

THE 57TH OLD TIME RANCH TOUR

STOPS ON THE 57TH OLD TIME RANCH TOUR
SATURDAY, JULY 19, 2008

Begin Tour at

1. Town of Rock River

Meet at Town Hall
8:15 A.M

2. Rock Creek Station

Host: Leola Hall
Speaker: Leola Hall

3. Atkinson Ranch

Host: Jim & Cathy Atkinson
Speaker: Jim & Cathy Atkinson

4. Bell/Otte Ranch

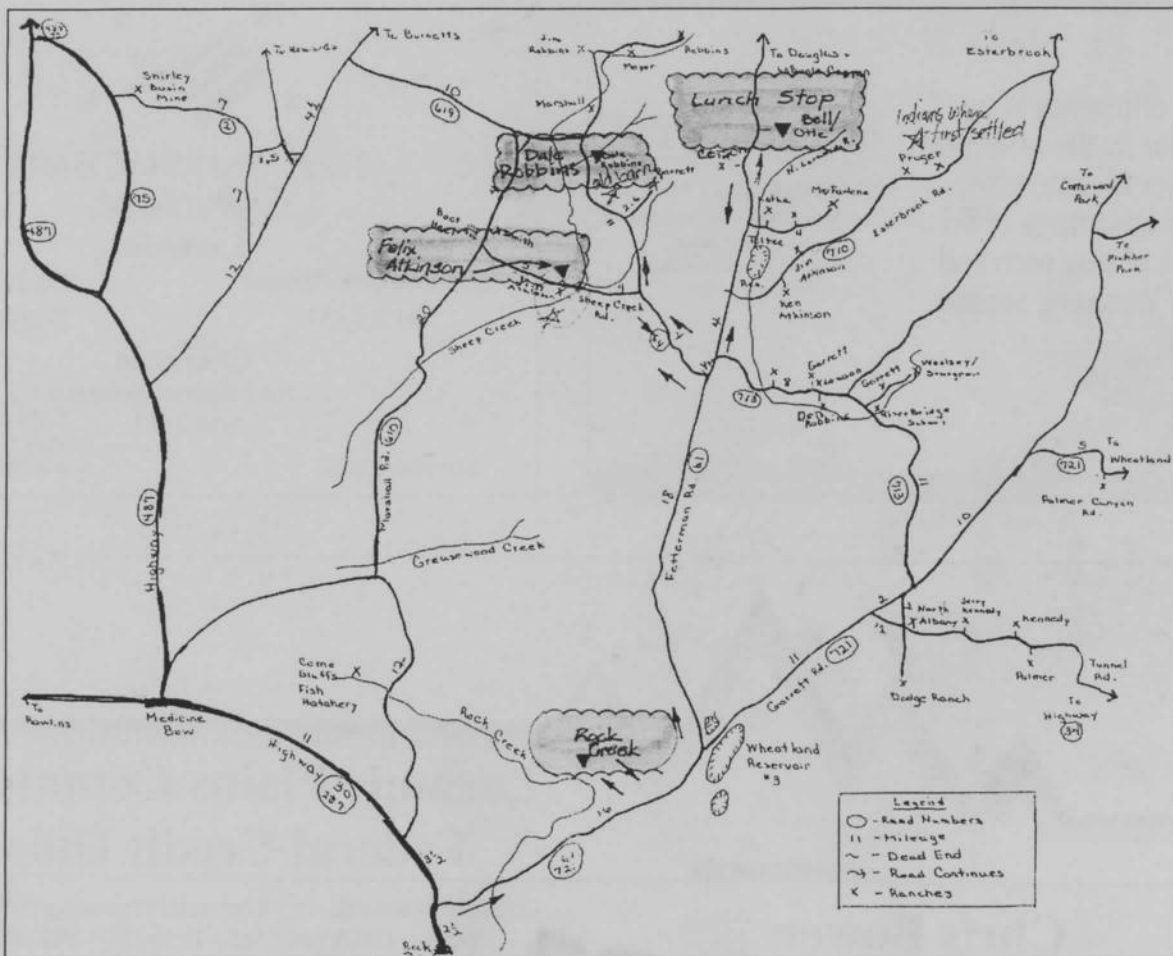
Host: Linda Otte
Speaker: Linda Otte
Donny Robbins

