg born in 2000. Lonnie married Ty Farella in 2004, and they live on the Farella place north of Newcastle and come to help at the ranch every day where they also run cattle.

Tyrone Farella was born in Newcastle in 1957, the son of Tony and Norma Dunn Farella, and grandson of Batista Farella (1881-1961), immigrating to America from Italy in 1901 and coming to work in the Cambria coal mines near Newcastle two years later. In 1913 he bought a small ranch north of Newcastle, which is still owned by his family, and where Ty and Lonnie and their family live.

Ty has a sister, Carol Rossman, and a brother, Tony Jr. Ty has two other children, Travis, who lives in Denver, and Taylor, a student at University of Mary in Bismarck, South Dakota.

Clara graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1960. Fred graduated in 1965. He had formerly attended Colorado State University and Casper College. Both were on the college rodeo teams, qualifying for national college finals three times. Fred and his team won the NIRA men’s team championship in 1961, held in Sacramento, California. Fred joined the Rodeo Cowboys Association in 1959, now the Professional Rodeo



Steer Calves, 10-2005

Cowboys Association and is a gold card member. Clara joined the Girls Rodeo Association in 1960, which was later changed to Women’s Professional Rodeo Association (WRPA), and also has her gold card membership. From 1990 through 1998 she was elected to represent the Mountain States Circuit (Wyoming and Colorado) on the WPRA board of directors. They both successfully participated in professional rodeos for several years, and showed Quarter Horses quite a bit in the 1970s and 1980s.

Fred is a past-president of the Wyoming Quarter Horse Association and has been a director for 30 years. He held judge’s cards in the American Quarter Horse Association as well as the National Cutting Horse Association. He still occasionally helps judge the cuttings at high school rodeos. He is a Niobrara County director of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association and was a brand inspector for a time. He was appointed by Governor Freudenthal to serve on the Wyoming Livestock Board and continues to do so.

Out-of-state hunters, some of the same ones having come for several years, show up in October to hunt mule deer, white-tail deer and antelope. White-tail deer were never seen in this area fifteen years ago, but seem to get more plentiful every year. They get into the hay around the barns and damage young trees and shrubs in the yard. Occasionally, wild turkeys come through the yard too, but they usually stick more to the cottonwood trees along the river.



Sen. Mike Enzi, Fred Wilson Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal

Lonnie has been riding Wilson horses successfully in horse show and rodeo competition since she was a small girl. She also has her WPRAs gold card. She qualified for the National High School Rodeo national finals all four years of high school. She qualified for the Mountain States Circuit finals nine times on three different horses she trained herself. She competes in barrel racing futurities in the area each year. Ty does very well team roping in the area, also riding a Wilson raised horse. Billy started barrel racing and pole bending at the local gymkanas and is into junior rodeos now, having started to rope steers and tie goats.

Fred learned to pregnancy-test and artificial inseminate cattle in 1965. In the early 1980s both he and Clara went to Colorado State University (CSU) to take a short course on artificially inseminating horses.

Clara returned to CSU in 2000 for the short course, and she also learned to AI cattle. Lonnie, also a graduate of the University of Wyoming in 1981, has also taken the course at CSU. She went to Australia for six-months not long after she got out of college, working on sheep farms, helping with shearing, riding colts, etc.

She was a 4-H member for several years, doing well in horse and sheep projects at local and state fairs. She owned purebred Columbia sheep, which were all sold several years ago because of the predator problems.

The first Quarter Horse stallion to come to the ranch was Clown Hancock in 1959. Clara bought him as a weanling at a sale in Fort Collins, Colorado from the known horseman and cowboy, Bill Coy from Torrington, Wyoming. She was in college at the time, so auctioneer Jack Campbell hauled him

to Edgemont where he was selling another sale the next day. He was shown successfully in several horse show events and Fred used him for team roping. His bloodlines remain in the Wilson horses today. The next stallion was No Maybes, raised by the Wilsons, born in 1979, and a grandson of Doc Bar. A few broodmares by him are still on the ranch. Dox Bueno Dinero was bought as a yearling from the Ox Bow Ranch at Weatherford, Texas in 1990. His foals have done well in barrel racing and cowhorse events. Lonnie rode him to qualify for the Mountain States Circuit finals three times and the National Circuit Finals once, having won or placed and several big PRCA rodeos in the area, Cheyenne, Greeley, North Platte, Cody, Rapid City, Belle Fourche, Sheridan, etc. She rides his sons and daughters, since his retirement in 2007 at the age of 18.

The last few years, Wilson steer calves have been consigned to the Western video auction.

Replacement heifers are wintered east of Torrington, the others sold either on the video or at the sale barn, or sometimes privately. All of the cows are home-raised, and most of the bulls are too. Every two years a new herd bull is purchased to be used on the purebred cows. The yearling heifers have been AI bred to top ABS or Select Sire bulls for over ten years, with most of these heifer calves going into the cow herd. Production records on the registered cows and calves have been kept for many years.

Occasionally, a low birth-weight bull is purchased as a clean-up bull, being turned in after all of the yearling heifers are artificially inseminated. The heifers calve about a month before the cows start calving, and are done about the same time as the cows start.

The heifers are also synchronized. One year there were sixty heifers to calve, and forty had calved before the due date, keeping things busy at the calving shed for the first ten days.

The hay meadows are irrigated out of the Cheyenne River, when the river runs. The last few years, because of the drouth, a lot of the alfalfa has died out and much of the hay had to be purchased. Big round bales are fed with the Hay Buster, with medium square bales being fed around the barn. The cattle are fed pellets through the winter months and during calving.

The horse herd is trying to be cut down, and the cow herd is trying to be expanded. The drouth caused the cow herd to be cut back a little three years ago. Hopefully, the hay meadows can be put back to alfalfa in order to raise more hay soon.

# The Wright Ranch

## Converse County



Sen. Mike Enzi, Wright Family, Sen. John Barrasso and Gov. Dave Freudenthal

As told by Ada Wright

The Wright Ranch was homesteaded by George Watts and Margaret Ann Wright in August 1908. They had some cattle and raised hogs and chickens to sell; they milked cows for the cream check and sold eggs. They also raised a garden and did about 20 acres of grain farming. Watts was depot agent for a number of years. After Watts left the family, they made their living on the ranch.

The 2-room homestead house is part of the present house. The center portion of the barn is the original barn that was built in about 1910. The east, south, and west additions were added on in 1929 or 1930. These and other buildings have been kept in repair and painted. A shop-garage Quonset was added in 1949 and cattle shed Quonset in 1952.

# GZ Livestock

## Sweetwater County



Overview of ranch

As told by JoAnn Zakotnik

The family legend is that in 1908 twenty-two year old Ivan Dearth grew tired of fighting with his family and milking cows in Wisconsin. He caught his horse, rode to the railroad station, and jumped on a train headed to Wyoming. The rest of the story was provided by letters, documents, and brochures found by Ivan's granddaughter, JoAnn Zakotnik, among Ivan's belongings almost 70 years later.

In 1906 the Eden Irrigation and Land Company, a private company, was organized under the Carey Act. The Eden Company envisioned making money, and brochures and other advertising materials were distributed throughout the nation luring settlers to buy land and settle in Eden Valley. Eden Valley was extolled as a veritable garden spot, conducive to the production of apples, peaches, pears, cherries, sugar beets, potatoes, wheat, oats, rye, and barley, melons and other crops. Unobstructed sunshine, rare, dry air, and an absence of rain during the harvest season

are all reasons the authors gave for investing in Eden Valley.

A receipt signed by Robert Lemon, dated April 1908, shows that Ivan Dearth from Argyle, Wisconsin applied for four perpetual water rights on land "situated in Sweetwater County, State of Wyoming segregated under the Carey Act for Reclamation under Eden Canals." Ivan left Saint Louis, Missouri for Eden Valley in early 1909. A photograph from a family album shows him standing on the back of a railroad car. One sign on the back of the car says, "Leaving St. Louis bound for the West." Another, "Illinois Central Railroad, Central Missouri Valley Route." He arrived in Rock Springs, then hired a horse and wagon to take him to Eden Valley.

The route Ivan traveled from Rock Springs to Eden Valley was almost the same as Highway 191 used by Eden Valley residents today. The road he followed was a trail in the sagebrush cut out by the feet of pulling horses and heavy rolling wheels



Ivan Dearth

as wagons made trips to the railroad for supplies. As he traveled, his view would have been filled with sage-covered hills. If he observed closely, he could have seen herds of sheep, hawks, eagles, sage grouse and maybe coyotes. The snow capped Wind Rivers to the north had to have impressed him. Over the rise about 33 miles north of Rock Springs, Eden Valley, the green spot in the desert we see today, was in 1909 only a vision. What optimism and imagination and perhaps a little ignorance enabled the early settlers to envision changing this harsh desert environment into one that was green with growing crops. Ivan's new home awaited him.

Ivan's letters to his future wife, Josie, written in 1913 and 1914, and a letter written by his friend, Ed Sass, give us a clue to his life during the years from 1909 through 1914.

He found work for a sheep rancher when he came in 1909 and spent two winters working for the Union Pacific Railroad around Rock Springs. Later he worked for the irrigation company to build and improve the irrigation system for the valley. In addition he was working on his own place. Ivan explained in one of his letters, "I took this place in the wild nearly everything in the way of

improvements has been done by my own hands." By 1913 Ivan was growing crops on his land, had some cows, and pigs, and horses.

Ivan's neighbors to the north, Nathan and Daisy Hodson, also came to Eden Valley in 1909. During the summer of 1913, Daisy's sister, Josephine Call, a teacher in Illinois, came to visit. Josie and Ivan began courting during the summer. Josie returned to Illinois in the fall and she and Ivan courted by mail until December of 1914 when they married in Gleason, Tennessee and returned to Eden Valley where they raised oats, peas, potatoes, beef cows, and milked cows. The dairy cows became a major part of their ranch about 1921. Ivan was instrumental in starting the Eden Valley Dairy. Josie cooked for 10 or 12 hired men, and raised chickens and turkeys which she sold in Rock Springs in addition to eggs. She also gave piano lessons which she traded for a cabbage on one occasion.

Ivan and Josie Dearth's daughter, Josephine Ruth, was born February 23, 1917. She was her daddy's girl and she preferred to do the outside work but she also learned to help her mother. After high school graduation she attended the University of Wyoming where she majored in Home Economics. While working for Farm Security in Powell, Wyoming, she met Charles V.S. Jamieson. They were married on May 26, 1941. A short while after they were married, they moved to the ranch and became partners in the ranch operation. At this time, the dairy cows were sold and the Dearth's bought sheep and a summer headquarters in Lincoln County, Wyoming. They raised three daughters, JoAnn, Mary Kay, and Linda Sue. All three attended Farson Eden School and all three graduated from college. After college, Sue and her husband moved to Manila, Utah, where she and Gale, her husband, ranched with his parents. Mary Kay and her husband Bob, a chemical engineer, make their home in Kemmerer, Wyoming where Bob is retired and Mary Kay is a nurse at South Lincoln County Medical Clinic.

After college graduation, JoAnn and her husband, Gary Zakotnik, returned to the ranch full time. JoAnn taught school until she quit to raise their three daughters. She later worked substitute



Sept. 1950



The Zakotnik Family

teaching and as a part-time bookkeeper. Gary shod horses and began working as a brand inspector to help supplement their income.

In 1967 the sheep and the summer headquarters in Lincoln County were sold. The BLM permits were changed from sheep to cows and the ranch began raising beef cattle. After Josephine died in 1977, Gary and JoAnn and Charles formed a partnership and changed the name of the ranch from Dearth Jamieson Livestock to GZ Livestock. Since that time Gary and JoAnn, with the help of their daughters, Jodee, Jill, and Jana, continued to raise beef cattle progressing from a mainly Hereford herd, crossing with Beefmaster, then

Red Angus. Their daughters are now grown with their own families.

None of the daughters live on the ranch at the present time. Jodee and her family live nearby and are very involved in helping with the ranch. Jill and Jana and the sons-in-law, and grandchildren all return to help, especially during branding and shipping.

We live in the original house and have done very little remodeling. A two-story addition was built onto the original two-room house in 1919. The woodwork still has the original finish. The barn built for dairy in the early 1920s is used to calve heifers today.

# **Other Centennial Farm and Ranch 2008**

## **The Lowham Ranch Limited Partnership** Uinta County



# 2009 Centennial Farm and Ranch Awardees



Photo courtesy Wyoming State Archives, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources

# The Jackplane Ranch

## Johnson County



The Jackplane Ranch

As told by Sue Myers

**F**rom Luddecke to Moorhead to three generations of Christians-that's the story in a nutshell of the 100 years of a family business known as the Jackplane Ranch located about 20 miles east of Buffalo on Crazy Woman.

It began as a 160-acre homestead back in the spring of 1884 when Herman A.C. Luddecke arrived in Johnson County. Born and educated in Germany, he had come to the United States at the age of 17 and, for the first few years, worked at his trade of cabinet making and architectural drafting in New York City.

For his first seven or eight years in Buffalo, he was engaged in carpentering and contracting but also began stocking his ranch with cattle and adding to his land holdings. His ranch home consisted of a two-room cabin which he had built from cottonwood logs along the bank of the creek. By 1892 his cattle interests had grown to such an extent that he gave up contracting to devote his entire attention to ranching.

He was married on January 1, 1901 to Miss Cecil Dunbar of Perry, Iowa, and brought her to the new ranch home which he had built of cottonwood logs with siding. It was a four-room, two-story

house, quite an improvement over the homestead shack which had since been converted into a blacksmith shop.

Mr. Luddecke believed in being self-sufficient. In addition to his large herd of cattle, which included some of the first purebred Herefords in the area, he raised some horses, hay, grain, and, because he liked to "set a good table", he also had chickens, milk cows, pigs and a huge garden.

One of his major projects was to provide an irrigation system to provide water to his fields and pastures. It took many man hours of hard work along with fresnos and horses as it involved flumes across the gulleys, a tunnel through the hills, and days of ditch work, but it did the job until it was eventually destroyed by a flood.

The Luddeckes had two daughters, Hazel, who preferred the domestic work of a lady, and Anna, the tomboy who enjoyed outdoor chores. When it came time for them to start to school, they first tried having a school on the ranch with the nearby Hepp children as the only other students. This worked for about five months. During that time, they had two teachers come and go - they did not like having to cross the creek twice to get to the place. So Mrs. Luddecke and the girls moved into a house in town during the winter.

Mrs. Luddecke was killed in a tragic accident in 1918 when the buggy in which she was riding overturned on the steep grade that ran parallel to Crazy Woman Creek, but her family continued to live and grow on the ranch.

Mr. Luddecke added to his land holdings by buying adjacent homesteads. He would invite World War I veterans to come to that area and file on homesteads. He would then give them jobs, make the required improvements on the homesteads, and then buy them out. One of these veterans was Hardy Moorhead who was later to become his son-in-law.

## The Moorheads

Hazel had continued her education at the School of Agriculture in Lincoln, Nebraska and, after graduating, taught art work in a department store in Omaha. She and Hardy, who was employed in the Ford factory there, were married in Omaha on October 24, 1923.

In 1926, the Moorhead family, which now included two-year-old Hermanetta (Hermie) moved to the Jackplane ranch and, during the next winter, Mr. Luddecke provided them with a new home. This was a modern Sears pre-cut house which was shipped by rail to Clearmont and then trucked to the ranch. The house, erected on a basement constructed of concrete by Burgers, was an “oddity” for that time and place.

It was a two-story structure with five bedrooms- and a closet in everyone! Its other features included hardwood floors and woodwork, and a linen closet but best of all, it had its own gasoline light plant which was housed in a tunnel in the basement.

The ranch continued to thrive and grow. Anna Luddecke Cusick Fieldgrove, who now lives in Sheridan, recalls when her father purchased the Rattlesnake Springs property of about 7,900 acres near Clearmont in 1929.

“The previous owners were sheep people and, since they used herders, the fences were in bad shape - wire was down on the ground in lots of places.”

## The Christians

Hermie Moorhead became the bride of Bob Christian in August of 1947 and, after spending a year working at the UT Ranch on Powder River, they moved to Jackplane because her parents were spending the winter in Arizona due to her dad’s health.

The family also had a lease on the Barkey place near Lake DeSmet so Bob, Hermie and Dube came to town so the men could feed the stock there. George Leath and his wife were on the main ranch at Crazy Woman and it was during this time that



Hardy & Hazel Moorhead with children Hermanetta & Dube



The Herman Christian family, 1907



John (Bob) & Hermanetta (Hermie) Christian with John, Marsha, Jac, and Melisa



Jackplane brand



John Christian & sister Jane McGinley, 1999



Jac Christian, Tim, Melisa & Makenzie Fixter, John & Marsha Christian, Kayla and Kristin McGinley, Hermie Christian, Jane McGinley



Hermie Christian & her 4 grandchildren & great-granddaughter Makenzie Fixter



Hermie Christian & great-granddaughter Makenzie Fixter



John Christian

a living room/sun room was added to the original ranch home.

The year 1949 was one Hermie remembers vividly. This was the year that her father died, her brother Dube was killed in a car accident, and her son, John, was born.

Since Bob and Hermie took over Jackplane, some things have changed and some things have remained the same. Bob's father, Campbell, went to work for them in 1953 and he and his wife, Sarah, became an important part of the family operation. Bob and Hermie added two more homestead properties to the ranch holdings in 1957 and, in 1960, purchased 160 acres on the Van Norman place along with a Forest Service cow permit. They later sold the 160 acres to Ray MaCrae but kept the cow permit.