LUNCH

5. Robbins Ranch

Hosts: Dale & Sandra Robbins
Speaker: Dale & Sandra Robbins

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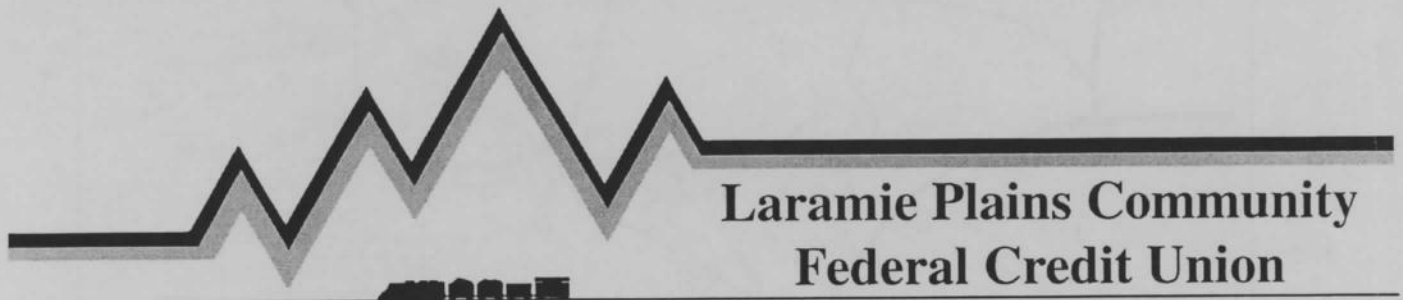
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THE FIFTY-SEVENTH OLD TIME RANCH TOUR

Saturday, July 19, 2008

The Old Time Ranch Tours were conceived and promoted by Dr. Robert Burns. The series has continued annually since 1951 except 1982 and 2001. Portions of the historical accounts printed here are taken without attribution and updated from the writings of anonymous authors of previous Old Time Ranch Tour booklets.

The 2008 Ranch Tour Chairman: Bob Nelson

Committee Members: Wes Bressler, John Rowland, Maurice Wear, Julie Underwood

George Gladney is the master of ceremonies.

The map of the tour is on the front cover of this booklet. The projected tour log follows the narrative.

Restrooms are available for each stop at the trailer carrying the port-a-pots.

Safety is a primary concern. Tour marshals will coordinate the caravan. Stay to the right at crests of hills. Please follow the directions of the traffic controllers. Be especially mindful of the fire danger. If you smoke outside your vehicle, please take your cigarette butts with you.

Please keep children and pets with you at all times. Neither the committee, individually or collectively, nor the sponsoring organizations accept any responsibility for accidents.

Keep a safe distance between cars. We will travel at 20 to 35 miles per hour on gravel roads. **THE MARSHALL AND FT FETTERMAN ROADS ARE VERY DECEPTIVE – SHARP CURVES OFTEN HAVE NO WARNING SIGNS.** Drive carefully. Respect the other fellow. Enjoy the scenery and have a good trip. **PARKING:** Your cooperation is appreciated at parking sites. Parking is accomplished so that cars need not use reverse gear for entering or leaving a site. If you have difficulty walking, please inform the first traffic director at each site so a close parking place may be found. Please allow the numbered cars to leave a site first so tour personnel may direct traffic.

Courtesy: We are guests of the ranches at which we stop. Please do not remove any items, including artifacts found on the grounds.

Thanks: Many people helped to organize and to promote this year's tour. In particular, we thank the publicity given to the tour by Bresnan Communications and the City of Laramie and to Kris and Jerry Johnson for storing the portable toilets. Thanks, too, to the Pepsi and Coca-Cola Bottling Companies for the refreshments at lunch and to Wal-Mart for providing ice. Finally, we thank the members of the Laramie Kiwanis Club who helped in many ways.

The Tour is grateful for the support of the financial institutions in Laramie. Their advertisements helped with the costs. Please thank the fine people at these Laramie businesses next time you visit.

American Nat'l Bank	Alb. Cnty. Public Employees FCU	Advantage Real Estate
Bank of the West	Laramie Plains Community FCU	Century 21 Real Estate
First Interstate Bank	UniWyo FCU	Duane Toro Real Estate
Security First Bank	First National Bank of Wyoming	Basic Beginnings

Our tour begins at Rock River. We want to travel at the speed limit so that the caravan will not become a traffic hazard. Please keep a reasonable distance between cars, but do not let the caravan get strung out for miles. This would be a good time for one person in the car to read the tour booklet to the driver and others. The trip log identifies several sites along the way.

Today we visit historical sites in Northern Albany County.

Stop 1: Rock River

The history of the Town of Rock River includes millions of years ago when dinosaurs roamed the land and the colorful Old West past when the pioneers first settled the area. The Laramie Daily Boomerang contained a page of photographs and descriptions of the Rock River Museum in the May 28, 1993 issue. Information also appeared in The Forty-Second Old Time Ranch Tour booklet of 1993.

Horse back riding, the Union Pacific Railroad, and automobiles have been important parts of the history of Rock River. The railroad pushed westward in 1868. From Laramie the railroad went to Rock Creek, eleven miles north of the current location of Rock River; to Wilcox, six miles northwest of Rock Creek; to Como, six miles west of Wilcox, and then to Medicine Bow. (The Old Time Ranch Tour visited Medicine Bow in 1991 and Rock River in 1993) Because of the bad winter weather, the railroad abandoned the towns of Rock Creek and Wilcox on April 1, 1900, and Rock River replaced Rock Creek on the Union Pacific line.

The population began to decline in the 1960's as younger people sought jobs elsewhere. US 30 was the main east-west highway until I-80 was opened in the fall of 1970. Tourists then passed by the town and the hotel closed. Clive Jones in A Profile of Rock River, Wyoming: Resources, Needs, and Potential wrote in 1976:

The history of the Rock River area points to a loss of economic function over time. In the early decades of the century, cattle and oil were shipped at the Rock River depot. Later, in the 1950's, timber was cut in the forests of the mountains west of town. This timber was made into lumber at the Rock River sawmill and was transported to market by railway and truck. Within the last two decades, however, the oil field has continued to pump less and become more automated,

the sawmill has been removed from its site as cutting operations farther and farther away from town became excessively expensive, and the train depot has been removed. Additionally, trends in the ranching and farming sectors provided fewer customers for Rock River businesses and little demand for seasonal labor.

Stop 2: Rock Creek

Murray Carroll's article and Minnie A. Rietz's writing are the basis of this account. Rock Creek was built on a section of land beside the Union Pacific Railroad (U.P.R.R.) in 1867. General Grenville Dodge was the Union Pacific's chief engineer for building the railroad and planned the route west of Cheyenne. Silas Seymour was a consulting engineer who decided that the railroad should go through the Rock Creek and Medicine Bow River valleys instead of following Dodge's route. The new route was twenty miles longer, required an eighty-five-foot deep Cannonball Cut, but needed about half the grading of the original plan. Since the new route would be quicker and less expensive to build, grading and construction began. However, the controversy continued. Murray Carroll wrote:

The dispute was settled in a meeting at Fort Sanders, Wyoming, on July 26, 1868, in what was one of the most notable gatherings of Civil War heroes since the end of the war. Generals Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, Philip H. Sheridan, John Gibbon, William S. Harney, August V. Kautz, Joseph H. Potter, Frederick T. Dent, Lewis C. Hunt, and Adam J. Slemmer met with Dodge, [Thomas C.], Durrant [vice-president], and Sidney M. Dillon of the Union Pacific. Grant decided the new route would be used since most of the grading was complete. He also decided that Dodge would remain as chief engineer and his route would be followed for the remainder of the line. Thus, the hero of the Civil War – the man who would be elected president in less than four months – decided the location of Rock Creek.