Bob was one of the first to start a cross-breeding program using the solid black Galloway bulls with his Hereford cows. He also became more deeply interested in raising quarterhorses. They've sold quite a few in this area and enjoy seeing them perform at the county fairs.

As the Christian children, John and Jane, grew up, they became more involved in the ranch and it truly became a family operation. Bob had enlarged the arena and this became the focal point for the family's recreational interests - training horses and ropings.

John attended Sheridan College and has recently taken over most of the working end of the ranch. One of his current projects, which almost makes a full circle back to the great-grandfather's way of thinking, is a system of water pipes which will provide better range water. He and his wife, Marsha, and their two children, live in a mobile home about a mile from the main ranch.

Jane, a graduate of Southern Colorado State College, is married to Pete McGinley and is involved in a family ranching operation with his father near Oshkosh, Nebraska.

And so, with true dedication to family ranching, Jackplane has grown from a mere 160-acre homestead to an operation which covers over 8,000 acres of deeded land plus more than 7,000 acres in State and BLM leases.



Jackplane Ranch celebration, summer 2009

To celebrate this successful venture of 100 years, five generations of Luddecke relatives gathered at the ranch for an old-fashioned family reunion on July 24-26, 2009.



Sen. John Barrasso, John Christian, Rep. Cynthia Lummis and Sen. Mike Enzi

# The Cole Family Ranch

## Crook County



View from the Cole Ranch Cookie House.

As told by Janet Cole Lake

The Cole Ranch in Crook County had its beginnings in 1882 when homesteaders Horace Cole (1844-1908) and Maria (Ogden) Cole (1855-1920) settled at the mouth of what became known as Cole Canyon. Horace paid the United States \$200 in 1887 to enter the homestead claim. The U. S. issued a patent to Horace for the “Old Place,” as it became known, in 1891. In 1887, Horace’s brother, George Cole, received a deed for his purchase of the area where the house, which is still in limited use, would be built in 1898. Two additional bedrooms and a summer kitchen, later converted to a shop, were added later. The house was affectionately named “The Cookie House” by the fifth generation owners. Horace purchased that property in 1893.

Damon Cole, Horace’s son, and grandfather and great-grandfather of the current owners, got a homestead patent for another part of the ranch in 1922 and 1923. Horace also homesteaded other parts of the ranch, and patents were issued in 1895 and 1911 (after he died, so the process took several years). George also homesteaded parts of the ranch, and patents were issued in 1891 and 1898. Horace purchased those homesteads from George.

Horace Cole’s obituary in *The Crook County Monitor*, Friday, July 24, 1908, reported that he was born on March 17, 1844, in Putnam County, NY, the son of Horace B. and Betsey Cole. After living on family farms in New York and Ohio, Horace enlisted on November 26, 1861, in the Sixth Ohio Cavalry. He served in Company K in defense of the Union and served in that regiment until December 1864. A Civil War flag belonging to Horace, along with an original tintype photo and frame of Horace, is on display at the Crook County Museum in Sundance.

Following his military service, Horace engaged in farming in Ohio, Missouri, and Nebraska. In 1877 “he joined the rush to the Black Hills and passed five years prospecting and mining in and around Deadwood” (*Progressive Men of the State of Wyoming*). Horace operated a grocery store for a time in Central City near Deadwood, and a gold scale that he used at the store is also in the Crook County Museum. In 1882, “he sought the cultivation of the soil as an agreeable occupation” (*Progressive Men*) and took up a homestead northeast of Sundance.

On September 28, 1879, Horace was united in marriage to Maria Ogden, whose parents, David and Mary Ogden, located in Crook County in 1882, on a ranch, later called the Ogden Place, adjoining the Cole Ranch. In 1897, “when, having been elected to the office, he qualified as sheriff of the county and took up his residence at Sundance. At the end of one term he retired from public life against the wishes of his party friends, in order to devote his time and energies entirely to raising cattle...” (*Progressive Men*).

The creek running through the Ogden Place was named Ogden Creek, and a canyon nearby was named Ogden Canyon. The two properties became one ranch when Damon purchased the Ogden Place from Chester Ogden (Maria Ogden Cole’s nephew) in 1937. The ranch also consists of parts of the

homesteads of O.P. Kellog, purchased by Horace, and of Chassell, Godfrey, Richardson, and Roadifer, purchased by Damon.

The Cole Ranch has raised cattle, sheep, hay, oats, and barley over the years. Horace's son, Damon Cole (1893-1961), along with his wife, Blanche Eva (Lytle) Cole (1897-1972), ranched for years. Damon and Blanche had two sons, Elbridge Lytle Cole (1916-1968) and Victor Horace Cole (1917-1995,) and two daughters, Ruth (Cole) Dickinson (1923-1992) and Wavie (Cole) Donaldson (1928-2005).

Larry Cole, Elbridge's son, recalled this story from Grandpa (Damon) Cole: In Horace's early years on the ranch, he was out riding one day and on the big pasture between the Old Place and Mt. Louisa, saw a lone male Indian riding toward the Bear Lodge. Horace dismounted, took his rifle out of its scabbard and laid it across his saddle, watching the Indian. The Indian looked at him but did not stop, just rode on up into the Bear Lodge and was not seen on the ranch again. Larry also recalled Grandpa Cole telling him about a white wolf that he shot. It was reportedly one of the last wolves shot in Crook County. The pelt is now owned by Ruth Dickinson's sons.

When Vic's daughter Janet Lake was learning to play violin in the 1990s, Vic told her about a violin that his grandfather Horace had played. Ruth Dickinson, Vic's sister, had stored the violin in an attic all those years. The violin was dug out, the dust blown off, and the bow and strings were replaced. It is currently being played proudly by Janet.

Victor Cole, father and grandfather of the current owners, was ranching on the Cole Ranch when the family home at the Ogden Place burned to the ground in the late 1950s. Vic, his wife Helen Jane (Storrs), and daughters Janet and Judy then moved to Casper, Wyoming, for several years, returning to Sundance in 1962. Due to Vic's compromised health, the Cole Ranch has been leased since 1962. Philip and Jeanne Habeck are the current lessees. Since the passing of Vic, Helen (1928-2000), and Judy Cole (1955-2002), the ranch is



The "Cookie House" at the Cole Ranch.



The new Cole Ranch sign erected in celebration of the Centennial Award.



Horace Cole's descendants receiving the Centennial Award in 2009: Back, L-R, Larry Cole, Jack Lake, Janet (Cole) Lake, Judy Cole's daughter Tami (Spracklen) Weaver, her husband Kelly, and, in front, their boys, L-R, Donnavan, Cameron, and Kody.

now owned by Janet (Cole Engel) Lake (fourth generation) and her children Dustin Daniel Engel, Jeremy Cole Engel, and Destiny Jeana Engel (fifth generation).

# The Dilts Ranch Company

## The Bridle Ranch

### Campbell, Converse Counties



John & Betty Dilts

As told by John Dilts

**M**y father, Fred Dilts, was born on August 29, 1873 in Ohio. He and his family moved to Kansas when he was approximately 12 years old. My mother, Elnora Dunkelberger, was born in Kansas on June 29, 1882. They met in Kansas where he was a farmer and she was a schoolteacher. They were married in Chicago in 1921. They moved to Wyoming to leave the small farm. In 1906 Fred traveled to Seattle, Washington to look over the country. He then decided to homestead north of Douglas, Wyoming. He raised sheep and cattle until his death on February 3, 1944. I was 18 years old when he died.

Fred and Elnora Dilts had two children, Fred Dilts, Jr., born 4/13/1923, and John C. Dilts, born 4/1/1925.

At the time of Fred Dilts' death, his son Fred, Jr., was in Officers Candidate School in Washington and he was able to return home to assist in managing the ranching operation. From the beginning when my father began ranching in Wyoming, he acquired lands both to the north and south of Douglas. At the time of his death he owned

35,000 deeded acres north of Douglas and 17,000 deeded acres south of Douglas. In 1948 my brother and I chose to divide up the ranching operation and Fred took the land to the south and I took the land to the north. I continued to acquire more land in order to expand my operation. In 1980 I chose to divide up my ranching operations among my three sons. Two of them remain active ranchers in Wyoming, and the oldest son exchanged his Wyoming ranching property for property in New Mexico.

In December of 1947 I married Betty Payne in San Leandro, California. After our marriage we lived 60 miles north of Douglas. In the early 1960s we purchased a home in Douglas to enable the children to attend school. Betty lived in town with the children while I spent most of my time at the ranch. We have three sons, John C. Dilts, Jr., born in 1950, Jerry J. Dilts, born in 1952, and Steven K. Dilts, born in 1956.

#### **Some interesting stories:**

-The winter of 1909 and 1910 was very harsh. Fred drifted with his sheep from Bear Creek to Lightning Creek. He froze both his hands and feet and his horse froze to death. A friend and neighbor said that he sat around for a couple of years recovering. Then he began ranching again and never looked back. At the time of his death he had 10,000 ewes and 2,000 cattle. He had 35,000 acres of deeded land north of Douglas and 17,000 acres of deeded land south of Douglas and utilized Federal and State land leases.

-One day Fred went to visit the bank, Douglas National, requesting to borrow some money. The banker inquired what Fred had as collateral to borrow on and was told, "Nothing". The banker told him that they would loan him the money according to who he was as a man, not according to the assets he owned.

-A neighbor named Leroy Moore traveled to Argentina to observe their methods of sheep ranching. He learned that they fenced their sheep





Sen. John Barrasso, Rep. Cynthia Lummis, Dilts Family and Sen. Mike Enzi

in tight pastures. In 1950 I began fencing pastures and the lambing percentage increased from 60 percent to 90 percent. Shipping weights increased from 60 pounds to 80 pounds. The increase in my revenue helped me to pay off my mortgages.

- As a young child working with my father, I remember that there were very few fences. We would tour the land and choose landmarks to establish boundaries for sheep grazing. Each band included 1,000 ewes and lambs during the summer and 3,000 ewes during the winter and was overseen by one shepherd.

### **Some interesting facts regarding prices of land:**

In 1938 my father paid \$3.50 per acre for the Dorr Ranch.

In 1948 I bought the Jenne Ranch for \$7.50 an acre.

In 1973 several of us purchased the Spear Head Ranch for \$25.00 per acre.

In 1984 I purchased the Miller Ranch for \$125.00 per acre.

# The Diamond Tail Ranch

## Big Horn County

As told by Mary Flitner

On a living room wall, Diamond Tail Ranch displays the original ranch deed signed in 1906 by Arthur Flitner. The handwritten document declares that for a sum of \$9140.00, Flitner purchased 160 acres on Shell Creek with 160 head of cattle valued at \$24 per head, and the brand drawn and described as “Diamond Tail”. The deal included “4 work mares, known as Lady, Pet, Maude and Mollie, and one black saddle horse known as Nig; two brood sows and some chickens.”

Born in 1864, Arthur Flitner moved to the Big Horn Basin from Noble, Oklahoma, where he’d quickly realized the opportunities which existed in an expanding frontier.

By 1905, he had begun to explore the business possibilities in Wyoming.

While he was investigating a place for sale on Shell Creek he received the sad news that his youngest son, Francis, had died of influenza. Arthur hired a buggy to take him to the nearest railway at Garland. As the story goes, the buggy team made it to Garland in less than four hours, and Arthur was able to catch the only train. Back in Oklahoma, Arthur and his wife addressed the loss of their son and eventually made arrangements to sell out and move to Wyoming. From W. W. Leavitt, they bought the 160-acre Diamond Tail property and moved west the following spring. With their surviving children, Geraldine and Howard, Arthur and his wife, Anna, traveled by train and wagon, eventually arriving at the Diamond Tail Ranch alongside Shell Creek. Fortunately, Leavitt had built a sturdy home, a little log house which still stands at the ranch headquarters. Thus began the family’s century of ranching in the Big Horn Basin.

Arthur and Anna Flitner’s son, Howard, joined them in ranching in 1924. In 1929 he married school teacher Maureen Desmond, a lively Irish



Howard Flitner



Howard & Maureen Flitner, ca. 1930s

girl from Montana. Their family grew to three sons, John, David and Stan, and a daughter, Patricia. Howard added to the original ranch acreage and introduced sheep to the operation. Arthur Flitner resisted this decision, but it turned out to be a good one for many years.

Over the passing years the ranch produced Hereford cattle, sheep and farm crops - sugar beets, corn, beans, hay and grain, with Howard and sons, David and Stan, as managing partners. In 1979, the ranch was divided to allow Stan and David to go into business separately.

Stan and his wife, Mary Budd Flitner, and their family remained committed to the ranch as each of their children - Carol, Tim, Sara, and Dan - grew, attended college, and married.

Stan and Mary, their son Tim, and his wife, Jamie Moore Flitner, continue as owners and operators of the original ranch. Although the families have scattered, they all share the love of the ranching culture and the Diamond Tail Ranch. The ranch acreage and capacity has expanded with purchase of adjacent property; it continues to operate solely for livestock production and agriculture.

Geographically, the Diamond Tail Ranch property bases at 4200 feet elevation on the farm fields' floor of Shell Valley, rising to 10,000 feet grazing land in the mountain ranges to the east. Stock trails still follow historic routes through Red Basin, Red Gulch and badlands, to Trapper Creek, up the Beef Slide and Black Mountain to White Creek, Snowshoe Pass and to Granite Pass.

Big Horn Basin weather is historically dramatic: arid, short of rain or snow, hot in the summer and cold in the winter. As Arthur Flitner realized, livestock can be successfully managed and fed here, with feed crops grown on the farm base while the cattle utilize summer ranges at high elevations.

The Diamond Tail Ranch no longer runs sheep. The cattle are Black Angus, and the ranch is well-known for raising and selling American Quarter Horses.



Old ranch buildings



Elephant Head



Stan & Mary Flitner

Improvements in roads, vehicles, farm equipment, irrigating techniques and equipment such as sprinklers, solar-powered pumps, stock water developments, and other advancements make a different life than the one led by early settlers.

Much of the Big Horn Basin land which was once regarded as agricultural is now residential or



Stan & Tim Flitner & grandchildren



recreational, and the Diamond Tail is one of the few true ranches left in the area. Stan commented “we’ve leased, bought, sold, partnered, borrowed, and experimented. Some things succeeded and some things failed, but we’re proud and fortunate to say that after a hundred years, we’re still here.”

# The Graves Ranch

## Johnson County

As told by the Graves Family

The Graves family moved west through Nebraska in the late 1800s. Charlie and Grace were married in Crook County, Nebraska in 1876. They had a son, Noble, in 1877. Noble came as a teenager to Johnson County, Wyoming in the mid-1890s. He returned in 1897 and settled in Barnum on Beaver Creek, behind the Red Wall, at the base of the Big Horn Mountains in southern Johnson County. Noble's father, Charlie, and the rest of the family came to Noble's place in 1901.

Charlie homesteaded on Blue Creek close to Noble's homestead. All of the children except the second born, Lillian (West), homesteaded in the same area, to the west on the mountain. Charlie and his three sons formed a partnership (Graves Brothers) and added to the original place by purchasing land on the Red Fork of the Powder River, about five miles north, from Augustas Fraker, Harmon Fraker, VanDykes, and Charlie Ford. Charlie Graves and son, Frank, moved to the Fraker homestead in 1908. The youngest son, Lee Graves, died of the influenza in 1918.

Noble Graves married Cena Grotevant in 1906, they had a son, Dean, born in 1919. Frank Graves married Fannie Lea and they had four children, Merle, Nona, Shirley, and a son, Norris.

Charlie retired in 1927 but the Graves Brothers (Noble and Frank) continued the partnership until Charlie died in 1941. After Charlie's death, Noble and Frank split the Graves' Brothers partnership. Noble kept his homestead as well as Frank's homestead and Frank stayed on the properties at Red Fork. Noble and his son, Dean, then purchased the Van Winkle homestead, a neighboring ranch joining Noble's, and it was also a place of past employment for Noble and Frank when they first arrived in Barnum.



Noble Graves Homestead



Van Winkle Homestead built before 1900



Davis on Buckskin Pony, Noble on Topsy Deer on old Pete around 1900 before irrigation



Noble Graves Sheep Camp at Red Fork



Noble Graves homestead after irrigation

Nobel died in 1946 and his son, Dean, took over the management of the place along with Noble's wife, Cena, until she died in 1957.

Dean had two sons: Charlie in 1948 and Wayne in 1950. When Cena died in 1957 she left her half of the ranch to Charlie.

In 1974 Wayne Graves purchased his brother Charlie's share and moved to the VanWinkle homestead. Over time Wayne purchased the rest of the ranch from his dad, Dean.



1st Christmas at Frank Graves, 1916

Wayne, and his wife, Gayann, had two children, Jonna and Nathan Graves. Jonna is a physician living and working in Laramie. Jonna and Nathan run cows on the homeplace and are the fifth generation of Graves to continue running cows in Barnum on Beaver Creek at the foot of the Big Horns. Nathan lives on Noble's original homestead.

The Graves Ranches have a great deal of history; both Noble's homestead house and the VanWinkle house still stand, with Nathan living in Noble's house and Wayne living in the VanWinkle house. Robert Van Winkle toured Europe with Buffalo Bill Cody. His talents with a horse and a rope were his contributions to the Wild West Show.

The Van Winkle house housed the Barnum Post Office for several years after the Barnum's. Noble carried the mail to and from the Mayoworth Post Office, north.