The decision was lucrative for Union Pacific. The railroad received a \$48,000 federal subsidy per mile. Building time and costs were reduced. The railroad received additional sections of land along the route. An eight-foot-thick vein of bituminous coal was found during the construction. The coal could replace more expensive wood as a fuel for the trains, and the coal or the coal field could be sold. Mr. Carroll continued:

As the railroad pushed past Rock Creek, workers left behind a typical section town. The railroad ran close to Rock Creek, so a diversion dam was built and an intake pipe run into the creek. A steam pump drew water from the creek into a storage tank for watering locomotives. The pump and boiler occupied one end of a pump house, while the pump-tender's quarters occupied the rest. There was a small station with a platform that served both passengers and freight. At the far west end of the settlement stood a two-story section house to shelter the section workers assigned to the station.

Initially, Rock Creek was a quiet town on the railroad and twenty miles downstream from the Overland Trail. Railroaders, hunters, and prospectors lived here. The activity increased considerably in early summer after Charlie Bussard built a tie boom on the creek. He floated ties to Rock Creek where workers stacked and shipped them. These workers lived in a transient tent city. Because the road to Fort Fetterman started at Medicine Bow, supplies were shipped from there. Murray Carroll wrote:

However, in 1877 a substantial change occurred. During the Centennial Campaign against the Sioux the previous summer, the military road between Medicine Bow and Fort Fetterman was not adequate to meet Gen. George Crooks's logistical needs. In May 1877, a party of soldiers from the Fourth Infantry and the Third Cavalry from Fort Sanders laid out a new route from Rock Creek to Fort Fetterman. The new road was only two miles shorter, but it eliminated four river crossings and used a better pass through the Laramie Mountains. It was .faster and safer ..and open year round.

The Rock Creek route jointed the old Bozeman Trail at Fort Fetterman, becoming the first link of a four-hundred-mile road extending from the Union Pacific north to Terry's Landing, Montana.

By 1878, the town began to grow to accommodate the shipments of freight and cattle. In busy seasons, 175 or more freight outfits operated out of Rock Creek. Even the closing of Fort Fetterman in 1882 did not significantly reduce the traffic.

There was a daily stage to Junction City, Montana, 400 miles distant and from Rock Creek the freighters drove their teams to several outlying points. Chief among these was Ft. Fetterman on the North Platte River near the present day city of Douglas. The same route used by the stage and the freight wagons can be traveled today by car. At one time in the '80s there were 170 freight teams of six horses or more working out of this town.

Beginning with the fall of 1883 a hundred carloads of cattle a day were shipped from Rock Creek. Murray Carroll reported that one cowboy said he saw 15,000 steers awaiting shipment in Rock Creek at one time.

Minnie A. Rietz reported that no more than twenty families lived in the town which boasted five saloons, two hotels, two general merchandise stores, the post office, depot, stage station, blacksmith shop, government warehouse, section house, a U.P.R.R. pumping plant, schoolhouse, U.S. Quartermaster's headquarters, big stockyards, and about fifteen dwellings. The town was a government freight depot for stores designed for the northern military posts that were freighted out by horses, oxen, and mule teams. Carroll wrote:

The beginning of the end for Rock Creek came in 1887 when the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad reached Fetterman. Cattle from the north were no longer driven down for shipment, the stage line became local, and the freighting business dropped away. The final blow came in 1900 when E. H.

Harriman rebuilt the Union Pacific along Dodge's original route. Moving the railroad eleven miles southwest of Rock Creek. Most of the residents moved to the new town of Rock River, and in a few years. Rock Creek was abandoned and all but forgotten.

The 1953 Ranch Tour booklet reported that the old store building and dwelling of William Taylor were both still standing. The section house, pump house, and stock yards were also standing. Back of the old store was a cellar where \$5,000 in \$20 gold pieces was taken out. The section house was furthest to the east, then the pump house, while west of the house and store were the stock yards, from which more cattle were shipped than from any other point on the Union Pacific Railroad until the cut-off was made in 1899 and the C & S was completed in 1885. Before that time, cattle from the north clear to the Montana line were trailed down to Rock Creek for shipment. The late Governor Brooks in his memoirs speaks of bringing cattle to Rock Creek to trail to his holdings near Casper and found an old iron in the form of a V which served as his brand which he later recorded. The Wilcox train robbers received their shipment of dynamite here at Rock Creek in 1899, which received all kinds of shipment – bar none!!!