New years gathering at Red Fork Ranch, 1917

The barn at Wayne's place was originally the Hauk homestead, also used as the horse barn at the Buffalo Creek Ranch and moved to Wayne's (VanWinkle place) from its original location 30 miles south. The Hole-in-the Wall is half way between the Graves Ranch and the Buffalo Creek Ranch. These buildings have stories to tell!

Graves lands are less than they once were but have survived the years. The Graves Brothers were always resourceful: they ran horses, cows, and sheep but in the 1930s, times and grasshoppers were so bad the Graves family herded turkeys to feed on the grasshoppers. They clipped their wings and belled the lead turkeys and herded them to roost at night to guard against predators.

The Fraker homesteads were at the sight of the Dull Knife Battlefield and still held the remnants of war. Noble was adept with a forge so the Graves made tools, parts, and equipment from the remains. The most significant was a harrow, made of rifle barrels. Ken Graves, another of Charlie Graves' great-grandsons, still owns the Red Fork Ranch.



Dean Graves & friends, early 1920s



Dean on Artist on Thanksgiving day



Winter Scene



Branding colts, Frank Graves branding & Dean Graves



Christmas at Grandpa Graves, 1935



Gayann, Charlie Ken Graves getting calf ready for a ride, Nathan waiting



Wayne & Gayann



Jonna & Nathan Graves



Nathan branding



Wayne & Jonna sorting



Dean Graves, Jonna Graves just visiting



Wayne & Jonna 2003



August 2003





Nathan Graves on front of state road map, at Frontier Days



Sen. John Barrasso, Rep. Cynthia Lummis, Graves Family and Sen. Mike Enzi



Wyoming Tourism postcard, Red Wall Ranch

# The Greet Ranch

## Washakie County

As told by Carol Greet

In 1890 George and Elizabeth Greet filed a homestead claim south of Ten Sleep, Wyoming with their family. It had been a long journey from England by way of relatives in Indiana and a short stay in Red Lodge, Montana. They had eight children, but only four came to Wyoming at that time. The two oldest boys, Will and Ernest, who were in their twenties, and the two youngest twin boys, Fred and Frank, aged six.

It was these youngest boys who grew up on the ranch, worked it, and became the founders of the current Greet Ranch. Originally, the homestead was seven miles south of Ten Sleep along the banks of tiny Spring Creek. They dug ditches with pick and shovel, and made yearly excursions for supplies to Buffalo or Sheridan. By age 20, the twins were looking for a better location and found it in Joe Henry's place another 10 miles to the south.

They managed to buy it in 1909, and in the spring of that year, they were moving to their new place. These were unsettled times for the Upper Nowood area, a deadline had been marked in the badlands, a warning to sheep owners to keep the woolies off of what some considered only cattle country. This uneasiness in the neighborhood erupted the last night that Fred and Frank spent on their Spring Creek ranch.

As they loaded their last wagonload of belongings, a large band of sheep and its herders arrived to spend the night just up Spring Creek from the Greet cabin. The Greet boys went to meet the men, embarrassed they didn't have enough supplies to offer them supper. Joe Emge and Joe Allemand instead offered the boys food and a tour of their sheepwagon. The Greets were even invited to spend the night, but declined as the new owner of their ranch had just arrived to take over. The Greet brothers returned to their cabin. Soon masked and hooded riders arrived, attacking the sheepwagons and killing sheep. The brothers stepped out of the cabin, but a bullet aimed



Twins Fred & Frank Greet



Original log cabin homestead



Edna Pyle, wife of Frank Greet.  
Note the six gun!



John Greet, age 8,  
doing 1st ranch job he  
remembers, running the  
team for the hay stacker



Ranch centennial party invitation

high over their heads encouraged them to withdraw back indoors. By morning, most of the herders lay dead next to their sheep. The Spring Creek Raid became an important event in Wyoming history, and the Greet brothers were witnesses.

The young twins prospered on their new place, soon becoming married. Fred and Dora never had children, but Frank and his wife, Edna, became parents to six children, four boys and two girls. Through the years, the Greet's obtained more land and cattle. Of those six children born to Frank and Edna, again it is the youngest, John, who now runs the original Joe Henry place. In the early years, they trailed cattle from the home ranch south through Cottonwood Pass and on to Lysite to ship them by rail to Omaha.

Fred and Frank lived into retirement years, Fred retiring in Worland, Frank in Ten Sleep. John married Oneta Alexander and had two children. Cindy currently lives in California, and Vernon is on the ranch with his wife, Carol, and three children. Their two boys, in turn, have plans to return to this ranch after completing their degrees at the University of Wyoming.

Greet Ranch held its Centennial Party on July 26, 2009 next to the original homestead. Over 300 people were in attendance. The Washakie County Cowbelles provided a fantastic meal, and Joe Bain, from Crowheart, Wyoming, provided musical entertainment. In fact, Joe wrote a special song for the occasion, which follows:

By the Nowood River a hundred years ago,  
Twin brothers had a dream  
And their dream began to grow.

They struggled in the bad times and prospered in  
the good.

And their ranch started growin' by the banks of the  
Nowood.

#### CHORUS

It all started one hundred years ago,  
Fightin' drouth and blizzards  
Cattle prices too damn low.

One hundred years o' ranchin' they're still goin' now,  
They still make a livin' Off them good 01' cows.



Sen. John Barrasso, Rep. Cynthia Lummis, Greet Family and Sen. Mike Enzi



Greet family at ranch centennial party

Now Johnny runs the ranch, With his family by his side,  
And he kept that dream a'growin' When his father crossed the great divide.

High up on the mountain Or out in the badlands,  
There's still cattle wearin' That A bar A brand.

#### CHORUS

No one knows the future, Nor what it may bring  
But there's another generation To do the brandin'  
in the spring.

Four generations Living in this land, There's still  
cattle wearin' That A bar A brand.

#### CHORUS

A Hundred years of ranchin' out here in this land,  
There's still cattle wearin' That A bar A brand.

Carol Greet also published a children's book entitled *Red Dirt in My Soul*. It is a multigenerational look at life on a cattle ranch. All of the photographs that illustrate the book were taken around the ranch by Carol.

# Eugene Hanson and Son, Inc.

## Laramie County

As told by Carrie Hanson Deselms

In 1887, John Hanson left his native Sweden and farm to come to America. His wife, Martha, and children remained in Delsbo, Sweden while he looked for a suitable place to call home. John spent a few years in Illinois before continuing on to Wyoming. He sent for his wife and children to join him. After a sea voyage that lasted two months, Jonas Hanson, who was 9 years old, and his mother and siblings arrived on the east coast. The family had to carry their own food on the ship and to the day he died, Jonas Hanson did not care to have caraway seeds in any of his food. Foods were preserved with the use of caraway seeds at that time, and for two months caraway seeds were in almost every thing the family had eaten on the voyage. Jonas and his two older brothers also were not impressed with the fresh fruit available when their boat docked in this country which was before Ellis Island. He couldn't understand why you would eat an orange or a banana because after you threw away the 'bone' and ate the peel, it just didn't taste good!

In Wyoming, John Hanson and his family found a small Swedish community at Salem in Laramie County. In 1892, they homesteaded in the Salem area and had a two-room sod house with a real wooden floor. This was unusual as most houses for the time only had dirt floors. Jonas could recall that he had to accompany his mother to some of the neighboring homes in the beginning. He had picked up the English language sooner than his mother and he had to translate recipes into Swedish for her!

From 1895 – 1898, John Hanson received the bid for the U. S. mail contract in the area. He had his 16-year old son, Jonas, carry the mail from the Salem Post Office to Pine Bluffs. Jonas used a single horse and cart three times a week for this trip and on alternating days; he carried the mail by horseback from the Salem Post Office to the Myra Post Office which was east of Albin, Wyoming. The



Jonas and Henry Hanson 1899



Hanson, early 1900s



Remuda of work horses by barn 1910



Jonas and Caroline Hanson homestead 1914



Jonas and Caroline Hanson home 1915

pay was \$1.25/day for the Pine Bluffs trip and \$1/day for the Myra trip.

For a couple years, Jonas was a line rider for the J. G. Gordon Ranch (currently the Hunter Ranch of Meriden, WY). He and Jelmer Johnson from LaGrange rode the drift fence and kept the Gordon cattle from drifting too far south on the open range.

In 1900, when Jonas was 19 years of age, he signed on as a drover on one of the last Texas Trail herd drives north. Three-year old Longhorn steers had been brought from Texas to Bushnell, Nebraska and wintered there before starting the last leg of delivering the government contract beef to the Indian reservation at Pierre, South Dakota. The following year the trail drive started in July after the 2500 head of steers had had time to recover from the winter. When Jonas joined the cattle drive, he purchased a Frank Meanea saddle and leather chaps which are still with the family. The trail boss supplied seven horses for each wrangler, six horses were each ridden for half a day and those horses were rotated over three days to keep them fresh. The seventh horse was a well-broken horse for the wrangler to use only for their two hour night duty ringing the herd but it was always saddled all night in case the wrangler needed it. Each wrangler also had his own personal horse with the cattle drive to be able to return home after they arrived in South Dakota. There were well over 100 head of horses along with the 2500 longhorn steers.

The 15 drovers, most of whom were from Lusk, Wyoming, bedded the cattle down at 8 p.m. and got them up at 4 a.m. to graze for a period of time before heading out. Jonas said the chuckwagon cook was not a good cook and served salt pork (sow belly), canned tomatoes and sour dough biscuits three times a day for the entire 60 plus days of the cattle drive. They had fresh beef one time when a steer broke a leg in quicksand but they couldn't preserve it for any future meals.

When they reached Gering, Nebraska with the herd, there was a narrow wooden bridge over the North Platte River, and there was only one house on the north side of the river which is the current location of Scottsbluff. The longhorn steers didn't like

crossing the wooden bridge so the trail boss hired a local man and his milk cow to lead the steers across the bridge. The trail boss also had a wrangler merge into the herd approximately every two hundred head of steers to keep them crossing the bridge. Jonas said this put the wranglers perilously right in the middle of the steers with their horns.

Farther north in Nebraska, the cattle drive did have one stampede from a night lightening storm. All the wranglers had to use their already saddled night horse to follow the different bunches of steers in whatever direction they ran and just stay with them until they settled down. When daylight came, it took a day to gather and regroup the herd before continuing on to South Dakota.

The trail boss scouted ahead for water but there were a few times they had dry camps. One morning some of the horses in the remuda were gone and one drover was sent to recover them. Three days later the drover returned with the horses. Jonas' personal horse was the instigator and had decided to go home and cut some other horses out to go with him.

Upon arriving in South Dakota, the cook disappeared when they arrived at Pierre because he was a wanted man. Jonas received \$30/month for his labor on the cattle drive. When he returned home he bought two ponies from the Indians. Jonas had to retrain the Indian ponies to be able to mount from the left as the Indians always mounted from the right. On the return trip home, Jonas had to pay 10 cents a head to water his animals at a fenced water hole in the badlands. When he got home, one of the Indian ponies broke its neck in the barn and the other died shortly after so Jonas didn't have them long with the remuda of work horses that he and his brother Henry had together.

In 1903, Jonas and Henry traveled to Cheyenne to attend the hanging of Tom Horn. Jonas said that he wasn't sure if Tom Horn killed Willie Nickell or not but that he was probably guilty of something. The Johnson County War had occurred in 1892 and Tom Horn's name was closely linked to that.

In 1902, Jonas recorded the J brand and homesteaded on a location where there was a C



Hereford herd 1968

hand dug water well (still currently in use for livestock). Jonas married Caroline Youngland in 1911, a Swedish girl whom he had met when she was in the Salem community visiting her grandparents, Carl and Anna Johnson. Jonas and Caroline initially lived in the bunkhouse which Jonas had built prior to 1907 and that remains standing today in fair shape. Corrals and a large two-story barn were built in 1914 and are used to this day for livestock. A four-room house with basement was also built in 1914 and, while it remains standing, is currently unused. Another water well and cistern were dug in 1914 and the house had running cold water by gravity which was unusual for homes at this time. This well continues to water livestock today.

Originally, a fairly large Hereford cow/calf herd was Jonas' main operation. Later, in the 1920s, the operation was expanded and dry land farming acres were added. Jonas and Caroline had three children, Eugene, Lucille, and Lorraine. Caroline died after the birth of their last child in 1927 and Jonas raised three children alone. Jonas worked closely with his brother, Henry, a bachelor who had homesteaded nearby.

John Hanson had gone to Minnesota when his wife, Martha, died in 1911, so Jonas and Henry were the two family members remaining in the Salem area as

their older brother, Olaf, left his Salem homestead to move to Cheyenne and their sister, Elizabeth, lived near Albin. Elizabeth and her husband, Alfred Sandman, raised the newborn Lorraine the first few years of her life but when Lorraine turned five, Eugene and Lucille asked their father, Jonas, to bring their sister home.

Eugene (Gene) Hanson worked with his father, Jonas, and his Uncle Henry on both their homesteads during his teenage years and for many years after that side-by-side with his father. When Gene was 24 years old, he married Georgia Wulf in 1943, and for their home they purchased his Uncle Olaf's original homestead which bordered his father's place. Jonas enjoyed working with his son and always showed tremendous respect for his daughter-in-law, Georgia. Jonas had remained a widow and appreciated the home-cooked meals and family atmosphere his daughter-in-law provided. Gene and Georgia had three children, Dennis (Deidre), Sonja (Clyde) Windecker, and Carolyn (Howard) Deselms. Jonas died in 1961 at the age of 82.

Gene and Georgia added more farm and pasture ground over the years and in the 1980s, irrigated alfalfa was also included in their operation. The original Herefords were changed over to an Angus/Hereford cross and now are Red Angus/South Devon cross. Eugene and Georgia continued to actively participate in the operation. Eugene Hanson was 91 years old in August 2010 and continued to manage the ranch/farm; drove a tractor in the summer on the farm ground and he checked fence, water and salt year round. Georgia at age 86 continues to feed the help. They celebrated their 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary in October 2010. In the last few years, Gene and Georgia purchased a couple more sections of farm ground and Gene just smiled and wondered why he was still buying land at the age of 90! Gene passed away in late December 2010. He was born, raised, lived, and died on his beloved homestead.

Dennis is the next generation's active partner in the Hanson and Son Corporation. Dennis and Deidre have three children; Jonas, Erica, and Emily. Sonja and Clyde have three sons; Shane, Heath, and



Gene and Georgia Hanson 2010



Gene and Georgia Hanson Headquarters 2006

Justin. Carrie and Howard have three children: Kirstin, Hugh, and Silas. Gene and Georgia have 9 great-grandchildren.

Current holdings of Eugene Hanson and Son, Inc. include the original homesteads of John/Martha Hanson, Jonas/Caroline Hanson, and Olaf Hanson. The operation also includes a 'Tree Claim' or Timber Culture Act of 1873. The trees in the Tree Claim had to have been planted sometime after 1873 but before 1891 when the Act was repealed. The original abstracts for this Tree Claim remain in the family records since acquiring this ground





Sen. John Barrasso, Rep. Cynthia Lummis, Hanson Family and Sen. Mike Enzi

in 1938 and many of the trees are still alive! There is a cement foundation adjacent to the Tree Claim that was the site of the Salem Post Office and store and the surrounding agricultural community is still referred to as Salem. The family has many letters and postcards sent to and returned from Sweden with the Salem Post Office stamp on them dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s for 1 cent!

Gene's great-grandparents on his mother's side, Carl and Anna Johnson, are buried at the Salem Cemetery as are several generations of the Hanson family and some of the future generations have plans to be buried there also. There is a lot of Swedish and family history in this cemetery and there is more to this story waiting to be told from all those in residence there.

John (b.1845 d.1928) and Martha (b.1845 d.1911) Hanson (married 1868)

- Olaf, Henry, Jonas and Elizabeth Jonas (b.1878 d.1961) and Caroline Youngland (b.1890 d.1927) Hanson
- Eugene, Lucille and Lorraine Eugene (b.1919 d.2010) and Georgia Wulf (b. 1923) Hanson
- Dennis, Sonja and Carolyn Dennis (Deidre) Hanson
- Jonas, Erica and Emily Sonja (Clyde) Windecker
- Shane, Heath and Justin Carrie (Howard) Deselms
- Kirstin, Hugh and Silas

# The Heward's 7E Ranch

## Carbon/Albany Counties



Hewards home Little Medicine



Agnes Heward's homestead cabin Mary Heward



Annie, Jack, Mark, Agnes, Mary, Robert Heward

As told by Ronald Gibson Heward

In 1896, Timothy Heward of Durham County, England, passed away, leaving a wife, Agnes Jane, a daughter, Annie 23, and three sons, John Stag (Jack) 20, Robert 16 (my grandfather), and Mark Gibson 10. Timothy's brother, Joseph, moved to Wyoming around this time and settled near Elk Mountain. In 1907 he talked Robert into coming to that area. He went to work on the Bill Ellis ranch. Later that year he persuaded the rest of his family to come to this country also. They sold everything they owned except their clothes to pay for their trip. When they got here Jack and Mark went to work on ranches around Elk Mountain. In 1909 they purchased the Oscar Reed homestead 35 miles north of Medicine Bow on the Little Medicine River for \$10 an acre and moved there. In addition to the land, they got three horses two milk cows and some machinery. Each of them filed for their own homesteads, all four of the kids within two miles of the one they bought. Agnes's was 13 miles south on the Little Medicine River. The reason they did that was so when they needed to go to Medicine Bow, they could go to her place, spend the night, and then go onto town the next day and do the same thing on the return trip.

In 1910 they purchased 1543 old ewes from Sam Johnson at 31/2 cents a head and thus began the Heward Ranch. That first winter was mild so they did ok and made a little money. The next two winters were hard and without any hay their losses were high. Somehow they survived and began to expand. I was told by Mark that the only thing they bought back then that they didn't absolutely have to have was tobacco. All three of the boys smoked a pipe. When they went to town they didn't have money to buy anything to eat so they took what they needed to eat. At some time they bought a few cows that were branded with a 7E, the brand went with the cows, so that is how the ranch became the 7E ranch. The cows did not become a permanent fixture on the ranch, I don't know how long they kept them but not very long.

I feel the reason they survived when so many around them failed was not because of anything special they did, but simply the fact that they had enough land to make it work. In this harsh environment it would be almost impossible to raise a milk cow on 160 acres unless it was on the river bottom, let alone make a living, but with almost a thousand acres it was possible.

As time went on they were able to buy a few of the homesteads around them. During a very hard time they were asked by a neighbor if they would buy some of their land for \$5.00 an acre, they weren't sure they could but finally consented to do so. After the first year they told him that they were going to have to back out of the deal because they just couldn't pay for it. The reply was, you are still in better shape than I am what if we rewrite the contract for one dollar an acre, could you do that? They agreed to try that and were able to make it work. Some of that ground is now our hay meadows. They kept expanding until they had about 70,000 acres of deeded, BLM and state land that ran around 5,000 sheep. Some of the homesteaders they bought out were Grounds, Eggleston, Brennon, Hotchkiss, Eaton, Heinz, Woods, Hamilton, Herzer, and Priet. There was quite a community out here back then, there was even a school house at the Heinz's place. A school teacher's salary at that time was \$50 a month, just \$5 more than a sheepherder.

As they expanded the ranch, they also expanded the hay meadows to 250 acres. They are not the most productive meadows, the ground is ether gravelly or hard clay, plus the water usually runs out around the 20<sup>th</sup> of June. When they got the sheep built up, they split them into two bands in the winter. One was kept in the meadow area; the other one was kept farther south, so about half of the hay had to be hauled down there. That made bailing it the only option. They didn't have a bailer so the hay was put up in loose stacks and then when Dad was done putting his hay up he would take his baler out and bale it. That was quite a job; the bailer was a hand tie so that took two people, one to push the wires through and one on the other side to put them back through so they could be tied. One to run the bailer, that is regulate the hay going into it and put a wooden block with slots through them on each end



Mark, Jack, Annie



Donnie, Mary, John, Agnes, Robert

of a bail to stick the wires through. Two pitching hay into it and two piling the bails. After all the hay was bailed it had to be loaded on a truck hauled to where it was needed, then piled again. What a process!! And people think they are over worked today. Eventually they got their own bailer, that saved a lot of time and man power.

Back then the only way to get stock to market was by train. In the fall the lambs and old ewes were sorted off and trailed to Medicine Bow where there was a set of corrals along side the railroad; they were weighed, loaded on the train, and shipped to where ever. This was done until the early 1960s. There was stock trailed from all over the country to Medicine Bow to be shipped, it was a very busy place in the fall. In the spring, after shearing, the

wool had to be hauled to Medicine Bow where it was loaded on the train also. That had to be a long process hauling three bags at a time on a wagon 23 miles. That is why they built their shearing shed where Agnes's homestead was at. That was at least 13 miles closer to town. When they got a truck to haul the wool it was unable to cross the river where they had been shearing so they moved all the sheep shearing and working corrals five miles up the river to what is known as the Heinz place. It is close to the county road so it was easier to get the wool out. They are a very good set of corrals for working sheep and are still used today.

In 1919, Mary Jane Thompson (Robert's former sweetheart) came from England and they were married. They lived at Robert's homestead the first year. Then they leased a place at the base of Shirley Mountain and lived there. They had four children born while they were there: Agnes Jane, born 18 November 1920, John Gibson (my father), 23 October 1923, Robert Donald, 23 August 1926, and a baby girl who died at birth. Robert lived 18 months and then died.

There were good hay meadows there so in the fall they would take one band of sheep over there to winter them. That lasted until Robert had a very bad mowing machine accident that almost cut his hand off and left it deformed the rest of his life. After that he was unable to work the way he needed to so he moved his family to Laramie until 1934 when they moved three miles east of Medicine Bow where they stayed the rest of their lives. Just a side note, Sue Klobus from Hanna taught Agnes and John when they lived near Shirley Mountain. She became a dear friend of our family. She later taught in Laramie so when Mark was in the hospital on several occasions she was there for his every need. We are truly grateful to her for the time and effort she spent taking care of him. Mark said "The public should know that country schools have produced scholars that have played a great part in making Wyoming and the nation what it is today." That statement was made in the 1960s.

In 1920, Jack married Mary Emma Oxley from Wayland, Iowa. They met at one of the many local barn dances. I don't know why she happened to

be there, she must have known someone in the area. They never had any children. She filed for a homestead so they built her homestead cabin and lived in it just across the river from the original cabin where Mark and Annie lived. Neither of them ever married so they lived together all their lives.

In the mid-1950s, Mark and Jack moved to Medicine Bow. Nat Smith was hired to run the ranch. Mark would drive out almost every day to help where he could and make sure things were being done the way he wanted. He continued to drive to the ranch until he passed away 11 days short of his 87<sup>th</sup> birthday. He had a new car ordered when he died. Nat ran the ranch until 1965. He did a lot of work while he was here and made many improvements. He made six large round twelve-foot high corrals to put the sheep in at night in the winter to keep them from drifting away in a bad storm. They were a great asset that saved a lot of sheep and time looking for them after a storm. After Nat left, there wasn't any one that stayed for more than a few months until I got here in 1968.

Uranium was discovered in the area in the mid-1950s, and by 1958 there was an underground mine in operation on what was our BLM land. By 1964 there were two open pit mines in operation in the same area. In 1970 the underground mine was changed to an open pit also, so we had three mines in operation on what were our grazing lands. We lost about 10,000 acres to them that split the ranch in half. Basically it split most of the summer range from the winter range. The part they took was used going to and coming from summer range so it could have been worse. At this time we are able to use about 1900 acres of that land, and about 800 acres was turned over to the state and our neighbor leases it. The rest is still tied up because of DEQ regulations even though the last mine stopped mining in 1997. With the exception of two or three minor misunderstandings, we had a very good relationship with the mines and we worked together for the good of both parties. The land that they reclaimed has several times more grass than what it did to begin with so when we do get it back, it will be really good pasture.



John Heward Family

Agnes died September 1926; baby Robert, April 1927; he was buried on top of his grandmother, Agnes. Annie, December 1956, Emma May, 1957, Jack, September 1963 and Mark, January 1971.

John and Agnes spent as much time as they could at the ranch when they got a little older. They would hunt and trap in the fall and winter, in the summer they helped with lambing, shearing, docking and haying. They both found great joy in being at the ranch.

When Agnes graduated she went to the University of Wyoming for two years. Then she ran the library in Medicine Bow for several years. She was offered a job at the Soil Conservation Service that she took and worked there until she retired in 1984. Agnes was very good with a sewing machine and made a lot of our clothes when we were kids and for my kids. I and my kids always looked forward to getting her presents because they always had special clothes in them. She never married so she was like a second mother to my sister, brother, and me, and a grandmother to our kids. She lived with her parents three miles east of Medicine Bow until they passed away, Robert in April 1963, Mary in May 1965, and Agnes died in March 2001.

In 1944, John went into the navy for 2-1/2 years, he was stationed near Seattle, Washington all the time he was in the service. While there, he met and married Berlina Ann Christensen in June 1945. I'm sure it was expected that when he got home from

the service he would move to the ranch and run it; however, Berlina had a different idea about it. So they leased the Arlo Richard place for three years and they bought it. It is located two miles east of Medicine Bow and a mile from his parents. They had three kids: Sharry Ann, born March 31 1946; Ronald Gibson, September 6 1947; and Robert Dale, March 8, 1951.

For the first three years they put up the hay and took in cows to feed the hay to in the winter. With very little expenses they were able to save enough money to purchase a few Hereford cows of their own. The first couple of years were very tight because they kept every heifer calf to build up the heard. He bought some land that bordered his mother's homestead to summer his cows on. So he trailed the cows out there in the spring and home in the fall. In 1964 or 1965 John and Mark went together and put in a set of scales just across the river from Agnes's cabin so the calves and lambs could be sold there instead of trailing them to Medicine Bow. That was a great improvement that has paid dividends ever since. Mom and Dad lived there until 1974; when Bobby got out of the service they moved to Medicine Bow. Bobby and his wife, Sharon, started running the ranch. Dad was much like Mark, there were very few days that he didn't go to the ranch to help out the rest of his life. He passed away February 9, 2009.

From the time I was ten, I was being primed to run this ranch. I didn't think much about it at the time

but looking back on it I can see what Uncle Mark had in mind. In the summer he would come and get me to help with shearing, docking, and irrigating, etc. When we got to the dirt road he would let me drive till we got back to the highway. There is a steep half-mile long hill with a turn in the road just as you get to the house, then the road goes out the other side. When I was about 12, we got to the top of the hill, I put on the brakes to slow down only to discover there were none. Oh boy, what a ride that was. I glanced at the speedometer just before we got to the house it was on 65. We slid around the corner at the house and was about a half a mile up the road before we came to a stop. We just sit there for a couple of minutes before either of us could speak. Then at the same time we both said emergency brake. To this day I check the brakes before I get to the top of the hill.

In 1966, after graduating, I attended Casper College for two years. The second year, on December 19, 1967, I married Linda Jean Tilley. We had dated for two years in high school. That spring after school we moved out here. Even though I grew up on a ranch and thought I knew all about it, when I had to start making day-to-day decisions I realized how little I really did know. Thank goodness Uncle Mark was here for a couple of years to help. I got a lot of advice from Dad, also. That made this new chapter in my life a lot easier. During the late 1960s and early 1970s the sheep market was terrible: as an example, wool that sold for \$1.50 in the 1950s was bringing 17 cents and the lamb market was equally bad at 20 to 25 cents. It was impossible to make expenses. The first two years I was here, Dad came to help during lambing since we couldn't hire help. We would each work all day and split the night shift so we got to sleep four hours a night. That wouldn't have been so bad if at the end of the year we would have made a profit but to do all that and then lose money, it was very discouraging.

To make matters worse, in the spring of 1970 we had just sheared the 13<sup>th</sup> of June when it came a terrible snow storm that killed five hundred sheep. After Uncle Mark died January 6, 1971, it was decided if we were to survive, the sheep that had made this place would have to go. In March we had an auction and sold all but a thousand of the

sheep. That fall we sold another 700 head, they brought from \$10 to \$20 a head. We then bought 65 Angus heifers from Osker Schmale who was Dad's neighbor so we knew the cattle. The reason we got black cows instead of Hereford, we were worried about snow-burned bags during calving since there is usually snow here during calving. The next year we got another 65 heifers from Schmales and 60 of Dad's heifers. They all had their first calf in 1973.

That winter we had the most snow I had ever seen, all the fences were buried, the bail piles were buried, I fed with a cat and sled most of the winter. I drove over the fences around the bail piles and then had to dig the bails out of the snow when I got to the bottom of the stack; it was a long way up to the sled. On the back side of the stack the snow would still be just like it was before the bales were taken out. I had started a calving shed but was unable to get all the lumber needed so I only had 20 feet of an 80 foot building done. Enough to get four cows in. Oh, how I could have used the rest of that when I started calving. There was a three-day period that it never stopped snowing and blowing. In a twenty-hour period I had 23 calves. As soon as the calves were dry and sucking good, back out they went. I never went to bed for that three days, I would go to the house and eat, then back to the barn, but it paid off, I never lost a new calf. There were several older calves that had been turned out that were buried and died. All in all, it turned out pretty well considering we had three feet of snow. The next year that shed was done.

Since there had only been sheep run with herders all those years there were hardly any fences, so that first year we had cows, the whole summer was spent building fence, 23 miles of it. There have been very few summers since then that we haven't added to that, we now maintain over 150 miles of fence. In the last four years we have started changing our operation from using two pastures all summer to having eleven when it is all done, that we rotate through each summer. Not using the same pasture at the same time of the year two years in a row, and leaving one or two that don't get grazed at all each year. In the last four years, we have built 15 miles of fence for this program and have about seven more to go to finish it. The fences we are



Sen. John Barrasso, Rep. Cynthia Lummis, Heward Family and Sen. Mike Enzi

building now are more environmentally friendly, they are either one wire electric with the posts one hundred feet apart, or three wire suspension fences with the posts 80 feet apart, and the bottom wire is barbless instead of the traditional five strands of barb wire with the posts 16 feet apart. I am really excited about this program, it is good for the land, the cattle, and the wild life. We are hoping that this will help improve the sage grouse habitat so they will come back like they used to be. Another thing we are hoping to improve is the river banks. These areas have been over grazed for years and have deteriorated very bad.

Another thing we changed is our haying operation. When half of the hay had to be hauled off it had to be baled, that took a six-man crew. Now that it is being fed on the meadows we started putting it up loose. In 1974 we got a Druby hay stacker, it goes out, picks up a windrow, then puts it on the stack. It will lift 24 feet high so it will build a big stack. With a little practice, a stack can be built without

having any one on it. With this type of operation three people can put up more hay in a day than six with bails. Plus there is almost no physical labor involved. In the winter it is feed with hydraulic equipment so there isn't any labor involved there, either. We still bale around a thousand bales a year just in case of an emergency. They can be fed with a pickup, tractor, cat and sled, or snow machine and sled, so they are a good insurance policy. Something else that has happened since we started feeding all the hay on the meadows and putting that fertilizer back on the ground is the hay meadows have improved dramatically. The meadows are one of our most important assets we have. The amount of hay we can produce determines how much livestock we can run. Right now we are leasing about one third of our summer range to others because we have reached our maximum carrying capacity with hay. We are running about 265 cows and about 400 sheep. Most years that works out ok, but some times if our hay crop is short, we have to buy some to get us by.

We have always welcomed hunters and fishermen to use our place and have never charged anyone to do so. We have made some very dear friends from all over the country by doing this. There was a man here last fall that said that was his 52<sup>nd</sup> year to hunt here, another one said it was his 47<sup>th</sup> year. There are many more like them. It is a time we as a family have always enjoyed. When possible, the kids still like to come home at hunting time to see familiar faces and visit with friends. The first few days of hunting season I don't plan anything because my job is to talk to and help hunters any way I can. My philosophy has always been if I treat someone like a human being they will return the favor and for the last 42 years that has proven to be true. We just don't have problems with hunters.

Somehow with everything else that was going on, Linda and I found time to raise six wonderful, hard-working kids. Kelly was born 10 August 1969, Kim, 31 August 1970, Todd, 31 October 1972, Chad, 15 August 1974, Lindsay 26 August 1976, Robin 25 February 1978. Every one of them graduated from college and four of them served a church mission. The boys for two years each and the girls 18 months each. If it wasn't for the help I get from all of the kids, I wouldn't be able to take care every thing that needs done around here. Every time Dad gets in over his head one or more of them come home and bail him out. I just can't say enough about how wonderful my kids are and how proud of them I am.

We as a family have always taken great pride in every aspect of this ranch from the land to the livestock to the wildlife and are always trying to do things to improve it. Our goal is to keep it going another 100 years.



# The EY Ranch

## Carbon County

As told by Rod Johnson

**M**y grandfather, John Cheesbrough, was born in 1878 in Yorkshire, England, where his father, Edward Cheesebrough, worked in a coal mine. The family emigrated when John was three years old, squatting at Fort Halleck before moving on to Carbon. Eventually they bought the UL Ranch on the side of Elk Mountain, where John grew up. They raised both sheep and cattle.

John purchased John Ivan's ranch on the south side of Elk Mountain in 1906. He soon acquired a homestead from John Jack, then homesteaded two other parcels. He married Nellie Arnett and purchased a homestead from Jacob Arnett, his wife's uncle. Nellie was born in Chicago in 1875 and had come to Milo to teach school. John and Nellie had two daughters, Victoria (my mother) and Joan. They called their place Hillside Ranch. I took it over in 1986 and call it the EY Ranch from my territorial brand originating from John Ivan.

John Cheesebrough was a Carbon County Commissioner from 1942 to 1958. He built the road through Pass Creek Canyon connecting the road from Elk Mountain to Saratoga, now County Road 404. He died in 1968.

On my father's side, my great-grandfather, Samuel Augustus Johannes Kanon, was born in Sweden on November 16, 1846. In 1883, shortly after my grandfather Jay was born, they immigrated to Ouray, Colorado. There Samuel became Sam Johnson. The family soon moved up to Medicine Bow and then to Elk Mountain.

Sam was a sheepman and a gambler who won and lost ranches all over Carbon County. On May 13, 1902, at four-thirty in the morning, Sam, better known as "Section Sam", had a gun fight with a California gambler over a woman whom Sam had brought to Ben Watkin's saloon in Medicine Bow. Sam was shot, staggered out into the street, emptied



Victoria and her Buck Rake 1925



Shearing Shed built in 1920 by John Cheesbrough, still standins

his gun in the air, and fell dead. He is buried in Medicine Bow.

Sam's son, Jay Johnson, (1883-1953) married Bertha Shoen, born in 1884 in Carbon (died 1946). Her father, Frank Shoen, ran a brewery in Laramie. Her mother came over from Sweden.

My parents, Robert Johnson (1907-2000) and Victoria Arnett Johnson (1909-2006), along with my brothers, Bob, Frank, Bert, and myself, ran the family ranch, the A-1. I was born in Laramie in 1938.