Vandals burned most of the remaining buildings in the late 1970's.



Pump House



Store



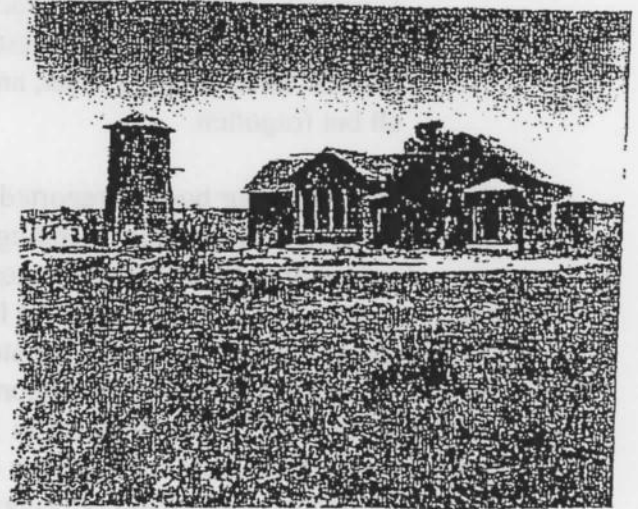
Section House



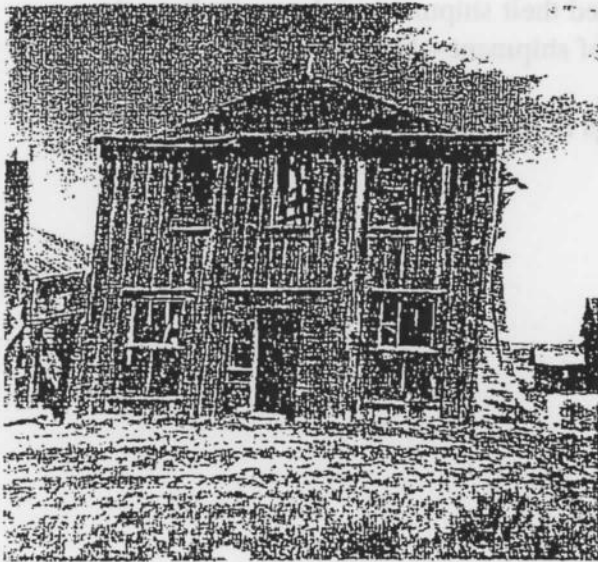
Section House

Photographs at Rock Creek in 1975

Provided by Mildred Wood



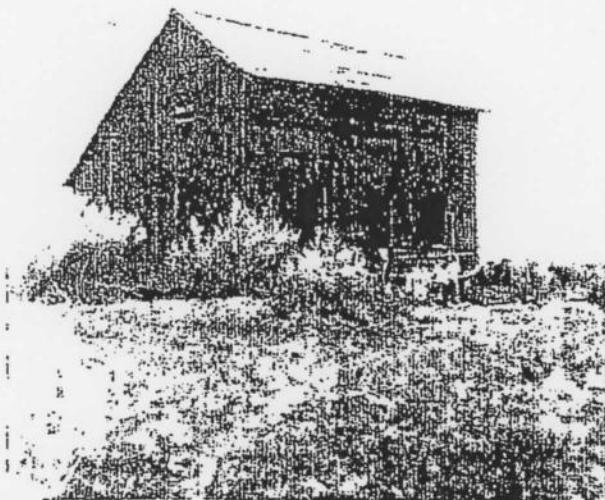
William Taylor House



Store



Pump House



Section House



Blacksmith Shop

The horses proceeded to eat the grass that the Atkinson's needed for their sheep. Lizzie sent one of the boys out to tell the man to move the horses. He ignored her request so she got her rifle. While standing on the porch of the house, she started shooting, getting closer and closer to the man with each shot. He immediately took the horses and left the area. Lizzie could drive a team of broncs, was an excellent cook, and enjoyed the isolated life on the remote ranch.