When I was little, I thought Elk Mountain was the biggest mountain in the whole world. Our place, pocketed in the folds of Elk Mountain, tucked between the peaks of Coad and Pennock and backed up to the Snowy Range, isolated us from the world. We ventured out to the towns of Rawlins and Laramie maybe twice a year, then rushed home to gargle away the contaminations of town.

We had a blacksmith shop, log barn, root cellar, and an ice house where ice, chopped from the ponds in winter and layered in sawdust, cooled our food until mid-summer. Our school was a red tarpaper shack and then a two-room log bunkhouse. Our school books were the old, tattered books handed down from town schools. I remember one school teacher who, every chance she got, galloped her horse 13 miles to town, not stopping to unwire the gates but jumping the cattle guards. One year we had three different teachers. I didn't learn much that year. About 5 miles away was my Uncle Donald and Aunt Marguerite's ranch, and another log bunkhouse where my aunt taught us and the Quealy's hired man's kids, as well as the kids who skied down from the tie-hack camp. My brothers and I traveled there in a single bobsled pulled with a team of horses. When I was in sixth grade I started school in Saratoga, where we bought a house so we'd have someplace to stay when the roads closed for the winter. Sometimes my mom stayed with us, otherwise we batched it.

The mountain taught me more than I would ever learn from a school. In summer, when a sheepherder quit or was off on a drunk, I took his place



On way to school 1940



Bert, Frank, Bob & Rod 1941-42



Late fall, 1942



School Picnic May 1942

following our herd of twelve hundred sheep. I did this every year. From the age of nine I ran the hay rake, harnessing our pair of workhorses by standing on a box. We used a plunger to push the hay up the long slanted poles of the beaver slide stacker where the men stacked the loose hay. We cut hay using horse-drawn mowers and an old John Deere tractor.

My mom cooked for us and the hired men on a wood stove. Beside the stove were large pots for heating water for baths and laundry. Her work never ended. My dad was ill for a long time and so we boys had to learn to do much of the ranch work ourselves.

Rod presently lives in the Wind River Mountains near Crowheart with his wife, Mackie d'Arge. His children are Kathy, Kelly, Linda, and Tom. He still commutes back and forth to the ranch at Elk Mountain.



Trailing cows to upper ranch 1984



Rod on EY Ranch 1989



Bear Creek Basin School Feb. 1947 Frank, Bob, Rod & Bert



Branding on the EY Ranch 1991



Fall, 1955, building Turpin Reservoir



Mackie D'Arge, *Lifting the Sky*



Sheepwagon restored by Rod Johnson

# The Lyon Family Farm

## Laramie County



The Lyon farm in the early days



Charlene, Sheppie Dog & Lewis O. Lyon



Lewis O. Lyon was also a veterinarian

As told by the Lyon Family

Lewis O. Lyon filed on his homestead on June 1, 1909. His wife, Charlene, followed a few months later. His brother, Charles, and her uncle, Earl Cornick, had come to Luther (now Bums, WY), liked the area, and had filed for their homesteads in 1908. Charlene's stepfather and her mother, A.G. and Edith Spillman, filed on the same section as Lewis O., also in 1909. A.G. was employed as a depot agent before Lewis O. and Charlene moved to Wyoming. Lewis O. was able to double his homestead by filing on the quarter west of the original homestead. He moved his original homestead improvements to a more suitable site using two five-horse teams to pull the house on skids. They built barns, corrals, and planted trees.

Lewis O. and Charlene's daughter, Edith M., was born in 1911 and their first son, Lewis T., was born in 1914. In the early 1920s they acquired a concrete block-forming machine and made enough blocks to build a new house. Their second son, Donald D., was born in the new house in 1924. Lewis O. raised registered shorthorn cattle, hogs, horses, and various grains. He was also a popular veterinarian in the county. Hiram and Mary Lyon, parents of Charles and Lewis O., sold their property near Rolfe, Iowa and came here in the twenties.

Upon graduating from high school in 1933, Lewis T. attended a business school in Sterling, CO and a diesel school in California. After returning home, he worked on the railroad tie gang for a while and then worked for the county road and bridge operating a Cat "60" for several years. Lewis T. was sharing the responsibility of the farm with his father and brother when Lewis O. died, unexpectedly, in December of 1941. Over the next several years Edith, Lewis T., and Don divided the property. When their mother died in California in 1955, they divided her Wyoming and California property. Eventually, Edith had all of the California property and Lewis T. and Don had all of the Wyoming property.

Edith married Sidney Hall. They had two sons and a daughter: Carl, Don, and Carolyn. They lived several years in California.

Donald D. married Margene Miller. They had two daughters and two sons: Dawn Dee, Shawna, Scott, and Mathew. Donald D. sold his property in 1967 and moved his family to Cheyenne. He retired from the Laramie County School District # 1.

Lewis T. married Vera W. Stevens (whose parents came to Laramie County in 1913). They continued to live on the original homestead, planting more trees, raising cattle, sheep, a few horses, and grain crops.

Their five children, Lewis Gordon, Gary, Larry, Kathleen, and Karen, learned to care for live-stock and operate farm machinery. Lewis passed on in 1985, leaving the original homestead to those remaining.

Vera still enjoys living on the farm and working with flowers, trees, and the livestock.

All three sons served in the military. Lewis Gordon served in the Wyoming Army National Guard until retirement; Gary served in the Marine Corps; and Larry served in the Navy.

Lewis Gordon married Linda Bridge. They have three daughters: Tammy and Scott Durbon living in Illinois; Tina and Chris Mogensen live in Laramie, WY with their son, Johnathan; and Julie living in Laramie, WY.

Gary and Larry operate the original farm and they and Kathleen have their own adjacent farms. Kathleen lives in Pine Bluffs and teaches school. Karen lives in Laramie with her husband, Tom, and their three sons: Alan, Karlton, and Michael. Their daughter, Kelly, also lives in Laramie with her husband and their daughter, Noel.

All of the family pitches in to help each other. Everyone enjoys and is thankful for the farm.



Moving homestead house on skids by neighbors with 2 5 horse teams



Charlene & Lewis O. Lyon holding Lewis T. & Edith



Lewis T. & Edith M. Lyon



Lewis T. Lyon & his Model T



Larry Lyon on 1937 John Deere A, 1959



Don Lyon sometime in the 1940s



2 John Deere tractors tied together for 1 operator. Lewis T



Gordon Lyon pulling graham home with D4 Cat, 1959



1959, Gary Lyon pulling tool bar with 1935 John Deere D



1959-1960 Hay



1962, Karen & Kathleen Lyon on Rowdy & Betty



1960, loading wool, boom built by Lewis Lyon



The Lyon Den, 1971, Gordon, Kat, Larry, Karen, & Gary



Home, 1961



1984, Grazing Sheep



Lewis T & Vera Lyon, Sept. 29, 1984



The Lyon Den May 31 2008, Karen, Vera, Gorden, Gary, Larry, and Kathleen



Home, 2000



Feb. 28 2009, Great- & Great-Great Grandchildren of Lewis O. and Charlene Lyon



Sen. John Barrasso, Rep. Cynthia Lummis, Lyon Family and Sen. Mike Enzi



# The Macy Farm and Feedlot

## Laramie County

As told by the Macy Family

The farm is currently operated by Kenneth and Angela Macy with sons and families: Fred, Krista, Jake and Rachael Macy; and Bert, Carol and Nicole Macy. Kenneth and Fred are full time in the operation, raising grain, hay, silage crops, sheep, cattle and finishing natural cattle and lambs in the feedlot.

The farm began in 1908 with William Bert Macy coming from Carleton, Nebraska to file and begin a homestead at Pine Bluffs, Wyoming. He came on the Union Pacific train with other families from Carleton. In the fall of 1908, he returned to Nebraska for the winter and in the spring of 1909, he and his brother, Charles Macy, returned to Pine Bluffs to stay. Charles filed and began a homestead beside William. With a change in the Homestead Law, William "Bert" purchased a relinquishment from another homesteader on the east side of his and completed a 320-acre homestead in 1913.

In 1910 William married Allie Tyler from Carleton, Nebraska. In 1911 Allie's parents and sister, Mr. and Mrs. John Tyler and Mary Tyler, moved from the farm at Carleton, Nebraska which had been damaged by a tornado to a homestead in the next section northwest of William and Allie. William and Allie's family of three sons Arthur, Glen, Wayne, and daughter Fern were born and raised at the homestead. The larger farm house that currently stands on the original homestead was built in 1918.

William farmed and raised cattle and work horses. In the 1930s his sons farmed with him and raised potatoes, edible beans, corn wheat, oats, hay, cattle, hogs, and chickens. Arthur, Glen and Wayne Macy were all active in the Future Farmers of America and all three achieved the American Farmer Degree in FFA. When Wayne received his degree in 1937, it marked the first time three brothers had received the recognition in the United States. The Macy Brothers raised significant amounts of Certified



South View W.B. Macy's Residence Aug. 1920



SE view of John Tyler's residence, Aug. 1920



North House, Ford truck, between 1942 & 1947 no electricity



Wayne Macy, late 1930s

Seed Potatoes in the 1930s. When World War II broke out there was a lack of labor for the potatoes, the farming returned to grain and livestock.

In 1932 Glen Macy purchased a nearby farm and raised potatoes and grain. Later, grain, cattle and hogs were his enterprises until his death in 1975.

In 1935 Wayne Macy purchased the homestead of his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. John Tyler. Wayne's brother, Arthur, and family lived on that homestead until the early 1940s, when Arthur left the Macy Brothers operation. In 1942 Wayne married Alma Lange, originally from Carleton, NE, and they moved to the Tyler place, purchased some additional land beside the Tyler place, and farmed there. Their son, Kenneth Macy, was raised on the Tyler homestead. After the end of World War II in 1946, Wayne returned from the Army and was asked by his Uncle Charles to farm the Charles Macy homestead. Wayne, and later Kenneth, have farmed that homestead as part of their operation from that time until the present. From 1940 through the 1970s the farm raised grain, cattle, hogs, and chickens.



Speed her up Carl!

In the late 1960s some sheep were added to the operation. After William Macy's death in 1957, Wayne and Glen purchased the homestead from their mother and shared the farming of that homestead for the next few years.

Kenneth and Angela (Huckfeldt) were married in 1967 and moved to the Tyler place to manage the farm in the fall of 1969, following Ken's graduation from the University of Wyoming. Wayne and Alma moved to a home in Pine Bluffs, but Wayne continued to help with the farming operation for another 30 years. After Ken returned to the farm, the operation raised grain, hay, feeder cattle, sheep, hogs and egg production chickens. In 1975, after Glen's death, Kenneth and Wayne consolidated the farms into one operation. In 1975 Allie Macy's health was failing and she had to move to a nursing home from the original homestead and the main house. Ken, Angie, and their children Fred, Bert, and Mary Lynne moved to the original homestead house of William Macy and ran the operations from there.



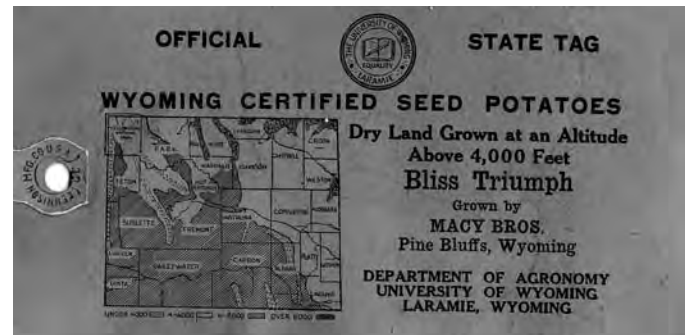
Threshing Rye at W.D. Macy's Aug. 1920

In the early 1980s, during the Farm Crisis years, egg chicken production ended. Angie took an off farm job to supplement the family income where the main farm enterprises were raising sheep, feeding swine and cattle.

In 1987 Fred joined the operation full time. At different times during the 1980s other parcels of land were rented and farmed. In 1989, Ken and Angie purchased some land across the line in Nebraska, which consisted of dry land farm land and pasture. In 1990 Fred, Ken and Angie purchased the land that was directly west of the original Tyler homestead and added that to the operation. During this time Fred and Bert earned their American Farmer Degrees in FFA and Lynne was very active in the local high school chapter. After Bert graduated from the University of Wyoming, he returned to the farm and lived at the Tyler homestead, worked at the local electric coop part-time, and purchased a farm at Harrisburg, NE with a beginning farmer program. In 1996 Macy Farms began to feed some of their cattle to finished weight (fat cattle) for slaughter and over the next year phased out the swine production. The farming operation continues to produce grain, hay, silage, feeder cattle, fat cattle, and sheep. The purchase of delivery shares of Mountain States Lamb Coop provides for a stable amount of lamb production for that market.

In 1998 Mary Lynne married JD Gray and in 1999 they decided to return to Pine Bluffs. Lynne and JD moved to the Glen Macy place and worked at completing the house that had been started there in the 1950s. They helped with the farm when their off farm jobs allowed. Their three children, Carl, Stephanie, and Clyde were born while they lived here.

In 2002 Ken and Angie purchased some additional land northeast of the original homestead from the Jessen Hay Company. Fred married Krista (Algien) and they lived at the Tyler homestead. Bert and Carol Macy purchased a farm south of Pine Bluffs, built a home and with their children, Chris and Nicole, moved to the country after living in Pine Bluffs after their marriage in 1999.



Official State Tag



Macy Farm & Feedlot working cattle, Fred, Bert & Krista Macy

In 2007 Ken, Angie, Fred, and Bert purchased a farm and feedlot from Anderson Livestock Co., west of Pine Bluffs. Ken, Fred, and Bert farm and feed cattle at this farm location, as the finishing fat cattle has moved to this feedlot facility and the farm ground is used for additional wheat and silage production.

In 2009 Ken and Angie moved to the farm that Glen Macy had purchased in 1932. This was the place that Lynne and JD had occupied for ten years. Lynne, JD, Carl, Stephanie and Clyde Gray currently reside in Gillette. They return to the farm to visit and help when possible. Fred, Krista, Rachael, and Jake moved to the original homestead house and live and work from there. Currently, Ken and Fred are the full time operators of the Macy Farm and Feedlot and the remaining family members help as much as possible on days off from their off farm jobs.



Sen. John Barrasso, Rep. Cynthia Lummis, Macy Family and Sen. Mike Enzi

# The Milleg Ranch

## Sublette County

As told by the Milleg Family

The Milleg Ranch was originally part of a ranch that was owned by Ezra and Minnie Swan, some of the first ranchers in Sublette County. Like most of the early ranchers in the area, they ran Hereford cattle. The ranch came to the Milleg ancestors by Minnie's sister, Daisy, who married Johnny Curtis. Since the Swans did not have any children of their own, they passed part of the ranch to Daisy. This was the beginning of the ranch being operated by what is now the Milleg family.

Johnny and Daisy had four children, Jack, Everett, Myrtle, and Lillian. Lillian married George Milleg, who was originally from Austria. George and Lillian continued to work on the ranch with her siblings. Lillian was the last surviving child and the ranch was left to her and George. Bill Milleg was born an only child to George and Lillian in 1923. In the early 1940s, Bill married Helen Clark. There were two sons born to the union, George and Bill. George passed away as a one-week old infant. The younger Bill worked on the family ranch with his father and grandfather, until George's passing in 1976. The ranch operation was continued by father and son,



Bill & Helen's Mountain Home

both Bills. In 1997, the senior Bill passed away.

In 1964, Bill married Sandra Smith. They had two children, Mark and Marsha. The ranch is still operated today by Bill and Sandra with the help of their family. Marsha married Wayne Barlow in 1989. Wayne and Marsha's daughters, Kailey and Logan, and Mark's daughter, Addison, are the sixth generation of the family to be involved with the ranch. The Milleg ranch is still a working cattle ranch raising Angus crossbred cattle.

# The Cora Valley Angus Ranch

## Sublette County



James Noble, Ted Wineman, Nels Jorgensen, Mrs. Wineman, Pauline Noble, Chief Neep A Water and family

As told by Ann Chambers Noble

James M. Noble was born January 1, 1863, in Burlington, Iowa, to Richard and Elizabeth Carroll Noble. James was educated in Burlington and at Howe's Academy at Mount Pleasant, Iowa. He left home at age 14 and headed west, where he worked as a cowboy. He had left home after his mother died and his father remarried. James eventually made it to Nebraska where he had cattle interests for eight years.

James sold his cattle interests to take up mining in Colorado, Utah, and at South Pass, Wyoming. At South Pass, he had at least one successful mine, which he used to make a second mine appear more prolific than it actually was. He then sold both claims for \$10,000 each. Before the "seeding" could be discovered, he opted to head over the Wind River Mountain in 1895, to visit his brothers Zach and Eugene, who had established ranches in Big Piney. (These were three of eight children born to Richard and Elizabeth Mary Carroll Noble of Iowa.)

James then took up cattle interests again, homesteading on the New Fork River in Cora. This was with his new wife from Switzerland, Pauline Rahm, who had been working for his brother, Gene, at his ranch in Big Piney. Pauline was the sister of John J. and Gottfried Rahm, who also had homesteads in the Cora Valley.

Both James and Pauline homesteaded a parcel just below the older Alexander's homestead, and it is still referred to by the Noble family as "The Home Place." This was in 1896, making them one of the earlier ranching families in Cora Valley. James brought from his earlier cattle days in Nebraska his two brands: the Quarter Circle F and the Quarter Circle F Bar. Family tradition believes that these brands were designed while James had livestock interests on the North Platte River. His brothers had a place at North Platte, Nebraska, near where Buffalo Bill Cody had his ranch.