The family ran sheep and continued to prosper until 1919, when a severe drought hit the area and no grass or hay was available to winter the large number of sheep that the family owned. Felix decided to try to winter 1500 young ewes at home and they would send the majority of the sheep out of state for the winter. In December they set out with the herd in two different bands for the railroad at Medicine Bow. The plan was to send them to Kansas for the winter. When they were about halfway, the blue-sky, shirt-sleeved weather turned into a raging east blizzard followed by a blizzard from the west. The sheep got away and drifted under snow banks. When things cleared away most of the sheep were dead and the ones they did find and dug out, developed pneumonia and eventually died.

In later years Day Atkinson said he thought it was a mistake to have ever left with the sheep. He thought they could have wintered the sheep on corn and sagebrush, and roughed them through the winter. Had the sheep been at home when the blizzard hit, they probably would not have drifted away. Who knows what would have happened?

Afterwards, Felix was anxious to get his sheep numbers restored so he bought a herd of sheep in New Mexico and had them sent to Wyoming. These he mixed in with the 1500 head he had at home before discovering the New Mexico sheep had the scabies. Soon, all the sheep were diseased. They tried dipping the sheep and spraying the land with tanks mounted on wagons to kill the parasite. But the disease held the upper hand and became the demise of Felix and Lizzie's empire. Felix continued to struggle and died in September of 1929, at the age of 63, without ever being able to rebuild his livestock enterprise to its former glory.

After Felix died, the sons tried to hang on and operated the ranch until the depression hit. Carl died of kidney problems in 1930, and the bank foreclosed taking possession of the land. Paul Atkinson moved to Hayden, Colorado, where he bought a ranch. Day Atkinson still had his original 640 acre homestead that was connected to the home ranch holdings and he leased the "Bridge's Place" farther up Sheep Creek and continued to run sheep. Merl was able to make arrangements to continue to run his sheep also. "Toots" was still a youngster when this all occurred.

While living at his homestead, Day had gotten acquainted with a young school teacher from Cheyenne by the name of Connie Ulrich. Connie had moved to the Little Medicine area to teach the children of her aunt and uncle, Marie and Earl Lacy. Day and Connie were married in 1934, and lived at Day's homestead and the Bridge's place until they regained the ranch and returned to live at the family's original holdings. Day and Connie had three sons – Lawrence, Gene, and Jim. They continued to run sheep and a few cows. In the 40's, they remodeled the old ranch house adding indoor plumbing, a new porch, stucco exterior and remodeled its interior.

In 1959, they were able to purchase some of the land Felix had used for free increasing their acreage. Jim graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1966, and began helping full-time in the operation of the ranch. In 1976, Jim married Cathy Reilly who was teaching in the area and they lived at the ranch as Cathy continued to teach at nearby isolated schools.

In 1977, Day Atkinson died in the same house in which he had been born almost 77 years previously. Connie continued to live at the ranch and Jim took over the business end for her.

In 1979, Jim and Cathy bought the original Jim Newell homestead located 12 miles east of the Sheep Creek homestead. Jim and Freda Newell lived there for many years and raised a family. They sold to Leslie and Catherine Atkinson who lived there until 1973, when the place was sold to Richard Wendling. After holding it for just a few month, Wendling sold to a group of lawyers and businessmen from Ft. Collins, Colorado. They retained ownership until Jim and Cathy purchased it.

With help from Jim and his family, Connie was able to continue to live at the home ranch until the fall of 1999, when health issues prevented her from continuing to live at Sheep Creek. She moved to the Iverson Ladies' Home in Laramie. Jim and Cathy had two children – Kacy Lynn born in 1980, and Colter Day born in 1984. Connie died at the age of 90 in the fall of 2003. Jim and Cathy continue to run both ranches and Cathy is still teaching in the rural schools.

The Felix Atkinson Ranch has had its share of ups and downs in more than a hundred years, but it is still in the family and there is no debt on the original holdings. The ranch is currently owned as a Limited Liability Corporation that is owned by Jim, Cathy, and their children. Hopefully it will continue to be owned by the Atkinson family for another 100 years.

Stop 4: Bell/Otte Ranch

History of Bell-Otte Ranch

Written by Linda Otte, 3rd Generation

Albert Henry (Bert) Bell was born in Greene County, Pennsylvania in 1855. He was the second son born to Hiram Cox Bell and Hannah Jane Shelby. At about 12 years of age, he ran away from home and finally worked his way to Texas. We know nothing concrete about his life until about 1881. We do know that he worked for various outfits in Texas and learned the cowboy life the hard way – by the school of hard knocks. He went north with the trail herds. On the second trail drive, which ended in Ogallala, Nebraska in 1881, he left the returning group and rode north to Montana.

After he spent part of the winter there, he drifted south and finally found himself in Rock Creek, Wyoming. He hired on with the Bar M Land and Cattle Company. This very large ranch was owned by stockholders who lived in England. He worked for them for three years. He hardly drew any pay; just enough for “smokes” and an occasional shirt and pair of pants. He was letting his wages accumulate so he could get enough ahead to buy his own spread. He had found the perfect setting for his ranch – on the north side of Bar M Mountain there was a wonderful spring that ran water year round. Just before he was ready to strike out on his own, the Bar M Land and Cattle Company went belly-up. And there went his savings!

However, Bert was a determined man and he had faced adversity before. He managed to homestead the piece that had that wonderful spring on it and then set about acquiring other pieces of adjoining land. He worked for Frank Prager when Frank needed help and then back to his own growing spread. Many other homesteaders couldn't hack the hard work required to ranch in northern Albany County, Wyoming. Bert would often loan them money to tide them over and charged them 10% interest. He gained the nick-name of “10% Bell”. As often as not, the homesteader still couldn't make it and Bert would acquire a piece of land to add to his ranch.

In 1899, after trailing his herd to Rock River to load them on the railroad cattle cars, he went on to Laramie. There, he and some of the other ranchers and ranch hands got liquored up. When he sobered up the next morning, he found himself a married man! He took his wife, Hattie, to the ranch where they spent the winter. Come spring, Hattie asked Bert for \$50 so she could go to town and get supplies, some material to make curtains and some other things to make the one-room homestead cabin homier. Hattie never came back! Bert finally divorced her on grounds of desertion about two years later.

Then a friend sent a letter to the Heart and Hand column:

Wanted: a mature woman, congenial and good cook

Object: matrimony

Reply: Bert Bell, Toltec, Wyoming

A single mother with two daughters answered. Her name was Vieva Jerusha (Eva J to her friends). She and Bert corresponded back and forth. They would meet that fall.

After selling his steers in Omaha, Bert went on to Painesville, Ohio where Eva J lived. She came out on the train to Medicine Bow in December, 1903. He met her with a sled and team. They headed out across the snow covered prairie on a track that only Bert could see. The next spring, they rode horseback to Spring Hill (now Esterbrook) and Frank Newell, the Justice of the Peace, married them. They had three sons, Albert, John, and Wilson.

The winter of 1928, John was 17 years old. The entire family was down sick with the flu. Bert contracted pneumonia and died. Of the rest of the family, John was the least sick. He and his brother-in-law, Jim Newell, burned a cabin on top of a nearby hill to thaw the ground so they could dig a grave. John remembered how weak and sick he was. I can look out my window and see that wonderful spring. I look a little further to the west and see Bert's grave. My roots run deep!

Eva J and her three sons tried to run the ranch. After two years, they divided up Bert's rather extensive holdings four ways. Eva J and Ab kept the home ranch (with the wonderful spring). John and Wilson got other parts of property. Wilson promptly sold his portion and left the country.

A year later, John married a beautiful school ma'am, Genevieve Peterson. They began their married life in a log house on a portion of John's share of the ranch. Just over a year later, the banker called John in and told him he was about to foreclose on his mother and brother. He told John that if he wanted that part of the ranch, he would back him financially so that John could buy it. John and Genevieve took on a big debt, moved to the home ranch and drank water from the wonderful spring.