In 1919, James Noble and Abner Luman bought a train carload of black Angus bulls. They



James Noble, Ted Wineman, Nels Jorgensen, Mrs Wineman, Pauline Noble, Chief Neep A Water and family

originated from the Pearce herd of Iowa. The family descendants all still run Angus cattle. The black cattle are now common in the area, but for many years, the Nobles ran the cattle without their neighbor's approval. It is said to be the oldest continuous black Angus herd in Wyoming under the same family.

In addition to running cattle, James had several other business ventures. In 1899, James took over the job of Cora Postmaster, moving the post office from the previous postmaster's place to his ranch, located on the original road to the Green River Lakes (which is now Dick Noble's Ranch). He also added a general store. This was added to Cora's saloon, blacksmith shop, community dance hall, and a printing office complete with its own paper, *The Cora Sentinel*. James didn't run the store long himself. He always had someone working for him or had the store leased.

Cora's turn-of-the-century success can in large part be attributed to the tie-hacking business located in the upper Green River Valley north of Cora about twenty-five miles. The tie-hack workers would get their food and supplies at James' Cora Store. The ledgers reflect that the store also served the area ranchers. Business was substantial enough to cover freight costs for commodities delivered. Noble also sold a lot of home-grown produce. They farmed 80 acres of potatoes, turnips, rutabagas, parsnips, and barley. James also had a bar attached to the store and Pauline was known to have stitched up some of the tie hack workers after their bar-room

brawls. Income was also obtained from his weekly steer delivery to Otto Schnauber who had the Rock Springs Butchering Co. James Noble was known during this time as the man with the long pocketbook, which apparently was put to good use while he played poker with the tie hack hands in his bar.

Cora's heydays were short lived, largely due to the closing of the tie-hack camps. The newspaper lasted not even a year. The growth of Pinedale proved to be a formidable competition, for by 1910, only the Cora Post Office survived, (though later the store was added again). The other businesses were unable to compete with Pinedale's offerings. The post office location was also lost from James' ranch when the new Cora highway was moved from the Noble ranch yard. With the advent of the automobile, drier ground was needed for the roads, so the road was moved to its present location. In 1919, several of the Noble ranch buildings were moved to the new highway location on the bench at its present location of the "town" of Cora. The new site sits on forty acres that belonged to Abner Luman. The Cora community-dance hall was moved to Pinedale to be used as a medical clinic after it was donated by Carroll Noble. It is now the Senior Citizens Center.

Ranching was lean during some years, just as it is today. One year the Internal Revenue Service wrote to James because he failed to file a tax return. James wrote back stating that he had not earned any income that year, so he didn't believe he owed taxes. The IRS responded that he needed to file anyway!

The wife of John C. Fremont wrote to James M. Noble asking if he would look for her husband's gold watch which Fremont had stopped at 12:00 p.m. and then left on top of "Fremont Peak." James felt that the mountain description in the letter sounded more like Bonneville Peak. He was never able to find the watch.

James and Pauline had five children: Ida Magdalena, Frieda (Hittle), Carroll Richard, James R. and a second Ida Magdalena, named in honor of



Carroll and Christina Noble

the first Ida. The first Ida went with her mother to Salt Lake City when she was only a girl of two or three. Her mother, Pauline, had gone to Salt Lake City to have gall bladder surgery. While there, the young child caught diphtheria and died. She was buried in Salt Lake City.

Carroll Richard Noble was a descendant and namesake for Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Maryland, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Carroll married a Sublette County native, Christina Clementsen, in June 1925 at Boulder by a Justice of the Peace. Henry and Frieda Hittle (Carroll's sister) stood up for them. Carroll continued his father's cattle business, also running black Angus. They bought and lived on the Westfall homestead, near James Noble's homestead, and later bought the Home Place from his mother. Carroll's brand was the LV, which he bought from a fellow rancher, Abner Luman. Abner had obtained the brand and cattle from Art Hicks. Carroll, in turn, bought the brand with a herd of cattle. Buck Elmore, known for his fiddle playing at the local dances, was the originator of the LV brand.

In addition to the Cora ranch, James and Carroll had holdings in Bondurant. He had the Bondurant Place, Walt McPherson place, plus what his sister, Frieda, and he had homesteaded in the area. Furthermore, he leased the Reiling Place, owned by Ted Wineman from Pennsylvania, and had summer range on the forest at Granite and Shoal Creeks. (James had a placer gold mine staked from the mouth of the Hoback Canyon to Granite Creek,

though he never proved up on it because the Hoback flour gold floated.) The Basin holdings were sold in 1944 when Carroll bought ranch land at Cora from Dick Luman near to his home place. In 1934, Carroll and Dick Luman topped the market with their 400 pound Angus calves at four cents per pound.

Carroll worked all his life for his family, ranch, as well as the local, state and national communities. Locally, he helped develop the Pinedale rodeo and rendezvous grounds and was an active leader and participant with the early Rendezvous pageants and the Sublette County Historical Society. Carroll played Father DeSmet in the first Rendezvous reenactment in Daniel. He also served eight years as a Sublette County Commissioner. Carroll served for a number of years as president of the Wyoming Wildlife Federation. "Through those years he battled his fellow ranchers, bureaucrats, and politicians alike for what he thought was right for our natural resources. He was almost a pariah in his own community and state because of his outspoken stands and dedication to the land and all it meant to him. He only half-jokingly alluded to the fact his fellow cattle ranchers had "bull-cotted" him. They would not buy his top-quality bulls even though other ranchers from other states would come to buy them." (*Pinedale Roundup*, September 12, 1973, p. 2).

Carroll served for many years on the board for St. John's Hospital in Jackson, the closest hospital to Pinedale. He served on the Pinedale District Bureau of Land Management Advisory Board, the State BLM Board, and the National BLM Advisory Board. He also served as a member of the Bridger National Forest Advisory Council. Carroll was also an originator and initial director of the Wyoming Outdoor Council, an umbrella organization of conservation groups. Furthermore, Carroll's devotion to the land, the wilderness, and the wild creatures brought him to some national eminence as a director of the National Wildlife Federation. He was one of ten national winners of the American Motors Conservation Award in 1971. There were only twenty of these awards given in the entire nation; ten to professionals and ten to





Noble Family

nonprofessionals; the latter group included Carroll. One of Carroll's sayings was, "we don't own the land; we have a lifetime lease on it."

Carroll and Christina had four children, three sons and one daughter. Their first child, named Carroll Lester but always called "Mike," was born November 2, 1926. This was Election Day and Wyoming citizens voted to not return the nation's first woman governor, Nellie Tayloe Ross, to office after she completed her husband's term upon his death. As a kid, Mike spent his summers at the Noble cow camp in Hoback Basin with Swede Gurney. His school days, however, were back in Cora for grade school, then onto Pinedale for high school. For ninth grade, Mike usually commuted every day, often getting a ride into town with Dick Thompson, who took a group in from Cora. Some days, though, Mike would ride the family colts to school, breaking them to ride. Carroll owned some property in Pinedale, where the Half Moon Lodge now stands, which had two cabins, a garage, and a hitching rack. The colts would spend the day tied

to the hitching rack. When the snow became too deep, Mike would move into one of the cabins, staying the first year with Carroll Rahm, a senior. There also were times when Mike drove Carroll's old car, a 1930 Chevrolet, to town on Monday then home on Friday, again staying the week at the town cabin. (The car would get to stay in the garage.) At this time, the State Highway Department plowed the road to the Cora Store, and many people left their cars there, walking the remainder of the distance home, as Mike remembers. During Mike's tenth and eleventh grades, Mike had Buzz Farwell from the Hoback Basin stay with him at the Pinedale cabin. Mike recalls that Buzz would often bring some meat for them, usually elk, which Mike would cook. Mike also remembers serving them his home cooked beans. Mike also fixed them hot cakes for breakfast every morning before school. His diet was rounded out at Sunny's Pinedale Drug Store with a milkshake, which he earned for mopping the floors. Mike's senior year, though, was not spent in town, for he drove back and forth every day. By now, World War II was on

with gasoline rationing. Mike received four gallons of gas a week, and he could drive back and forth to town five times on this ration. Gas was twenty-five cents a gallon, costing Mike a dollar every Monday morning for his ration fill up.

Mike married Ruth Phillips July 1952 at the groom's parents' home in Cora. Ruth had come to Wyoming to visit her cousin, Tommy Kitchen, at the CL Bar Ranch in Cora. She later attended school in Laramie and taught school on Willow Creek. Mike and Ruth continued the family ranching tradition with Angus cattle branded with James' Quarter Circle F brand. They purchased the Wells Place and the Gilly Place on the Upper Green from Dick Luman. Mike and Ruth also purchased the Rahm ranch north of Carroll and Tina's ranch in Cora with Mike's brother, James, and Margaret Noble. Mike and Ruth named their place the Cora Valley Angus Ranch.

Carroll and Tina's second child is Lillian Ida, always known as "Pat." She married Ben Pearson in January 1951. Ben and Pat purchased the Montrose Place from Buck Baker in Daniel in 1957 and have raised their four daughters and Angus cattle there. Pat and Ben have used James' second brand, the Quarter Circle F Bar.

Carroll and Tina's second son is James T. Noble, who married Margaret in 1956. He uses the Bootjack brand, also the name of his ranch, which is an old Sutton family brand. They purchased the Rahm ranch north of Carroll and Tina's ranch in Cora with Mike and Ruth.

The last child born to Carroll and Tina is Richard R., who married Louise in 1958. They ran their black cattle at the original James and Pauline Noble homestead on the New Fork in Cora, using the brand N slash D, which was designed by Carroll for Dick as a young boy.

The Noble ranches were recognizable for decades for the log hay cribs used until a few years ago. Some of these cribs were built by James M. Noble. Johnny Rahm first built the beaver slide to stack hay, and James thought Johnny had gone crazy when he first saw the contraption. The next year, James M. Noble had a beaver slide at his ranch.

Fifth generation Nobles are now living and working the ranching tradition in Cora and Daniel. They continue to run Angus cattle using many of the older family brands as they continue to be passed down the generations. Passed down the generations are also the ranching lifestyle and values. The current owners and operators of the Cora Valley Angus Ranch are Carroll David and Ann Chambers Noble using the Quarter Circle F and LV brands. Their four daughters, Meredith, Andrea, Laura, and Zoe, all assist with the ranching operation.

This history was previously published in "Seeds-Ke-Dee Revisited; Land of Blue Granite and Silver Sage; Historical Folklore of Wyoming's Green River Valley." Presented by Sublette County Artists Guild, 1998. It has been updated some for this article.

# The Prager Ranch Inc.

## Converse County

As told by Barb Billingsley

**F**ranz “Frank” Prager was born June 8, 1839 in Sachsen, Germany, the son of Rudolph and Christiana Prager. In 1853, Christiana, daughters Emelia and Carolina, and son Franz, age 14, boarded the Fides ship, thereby fulfilling her promise to Rudolph, that should he be killed while furnishing guns to the rebels during the current revolution, she would take their children and go to America.

After leaving the family farm in Illinois in 1859, Frank dealt with Indians in Nebraska, then lived with them, out of necessity, in Colorado. He farmed and freighted near the Big Thompson, and was a Colorado Ranger. Frank arrived in Cheyenne, Wyoming, stopping at Horse Creek with 150 cattle and 15 horses, in 1872. In 1875, home was Cottonwood Park, on the south side of Laramie Peak, where the Indians called him Mimie-Wah-See, meaning Laughing White Man. From his former dealings with them, he knew the worst thing he could do was to act scared, so he had learned to laugh at them.

On October 9, 1876, he encountered Chief Big Foot and eighty braves, who tested every magical power they thought he possessed. After hiding all afternoon in the thick brush of a nearly-empty beaver dam, he shot, through the approaching darkness, and killed one of two warriors, who had begun walking towards his team of horses. Enraged, they started a fire. As he ran through the flames, an arrow pierced his heel. After gaining a little distance, he stopped to pull the painful arrow, then tied his boots together, and continued running in his socks. Before reaching a new hiding place, a bullet grazed his shoulder. The next morning he gathered a few provisions, and began his walk of twenty miles, to the Mule Shoe Ranch, west of present-day Wheatland. In Cheyenne, he shed his buckskins for white man’s attire.



Frank Prager, the Laughing White Man, studio portrait tintype

After returning to the mountains, Frank moved to the southwest, finally settling in the Antelope Basin on the Laramie Plains, as one of two first settlers in the future Garrett Community. His brand, “10”, now owned by great-grandson Larry Frank Prager, was registered in 1880. The 1881 Albany Country Economic Development reported Frank owning 900 cattle. He married Rosina “Rosa” Schneider, born February 3, 1865 at Alsace-Lorraine, and raised in Louisville, Kentucky, on December 21, 1881, in Cheyenne. He brought her to the Basin, on Christmas Eve, where she wouldn’t see another woman for more than two years. Their first baby, Gertrude, was born and buried in 1882. The Prager’s moved a few miles north, and established the Ten Ranch. They raised six children: Dora, Fred, Frank, Sophia, Julia, and Harry. Frank was one of the first sheepmen in the area, owning 5,000



Frank and Rosa Schneider Prager, Honeymoon 1882  
Louisville, Kentucky



Frank Prager, Studio portait by Walker

head. He died August 22, 1920, and Rosa, April 8, 1945. Why did Frank come to Wyoming? It appears that every time his area became too thickly populated, he moved on...

John McFarlane, father of Ellen Amanda, also helped develop early Wyoming. Born November 12, 1842 in Scotland, his family came to the coal mines of Peach Orchard, Kentucky in 1852, then moved to Wisconsin. John went to Nebraska City, Nebraska in 1866, to drive ox teams to Ft. Laramie, Wyoming. While at the Fort, he made bricks for the adobe buildings, and witnessed the signing of the treaty of the Indian Council, the largest assemblage of redskins ever seen in the West. In 1870, he and future brother-in-law, Dan McUlvan, bought one of Wyoming's first few ranches, the M Bar, near present-day Chugwater, and established one of the first extensive herds of range cattle. They, too experienced trouble with Indians; the most notable, just five days after Frank Prager's battle, was October 14, 1876. Dan, and John's brother Dave, were riding in their pasture, when their horses were killed. Rendering the wounded men afoot, the renegades went to the home corral and stole all of their other horses.

John married Kate Oliver on February 12, 1877, at North Bend, Wisconsin. Born February 5, 1855 in West Virginia, her parents were William and Isabella "Bell" (Irvine) Oliver. In 1885, the M Bar Ranch was sold. In 1886 the McFarlanes moved to the Owen Community, south of Laramie Peak, where they ranched for over thirty years. John's brand, Bar Two Dot, has been passed down to great-grandson, Norman Prager. Ironically, Frank Prager had squatted on this land a few years before McFarlane's arrival; now one of John's six children would become his daughter-in-law.

The Prager Ranch, as we know it today, began November 2, 1903, when Frank Prager, Sr. loaned \$3,534.52, on a three-year-note at eight percent interest, to Arthur Akin, partner of Nelson Edholm, in the Eagle Mountain Cattle Company. Akin's collateral was a mortgage deed for 160 acres, on Bear Creek in Northern Albany County. Edholm and Akin, retired jewelers from Omaha, Nebraska, were also partners in their love of liquor, each

taking his turn at caring for the other, “ailing” one. Frank, an astute business man recognizing opportunity, issued an additional mortgage for \$2,000.00 on their “100 head of neat cattle.”

On the Akin land were a log cabin and barn, probably built by the Newell’s, while they had hunted elk here, prior to 1884, to honor their contract to provide meat for the Union Pacific Railroad’s eating houses in Laramie. They had also tried mining; prospect holes and the steep hill they named “Mining Camp Hill” testify to their efforts. Overlooking the buildings is Graveyard Hill, where they buried two relatives in 1880; little Claude Chapman drowned in the spring, and measles claimed Leonie Coe, age 7, on August 9. Frank Prager, Jr. traded his desert claim, nearer his father’s ranch, to Frank, Sr. for this timber deed, located ten miles north of the Ten Ranch.

German cowboy, Frank R. Prager, born August 8, 1888 at Rock Creek, married Scottish lassie, Ellen Amanda “Mandy” McFarlane, born October 17, 1885 at Cheyenne, on September 21, 1910, at McFarlane’s home at Owen. They began married life in the primitive two-room cabin, formerly occupied by Edholm and Akin, after arriving in their wedding gift, a 1910 Studebaker buggy. One night, all ten of their heifers were killed by wolves. Mandy’s mother came to visit, and spying the wooden apple box, turned dish cupboard, said, “Mandy, you could make a curtain for your cupboard with a flour sack.” Mandy replied, “Yes, I could, if I had a flour sack!”

David Frances was born April 15, 1911. As a small child, he was trained to ask, before going outside, “My cap and bell, Mother”, and Mandy would strap the turkey bell around his neck, so she could hear him if he wandered too far. Rosa Kate was born September 29, 1912.

Edholm’s adjacent homestead was acquired through foreclosure. Other homesteaders left, discouraged by land parcels which had looked good on paper, but in reality, were fruitless rock piles. Over the years, the Prager’s were able to amass enough land, including the homesteads of Frank, Mandy, and David, to form a viable ranch. Along with



Frank & Ellen Prager



Edholm & Akin homestead, Frank & Mandy's 1st home



Rosa & David in the schoolhouse, 1923



David, Ellen, Lawrence & Rosa Prager

these lands came two early water rights, Akin's 1886 and James Carragher's 1889; these, aided by sub-irrigation from bog holes, enabled adequate production of high-quality native grass hay.

In 1918, the family moved up the valley to the abandoned two-story Comly house; built in 1900, it had also been the Eagle Post Office. The great flu epidemic arrived shortly before Lawrence McFarlane Prager was born October 17, on his mother's 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday. It was the only birth attended by Dr. Phifer at the Wheatland hospital that year, where both mother and baby survived. Back at the ranch, both Frank and David were gravely ill. David had to wait a year to resume school, and Dr. Patrick told Frank that if he had been a smoker, he wouldn't have lived.

In 1922, the family moved two miles down the valley, to their new two-story, four-bedroom house, built on Frank's homestead, at the foot of Miner's Hill. Shaded every morning by Eagle Peak, that picturesque mountain, which walls off the east end of the valley, provided the logs for the house, two barns, and other buildings.

Prager School began in 1917. In a few years, David began trapping. The teacher, who lived with the family, said he'd get better grades, if he didn't check his traps before school every morning. So, David left even earlier, checked his lines in the dark, and sneaked back to bed. The teacher was so pleased to see his better work, now that he wasn't "fooling with those traps anymore!"

It was Prager High School for David and Rosa, as well as grade school for Lawrence the last year, 1925-26. For the 1927-29 terms, Mandy and the children lived in Wheatland, where David and Rosa finished high school. Lawrence stayed one more term, with his aunt, for eighth grade. His higher learning was correspondence courses at the ranch. Frank bought his first car in 1928, but raising and working with horses, both saddle and draft, was his passion. Many young horses were broken to drive by harnessing them with a more experienced partner, and hitching them to a mowing machine and dealing with the runaways. Frank broke his own saddle horses but he didn't over train them;



Frank Prager & Lawrence 2.5 years old about 1921 on Slim

he could ride them but no one else could. Frank enjoyed many adventures with his horses; he experienced runaways with his teams, and liked spirited saddle horses. The county road, connecting the Laramie Plains with the Esterbrook community, was only a wagon track. Cars drove into the valley, then couldn't climb the steep hill at either end of the valley. Frank would pull them up with his saddle horse and a rope.

Frank had two brands. Quarter Circle, Open A, Quarter Circle, later owned by his son, Lawrence, is used today by Prager Ranches, Inc. Quarter Circle, Open A, later owned by his son, David, is now owned by granddaughter, Barbara Billingsley, and great-grandson, Gary Cundall.

The original cattle were predominantly Shorthorns. Hereford bulls have been used since 1940; seventy years later, those Shorthorn genes yet hold some dominance, with a few roan cows still in the herd today. Angus bulls have been used, in addition to Hereford's, since 1987.

In the 1930s, the cattle were diagnosed with a disease, and had to be sold. This tragedy turned out to be a dose of "that Prager Luck", when the next year brought the government's killing of everyone's cattle, due to drought and depression.

The family's salvation during those lean years was their sale of furs. The ranch's mountainous terrain, at 7500 feet elevation, provided an ideal environment for trapping, if one was up to its rigors. David Prager said, "We only have three seasons, July, August, and Winter!"

Long, harsh winters full of cold, blowing snow into deep, crusty banks, demanded unique management skills. (The term, "wind chill factor" probably originated here!) In order to survive being "snowed in" for at least four months every winter, and usually longer, enough supplies had to be stockpiled in the fall to last until spring. Ninety miles north of Laramie, eighty miles north of Wheatland, and fifty miles south of Douglas it's a long way to anywhere. Living under these conditions trained one to think things through; one wrong decision could make the difference between life or death!



Lawrence, age 12, 1930



David on Rake 1940s



Old Comly house 1941



David, Frank, Ellen A, Rosa & Lawrence Prager LtoR 1944



Lawrence Prager with mountain lion he caught



Moving Mandy Prager's Homestead from Woodchuck to Lawrence's, became Prager schoolhouse Nov. 1, 1946



In front of Frank's house Mandy, Frank, & David Prager, David Carol Kilpatrick, Lawrence Prager, Alfred Kilpatrick, 1949



Coon & Andy driven by Lawrence 1950

Feeding season was longer here, than on most ranches. The hay supply had to last until spring, because purchasing more was not an option; there was no way to haul it. In order to survive these extreme winter conditions, the cattle needed extra feed, but many days, they didn't get it. When the hay was pitched off the sled, the wind blew some of it away, and part of the cottonseed cake was tromped into the snow. In the 1960s Lawrence achieved his dad's wish for baled hay, which didn't blow away so fast. After the last team of horses, Coon and Andy, died, the snow tractor and the crawler tractor took their turns pulling the sled. Finally, several bales piled on a snowmobile, with more pulled on a sled behind, did the job. 1979-80 was the last winter cattle were kept in the mountains. Since then, the mountain land has been used only for summer range and hay production, with the cattle and hay being moved to Douglas for winter feeding and calving. Only David remained in the mountains year-round.

Calving on the ranch couldn't begin until late April; even then, too many calves were lost to hypothermia in the cold, wet, melting snow. Summer, though short, was a heavenly trade-off for winter's stress. Eighty degrees is a hot day, and rattlesnakes don't like the altitude. The grass is often sprinkled daily by afternoon thunder showers; no better summer range can be found.

The heavy snow pack weighs down on the fences, loosening posts and breaking wires. Then elk run through them, breaking more wire and tangling it in the trees and sagebrush. Digging post holes in rocks requires heavy crowbar and much fortitude; some rock jacks are used. Most pastures have fenced gaps, taking advantage of natural barriers.

The first tractor was purchased in 1956, to mow hay. Thus began the gradual phasing out of horse-drawn hay machinery in the 1960's: mowers and rakes, the go-devil and push-pole stacker for loose hay. Five tractors, all 1950's and 60's models, with mowers, rakes, baler, and bale piling wagon, are still used today for haying there. The meadows, never having been plowed, add the challenge of protruding rocks and uneven ground, with the large shallow indentations, or buffalo wallows. A swather's



windrows are too thick to cure in the heavy dew, and the spongy ground will not support modern, heavy balers.

A major undertaking each September, was trailing the sale cattle fifty miles to Rock River, to ship on the train to Omaha, Nebraska. After almost a week of the discomforts of bed and breakfast on the Plains, trouble usually awaited. Highway 30 was the major cross-country route, the railhead was on the other side of the highway, and the holding pens were on the other side of the tracks. Just as the hesitant cattle were about to cross, a car would honk, a train would whistle, or a motorist would take a picture, or “help” by hollering. This might be repeated several times, before the cattle were penned. The 1950 trail was the last ranch work Frank did; the next week he was diagnosed with cancer of the liver. He passed away three months later at home, on December 29, and David and Lawrence became co-owners of the ranch.

By the late 1950s, the cattle were only driven eight miles, to the neighbor’s new corral, to load on trucks. After the Douglas sale barn was built in the 1960s, the brothers experimented with marketing. David shipped his cattle to Omaha; Lawrence sent his to Douglas. David’s steers brought a few more cents per pound; the heifers were exactly the same price. The freight bills and added shrink on David’s cattle were no longer justified, so ended the trip to Omaha. In the 1970s, David designed a shipping corral on the ranch. Weekly auctions, and pickup trucks pulling stock trailers, now made it possible to market small parcels as needed, instead of waiting for the annual fall trip. Two-year old steers, updated earlier from three-year olds, were now old-fashioned, so yearlings were sold. Since the 1990s, calves have been the market beef.

Long winter evenings offered time for other chores or hobbies, such as needlework for the women, and items crafted from home-tanned deer leather for the men. Teaching himself to play the banjo kept Lawrence busy. In those days it was volunteer; anyone who arrived at a dance with a musical instrument was “in the band”. His first “job” was playing a washboard. At a dance at Esterbrook in 1939, he met Sibyl June Bruner, born May 9, 1924



The LaBonte Quartette, Ferris Bruner, Sibyl Bruner, Lawrence Prager, Arthur Bruner

to Ferris Bruce and Mary Kathryn (Dunn) Bruner. He played drums in her family’s band, the LaBonte Quartette. He bought Sibyl an accordion, and then a diamond ring; their wedding was September 28, 1941, at the Bruner home on Mill Creek. Their gift from her parents was ten yearling ewes.

The newlyweds moved into and began renovating the dilapidated old Comly House. When Lawrence was drafted into the Navy in 1944, they spent two years in California, where Sibyl found secretarial work at a supply depot. Lawrence received training in sonar radio operation. His highest aptitude was problem solving, which served him well all of his life. He had an uncanny knack of always being prepared, and a supreme talent for fixing things. Upon their return in 1946, Mandy’s one-room homestead cabin was moved two miles, and down one of those steep hills, to the Comly yard. Lawrence and Sibyl lived in it four years, while the house’s interior was rebuilt, as ranch duties allowed.

Barbara Ellen was born September 18, 1948, just in time for the Blizzard of ’49. The new parents hung a tarp over the cabin’s thin door, trying to capture what little heat the shepherd’s stove gave. Water carried from the spring was frozen in the bucket each morning; if the baby’s mitten came off during the night, her hand would turn blue. The men confronted the six weeks of ground blizzards, to feed the cattle each day. The cattle stayed in “Cow Heaven”, named for its natural shelter from every side. After riding the horse-drawn sled and pitching the hay on and off, the men’s beards would be



Barb & Rita on Shetland, Tiny, & Larry



Branding



Gary Cundall & Britches oversee cattle drive to Douglas

frozen over; this prevented them from freezing their faces too badly. David's daily diary entry was, "L of a Blizzard!"

In February 1950, the family moved back into the house, and were joined July 19 by Rita Mary. Larry Frank was born August 26, 1952, and Norman Lisle on December 17, 1955.

Rosa married Alfred Kilpatrick July 14, 1945, at Paris, Texas, where he was in the Army. They ranched at Burwell, Nebraska, and he was a minister, as well as a ditch rider. They were parents to Carol Ann on June 16, 1946, David Earl on May 11, 1948, Roy Alan on November 12, 1951, and Mary Ellen on March 10, 1953. Alfred and Rosa both passed away at Ord, Nebraska, he on May 11, 2000, and she on March 4, 2003. Their son, David, preceded them on February 28, 1966.

In 1953, the men found a deer which had been killed, and recognized the likely culprit. They trapped the large mountain lion, the first seen in the community in over sixty years. It rated fifth in the Boone & Crockett Club. David's mule deer and Lawrence's elk, both killed on the ranch, won Boone & Crockett medals. A hunters' outfitting camp was run 1953-78, with David and Lawrence as guides, and Sibyl cooking for as many as 35 people at a meal. Electricity's arrival in 1954 made life much easier.

David's passion was wildlife; no wonder he was so in tune with this ranch, and its landmarks; in addition to Bear Creek and Eagle Peak, there's Beaver Mountain, Creek, and Pasture, Jack Rabbit Draw, Grouse Creek, Jay Bird Peak, Jack Squirrel, Chicken Hawk, and Woodchuck Mountain and Meadow.

Lawrence continued his love of music, when he was hired to play at Hubbard's Cupboard, in a duo with Cliff Hubbard from 1955-76. Sibyl, Larry, Norm, and Barb also played there, from time to time. This dance hall, with its warm glow of happy days gone by for these generations of the family, sits on Cottonwood Creek, on the very ground where, some eighty years before, the Laughing White Man camped, and those Indians danced.

Later, the Prager Band-Lawrence, Sibyl, Barb, Vern, and Rita-played at Esterbrook and other community events. These days, Barb and Vern play keyboards and fiddle with Spur of the Moment; Norm plays bass for both Avalanche, and Saggy Bottom Boys, bands. Sibyl, age 86, leads the Douglas Senior Band with her piano music.

The second generation of Prager School opened in that homestead cabin in 1954. When the snow was too deep for the teacher's Jeep, Lawrence took his young children in the snow tractor on Monday mornings, to the teacher's home, where they stayed until Friday afternoon, when he repeated the six-mile trip, to bring them home for the weekend. Beginning in 1962, Barbara, joined two years later by Rita, stayed with friends in Douglas to attend high school, while the rest of the family remained at the ranch. This ended in 1966, when Lawrence and Sibyl purchased a small acreage near Douglas. Thus began eight winters with Lawrence and David in the mountains, and Sibyl overseeing the youngest three children's educations, and their 4-H and FFA sheep and cattle, at Douglas. Larry and Norman sheared sheep to earn college money.

Mandy passed away April 1, 1972 after living in the nursing home for two years, suffering complications from a stroke. Once asked what her greatest accomplishment was, she answered, "Making something out of nothing!" The beautiful doilies she crocheted, not with fine crochet thread but using the strings saved when ripping open feed and flour sacks, are a prime example. Lawrence also sheared sheep in his younger days. Small flocks of sheep were raised three different times; the registered Corriedales, begun in 1959 as 4-H and FFA projects, won national honors. Lawrence and Sibyl were the first parents in Wyoming to have more than one child earn FFA's American Farmer Degree, with Larry in 1973, and Norman in 1976.

Barbara married Johnny Dean Cundall September 10, 1967 at Douglas; their son, Gary Dean, was born June 11, 1974. Barbara and LaVern Gene Billingsly married November 1, 1986, at Glendo. They worked on the ranch, beginning in 1987.



Comly dairy barn, 1954



Prager cows waiting in the snow, ca. 1960s



Frank Prager Farmstead, 1988





The Ranch



Lawrence & Sibyl 65th Anniversary party Sept. 28, 2006

Rita worked at the Douglas GM dealership, 1971-2009, serving through a succession of four owners; she currently works at the Wyoming Pioneer Museum and Ft. Fetterman.

Larry married Karen Kay Gustafson September 14, 1974 at Douglas. They lived and worked on the ranch 1975-78. He continued to shear sheep to supplement their meager income, due to the lower-than-usual cattle prices during those years. Having lived in Belle Fourche, South Dakota since 1979, he is manager of Center of the Nation Wool, and Karen works in the pharmacy at Pamida. Their children are Ryan Michael, born October 22, 1976, Jeffrey Lawrence, born May 28, 1979, and Kristin Susan, born January 23, 1984.

Norman married Tina Marie Sanders on July 21, 1979 at Gillette, where he worked in the oil fields.

Kevin Lisle was born June 9, 1985, and Amanda Marie on April 3, 1987. Norman married Edwina Joyce “Eddi” Berland on December 7, 1991. He has worked on the ranch since 1989.

The ranch was incorporated in 1974, with ownership passed to Lawrence and Sibyl’s four children, since 1998. A third unit was purchased at Douglas in 1992, for winter quarters, added hay production, and a home for Norm and Eddi. The cattle are trailed there in October, and trucked to the mountains in June.

David passed away at the ranch, while out with his snowmobile, to feed some horses and check his traps, on March 29, 1988. Lawrence passed away in his garage at Douglas, as he was leaving to play music on March 31, 2010.

Financial management strategies have always been, “Make it, fix it, or do without; purchase only what’s necessary, with cash.” The only two major indebtednesses have been the two land purchases at Douglas. In 1984, most of the cows survived a killer spring storm, only to contract anaplasmosis in the summer. Carcasses were everywhere; a loan that year would have “closed the shop”.

A prager in Germany is a unit of measure. It is fitting, then, that we mark our progress. Those original 160 acres, with free use of government land, have expanded to 6,800 acres, plus government leases. Frank rode a horse, David



Barb Billingsley & Rita Prager 2009 State Fair Parade



Vern Billingsley in 2009 State Fair Parade



Sen. John Barrasso, Rep. Cynthia Lummis, Prager Family and Sen. Mike Enzi

drove a Jeep; now Norm uses a 4-wheeler. That twice-weekly mail (weather permitting), at the box, five miles from the house, and the scratchy radio's "Party Line", have been replaced with E-mails and cell phones. The McFarlane motto, "This I will defend", also applies to the Indian tepee rings, and remains of two other acquired homestead cabins and a barn, still found on our land. Our heritage—German stubbornness and Scotch thrift, and "that Prager Luck"—has served four generations of this family through one hundred six years of living and working here. We all identify with the sentiments penned by Norm, "No matter where we go, or how far we roam, we'll always call that mountain valley, Home!"

# The L W Bar Ranch

## Laramie County

As told by Marilyn & Darrel Repshire

In 1908, Walter Fuller Whitehead from Bucyrus, Kansas, came to Pine Bluffs, Wyoming on account of Walter's and daughter Mary's, health. He wanted to purchase some land north of Tracy switch, half way between Pine Bluffs and Egbert. He returned to Kansas to get the family and in April 1909 the family traveled on an immigrant train from Kansas that hauled livestock, people and belongings. They brought along six horses, four cows, one bull, and some Kansas hay. Because sheep had to be dipped, they brought none. They bought their tickets only to Sneed, Nebraska, six miles east of Pine Bluffs. This was done because the fare was only 2 cents a mile per person in Nebraska and it went up to three cents a mile in Wyoming. The first summer they lived in a tent in Pine Bluffs. He wanted to live near Hillsdale, so he looked at some land north of Hillsdale, which Walter decided to purchase. He got to view the land in a motorized car! The developer had purchased the property from the Union Pacific Railroad who received title from the federal government as payment to build the railroad. They paid \$20 an acre. This land was part of that involved in the feud of the Thomas hay meadow. Fortunately, no shooting, just quarreling remained. They now began their lives out west on the Wyoming prairie.