John worked hard and did whatever was necessary to keep the ranch running. He trapped, carried mail, guided hunters, etc. He eventually bought back much of the land his father had had. He built irrigation reservoirs. He developed hundreds of acres of hay meadow. He also developed some irrigated pasture. John had the ability of seeing sights for reservoirs and encouraged his neighbors to build them. John was the first rancher in the community to apply fertilizer to his meadows to increase his hay production. He was so proud and happy when he was finally able to run a thousand head of steers! We now graze those meadows with 3,500 to 4,000 head of yearlings rather than putting up hay.

John and Genevieve had four children – one son and three daughters. In order for the children to be educated, John and Genevieve lived apart during the school year for 12 years. Genevieve took the children to Laramie and lived there. The family went to the ranch whenever the weather and roads allowed them to travel. John stayed at the ranch. He was lonely and missed his family, but believed that education was very important.

Their son, John Henry, graduated from the University of Wyoming with a degree in Ag Econ. He joined the Air Force and retired 30 years later. He served in Vietnam. He and his wife have four children and 6 grandchildren. They reside in California.

Their oldest daughter, Laura Lee married a rancher from Lander. They settled in at the home ranch. John and Genevieve built a new home at the Reed Place (1957), 6 miles away, where there was already a barn and set of corrals. Later, Laura Lee and her husband decided to go back to Lander. Eventually, they started a custom haying operation and they came to the ranch every summer to hay. They have three children and two grandchildren. They currently reside in Torrington, Wyoming.

Their youngest daughter Barbara went to college and obtained her teaching credentials. She taught high school English in Anchorage, Alaska until her retirement. During that time, she came home to the ranch almost every summer to help hay. She and her husband live in Idaho. She has a total of five step-children.

The third child, Linda, had married in 1958. She and her husband, Dean Otte, both worked in Laramie. They eventually approached John about coming to the ranch. He suggested they come and work for wages for a year and if it didn't work out, they could walk away with no hard feelings. If it did work out, they could buy into the corporation.

Ten years later, Dean and Linda were finally allowed to buy into the corporation. They lived at the home ranch where the wonderful spring was. They had two daughters. They ranched with John and Genevieve until John's death in 1992. Genevieve had been in the nursing home for seven years by then. She was the victim of Alzheimer's disease, and died 14 months after John's death.

Dean and Linda continued to ranch. In 2001, their oldest daughter, Celia, and her husband, Jack Corson asked to come to the ranch. Dean was diagnosed with lung cancer in May of 2002. Jack and Celia began to ranch with Dean and Linda in June of 2002 after Celia's son Shell graduated from high school. The Corson's moved into the home that John and Genevieve had built at the Reed. Dean lost his battle with cancer on November 1, 2006.

Now Linda lives alone in the house on the home ranch where the wonderful spring is. Jack and Celia haul drinking water from that spring because it is so much better than the water at their house.

And that brings us to today. How blessed we have been to have had Bert Bell decide to homestead where that wonderful spring is. Even in the worst drought years, it has never gone dry. Think I'll get a drink of water - from that wonderful spring!

Stop 5: Robbins Ranch

The Bean Place, where Dale and Sandra Robbins now reside.

Charles F. Burbank filed for a homestead on October 28, 1903. He sold this property to Ira Bean on November 28, 1903. Ira Bean and his wife Mary and Ira's father Benjamin Bean filed and homesteaded on other land joining the quarter section that Ira had acquired from Charles Burbank. They continued putting the Bean Place together through 1925. Ira and Mary had a cabin to live in. Sometime prior to 1913 they built a house and a large barn. Mary was a Marshall. Her brothers, the Marshall brothers, had a saw mill up in the Cold Springs area. The Marshall brothers built the large barn which still stands at the Bean Place.

In 1926 Mary and Ira built a large house. They used this house for their guests. At this time they had started a dude ranch which they called the open B Ranch. Their brand was the open B and the ranch was called the Open B Ranch. They had guests from all over. The guests would arrive in Medicine Bow on the train where the Beans would meet them and bring them to the ranch. At the ranch the guests were treated to home cooked meals served family style. They stayed in the large house or in cabins. They could go horseback riding and take camping trips. Mary and Ira's son, Ned, was the dude