Walter was born in 1872 in Bucyrus, Kansas and died in 1943. He married his wife in 1893, Martha Ann (Mattie) Lower, who was born in 1872 in Freeman, Missouri, and died in 1944. Together they raised their family of three girls and six boys. They often had extra nieces, nephews, or traveling neighbors who spent various amounts of time with them at the farm/ranch. Walter and Mattie grew the farm/ranch with the help of their nine children. One son, Lester (1905-1991), was the one who remained on the ranch to run it right until his death. He married Marie Wheeler Repshire from Wakeeney, KS, in 1948. She was widowed with three young boys (George, Cecil & Darrel). Together Lester and



Spring 1942, Walter going to transplant a yucca; Mattie in her flour sacks dress and apron

Marie had a daughter, Nelda Whitehead Atwood. Darrel Repshire, Lester's stepson, remained interested in the ranch in later years. He is the manager and owner along with his wife, Marilyn.

Soon after arriving in 1910, the Whiteheads built their first home that was 14 X 40 feet with a dirt floor. The fuel used to heat the home was usually bought in Hillsdale at the local coal yard. In lean times they used fence posts and cow chips.

In 1918 a lovely two story block house was built. July 4, 1928, that house was heavily fire damaged and was restored, very slowly, over the next 20 years. They never enjoyed the luxury of electricity or indoor plumbing. Mattie felt she HAD advanced

to modern times when she had coal or wood to burn in the stoves instead of cow chips or corn cobs! Darrel & Marilyn did build a home on the place in 1975 and still live there.

Walter went into the real estate business, ranched, and also served on the school board for several years. Later, when Lester was raising his family, he also drove a school bus for the Hillsdale area students to make ends meet. Over the years he had beef and dairy cattle, sheep, chickens, and pigs. He also planted corn, millet, wheat, and rye. He supplied a Cheyenne dairy with cream. When Darrel started “working” at the ranch with Lester, he also ended up driving a school bus. Darrel’s wife, Marilyn, did teach in the district for 25 years, which helped make it possible to keep on ranching. Their sons, Ed and Dave, now live elsewhere with their families.

There is one, undocumented story about the Whitehead place which intrigued many people over the years. Back in 1882, a stagecoach was making a run from Deadwood to Cheyenne, carrying some \$13,000 worth of gold bars. Needless to say, the stage was rumored to have been robbed, men killed and the gold buried at a grave north of the Whitehead house. Thirteen men were reported to have died over the load of gold. This was the last run made which would insure delivery of the gold. The coach was afterwards re-routed through Ft. Laramie. At the time of the robbery, a 12-year-old boy was in the area and was to have ridden one of the dead man’s horses. This same boy returned to speak with Lester 33 years later, only to be among the many who dug for the cache and found nothing. Fast talking moneymakers even made maps of the location and sold them to adventurous treasure hunters.

In 1914, Walter registered his first brand (W reverse F) with the state. His son, Lester, registered his own brand in 1960, that being LW bar. Both brands are still registered to the ranch. The Whitehead place was incorporated in 1972 and then included Darrel & Marilyn Repshire. Three generations (2 Whiteheads and 1 Repshire) have lived, loved and laughed on the 100 year-old place on Lodgepole Creek.



Stone house at Hillsdale, 1920s



Lester & Marie Whitehead

Over the years, several crops, many varieties of animals and even a dairy, saw activity on this ranch/farm, (we call that a franch). Currently, cattle, deer, coyotes, rabbits, skunks, porcupines and lots of birds call this place home, home on the range. We still get wonderful harvests of asparagus (planted by Walter in the early 1920s) during May along the creek bed. A few of the apple trees from his old orchard still remain, yielding some fruit for the birds and other critters.



Repshire Ranch 2008



Marilyn & Darrel Repshire



Sen. John Barrasso, Rep. Cynthia Lummis, Repshire Family and Sen. Mike Enzi

Walter started many groves of trees and we have increased those plantings with five more extensive windbreaks in the last 35 years. In fact we were presented an award of merit for outstanding accomplishment in resource conservation in 1994. We enjoy our life at “Repshire’s Retreat”, our place of solitude and beauty.



# The Russell Ranch

## Hot Springs County



Sen. John Barrasso, Bobbi Barrasso, Russell & Fey & Tom Anderson Family, Rep. Cynthia Lummis and Sen. Mike Enzi

# The Smith Ranch

## Crook County



Sen. John Barrasso, Nels Smith Family, Rep. Cynthia Lummis and Sen. Mike Enzi

As told by Nels Smith

**T**he original Wyoming property was purchased August 15, 1907. When my Danish immigrant great-grandfather learned that adjoining or nearby land could be acquired simply by filing on and living on it, he got every adult relative to file on those parcels. In one case they beat a competing filing to the land office by less than an hour. The ranch was operated by Smith Brothers (Nels H. and his brother Louis). They raised cattle, draft horses, and small grains and hay.

When the partnership was split in 1912, both men continued production, especially of the fine Percheron draft horses that were in demand for both agriculture and replacement artillery horses during World War I.

The ranch survived the depression and even prospered to some extent through division, hard work, frugal management, and having good land in a location not totally devastated by drought.

When Nels H. Smith was elected Governor in 1938, his sons Peter and Christy, assumed management and operation of the ranch. With machinery becoming available and the agricultural labor force shrinking, the hay and grain operations were mechanized with such dramatic changes as the purchase of a 12 foot self-propelled combine and a Drube hay stacker, which Peter helped build at the Drube machine shop in Wheatland. Peter's mechanical skills and field practicality attracted the attention of the president of the International Harvester Company, who asked Peter to direct the field testing of the prototype for the world's

first mechanical cotton picker. My father turned down the request since it was impossible for him to leave the ranch operations but you can imagine my surprise and delight when I saw the prototype cotton picker in the Smithsonian. The cattle operations were also expanded substantially with the purchase of a “winter ranch” west of Newcastle.

When Peter and Christy split their partnership in 1954, my branch of the family took the Crook County portion which I began operating upon graduation from the University of Wyoming in 1961. In 1967 I was able to acquire the original Wyoming property from my great-uncle Louis’ branch of the family.

The Smith Ranch seems literally to be the crossroads of history for the northeastern Wyoming Black Hills. Lt. G. K. Warren on his Black Hills reconnaissance in 1857 went down, then back, Inyan Kara Creek where it flows through the ranch. General George Custer crossed what became Smith family land in four places. His July 22nd, 23rd, and 25th, 1874 campsites were partially on that land.

The Dodge Expedition in 1875 camped on Inyan Kara Creek while making a very thorough inspection of the entire Black Hills. The first country church in Wyoming was built on the ranch and is now a residence in Sundance.

The homestead of Nels H. Smith, later governor of Wyoming, is less than one mile west of the church site. The last fort built in Wyoming, erected by the Inyan Kara community after Sheriff Billy Miller was killed in a skirmish with Indians in 1906, was in what is now the corral at Smith Ranch headquarters.

The Inyan Kara Post Office was on the ranch. As of 1885, Inyan Kara was the only community identified on maps between Sundance and Hat Creek north of near Lusk.

# The Tadewald Ranch

## Goshen County



Tadewald house made from 3 homestead shacks, 1926



Bill Tadewald & Walt Schnorenberg, ca. 1925



Mary Tadewald & Walt Schnorenberg. Mary is holding a Browning humpback, 12 gauge automatic shotgun.

As told by Daniel Tadewald

The original homestead totaled 800 acres: William Tadewald had 320 acres; Mary Shurk (Tadewald) had 320 acres; and Herman Tadewald, 160 acres (2-80s). After proving up, William and Mary got married and later bought out Herman's. Two-80s were farmed every year – potatoes being the major crop for year but also some corn, grains, and hay. With a small herd of cows plus free running turkeys, and a large pen of hogs, the family survived and prospered.

Bill and Mary Tadewald raised three children, Bernard, Herbert, and AnnaMae. After World War II, Bernard and his wife came to the ranch to try running it in conjunction with Bill and Mary. They later moved to Cheyenne and then Casper, working in the plumbing trade. In 1953, Herb and Rosemary returned to the ranch with their three children, Shirlee, Carmen, and Danny after working in the oil patch industry and working on both the Wagoner Hereford Ranch in Jay Em and the Podolak Polled Hereford Ranch in Lusk.

Herb and Rosemary purchased the ranch at that time from Bill and Mary who moved to Mitchell, Nebraska, and later Torrington, Wyoming. Herb expanded the original acres in 1960. In 1974 Herb installed a center pivot irrigation project to diversify and expand the ranch's production. That spring son Danny returned to the ranch after graduation from the University of Wyoming and went into production partnership with Herb and Rosemary.

In 1977 Danny married Diane and they have lived and worked the ranch ever since, adding their own pastureland and another center pivot irrigation farm by private purchases. In 1980 they built a log home and reside in it, raising their two children, Amanda and Casey.

At present, the ranch raises and sells irrigated alfalfa hay and operate a 130 head cow/calf operation with a small herd of registered Texas Longhorn cows.



Herman Tadewald family in front of Tadewald cigar factory ca 1918



Tadewald Ranch, 1992



Tadewald Ranch, from 1955 newspaper article



Tadewald Ranch sign



Tadewald Ranch, 1959

The main house which Herb and Rosemary reside in was originally constructed by moving three of the original homestead shacks together. The dining room was William Tadewald's shack; the bedroom was Mary (Shurk) Tadewald's; and the living room was Herman Tadewald's. Before the banks crashed, Bill had invested in the materials to build the second story addition and square out the three shacks in

the configuration the house now stands, with a full basement under it all.

Before Herman's homestead shack was incorporated into the ranch house, it was moved close to Bill's homestead site and it was used as a cigar factory. Large tins of loose leaf tobacco were purchased and Bill and Herman hand-rolled cigars and marketed them in town. Between the hand rolled cigars and the moonshine and home brew beer, this is how they made it through and survived the Great Depression.



Sen. John Barrasso, Rep. Cynthia Lummis, Tadewald Family and Sen. Mike Enzi

# The Green River Livestock Company

## Sweetwater County

As told by Laura Taliaferro Pearson

The first members of our family to reside in Wyoming were Thomas Seddon Taliaferro, Jr., and his wife, Lucy Ramsay. Thomas, Jr., in 1883, after graduation from high school, came to Wyoming to work in the freight depot for the Union Pacific Railroad in Green River, Wyoming. His wife, Lucy, came to Wyoming in 1896.

Thomas, Jr. (July 1, 1864 – August 17, 1940) was from “Lowland Cottage” Gloucester County, Virginia, and Lucy (November 26, 1871 – October 13, 1953) was from Alexandria, Virginia. He came to Wyoming due to the deep recession and the lack of jobs in the East.

Prior to moving to Wyoming, Thomas, Jr. attended Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia where he worked for a merchant named William Ramsay and met his future wife, William’s daughter, Lucy.

Thomas, Jr. left the Union Pacific in 1898 when he became an attorney and served as the Mayor of Green River. In 1900, he and his family (eventually consisting of nine children), moved to Rock Springs where he set up a law practice. Other activities, outside of the law practice, included President of First National Bank of Green River, interest in State Bank of Green River, Presidency of the Green River Mercantile Company, City Attorney for both Rock Springs and Green River, and author of the Green River Ordinance which he defended successfully before the United States Supreme Court. Lucy became active in politics, traveling on behalf of the Women’s Suffrage Movement and the Democratic Party.

Thomas, Jr. was always interested in agriculture and was one of the founders of the Rock Springs Grazing Association in 1908. He helped start Green River Livestock Company in 1909, and was involved with many other agricultural ventures including Big Island Cattle Company, the Eden



T.S. Taliaferro Jr



Lucy Ramsay Taliaferro



T.S. Taliaferro III



Irene Smith Taliaferro

Valley Project of 1911, and Big Sandy Livestock Company (which we still own).



Mrs. and Mr. Edward Taliaferro

In 1919, Thomas, Jr. recruited his second son, Thomas Seddon III, who left medical school to come back and operate and manage the agricultural interest for the family. Thomas III ran the business for many years, and served many years as a Commissioner on the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission. In 1953, he was able to convince his brother, Edward Ludwell Taliaferro, to resign from his position in the banking business and start into the sheep business. Edward served as Mayor of Green River and continued as a Green River Councilman for many years. He was also appointed, served, and chaired the Wyoming Highway Commission. Ed was married to Elva Angus, and the two had three children (William Ramsay “Bill”, Thomas Seddon IV, and Susan). Thomas Seddon III was married twice, first to Irene Smith and then to Myra Buck Antilla. He never had children, so he left his interest in the sheep business to Ed’s sons, Bill and Tom.

Bill and Tom worked the ranch as teenagers and eventually began running the business as adults. Tom took over the farming endeavors in Farson, while Bill managed the ranching end of the business. Bill married Mary Bylund and had four children (Edward, Sarah, Laura, and Debra), while Tom married Linda Masters and had two adopted children (Breck and Brooke) and two biological children (Thomas Seddon V and Christina).

Tom has since retired, while Bill is still running the operation with the help of all his children, their spouses, grandchildren, and current wife, Jan. His son, Edward, now manages the farming end on a newly developed piece of ground north of Green River named “Mann’s Flat.” Ed married Tara Miller, and they have two children (Margretha “Maggie” and Ramsay). The farm in Farson is currently up for sale. His daughter, Sarah, married D.J. Tedesco, and they currently live in Castle Rock, Colorado. They have three children (Jared, Collin, and Nicole) and although they live elsewhere, they have a vested interest in the survival of this operation. His daughter, Laura, manages the ranching end with husband James Pearson. She has two children from a previous marriage to Dallas Valdez (William and Jordan), and one child with James (Corbin). They live on the Slate Creek Ranch (“Graham Ranch” originally the Guy Pyle Homestead). Up until the purchase of this ranch in 1947 by Thomas III, Green River Livestock was primarily a trailing operation, and up until the reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone, during the Clinton Administration, it remained, for the most part, a migratory sheep operation. Since that time, we have sold our summer and early fall allotments, reduced our numbers, and are running the sheep closer to home on private land, on BLM land, and on Rock Springs Grazing Association land. We could no longer compete with the wolves.

Bill’s daughter, Debra, married Oscar Barton. They have three children (Marysa, Kelsee, and Branson), and live at “Mann’s Flat” about a mile from Ed, where they have started a pheasant farm and sporting clays course. Bill oversees everything, and as if this wasn’t enough, has managed to immerse himself in many other activities throughout his life. He is Past President of the Wyoming Woolgrowers





Association, Past Chairman of the Wyoming State Grazing Board's Central Committee, Board Member of State Bank of Green River and Rock Springs, Board Member of Rock Springs Grazing Association, Chair of Sweetwater County Predatory Animal Board, Board Member of Sweetwater County Weed and Pest Board, two terms with the Wyoming Livestock Board, Past Member of the Wyoming Bicentennial Commission 1973-1976, and has previously been on the Western Wyoming College Board, the Sweetwater- Rock Springs Airport Board, the Sweetwater County Mental Health Board, and the Rock Springs Planning and Zoning Board. He and Jan spend the winter months in Rock Springs and summer months at Slate Creek.

There are many different aspects of our ranching operation that have made it unique. We are the type of operation that has always tried to think of or try things that may be more efficient or convenient. 1) The first to introduce center pivots into the Eden Valley. Imagine how much water was wasted, flood irrigating. 2) Some say we "ruined



Jan and Bill Taliaferro



T.S. Taliaferro IV and Linda Masters



Bill Taliaferro and his 4 children



Thanksgiving 2008

the best set of Columbias along the Union Pacific, by crossbreeding with the Finnish Landrace breed of sheep.” People thought we were crazy, and probably still do, but we sacrificed some quality of wool, in order to run fewer numbers and produce more lambs. Now we are getting about an 80% conception rate on ewe lambs, meaning we don’t have to hold them over a year to get a lamb. They have their first lamb when they, themselves, are just turning one year old. 3) The first to attach solar panels to our sheep camps (powering radios and cell phones), opening a better line of communication not only between ourselves and the men, but between the men and their families. 4) The first to haul water to the sheep using semis and mobile troughs. This has become a valuable asset, having the ability to use range that has increasingly become more difficult to utilize, due to the drought. 5) The first to purchase ultrasound equipment to pregnancy test our own sheep. The guessing game is over! The lambs are either there or they’re not. This allows us to sell all the dries in the spring, rather than running them all summer.

Green River Livestock was founded by Thomas Seddon Taliaferro, Jr. on February 8, 1909. It was later operated by Thomas Seddon Taliaferro III, and his brother, Edward Ludwell Taliaferro. Then it was operated by William Ramsay Taliaferro “Bill”, and Thomas Seddon Taliaferro IV (sons of Edward).



Sen. John Barrasso, Taliaferro Family, Rep. Cynthia Lummis and Sen. Mike Enzi

Operations now are being handled primarily by Bill, Edward Bylund Taliaferro (Bill's son), and Laura Taliaferro Pearson (Bill's daughter), but the survival of this company has truly been a family effort. All of Bill's children, their spouses, and hopefully his grandchildren (5<sup>th</sup> generation participants) have and will have the desire to keep this company running, for future generations, with the amount of dignity and pride that the many generations preceding us have shown, no matter what the cost. This ranch is a true symbol of the West. It has a story to tell, a story of 100 years that with any luck will continue to weather the storms coming its way, preserving this way of life for generations to come.









**Wyoming State Parks & Cultural Resources**  
**Historic Preservation Office**

Barrett Building, 3rd Floor

2301 Central Avenue

Cheyenne, WY 82002

Phone: (307) 777-7697

Fax: (307) 777-6421



Cover photos courtesy Wyoming State Archives, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources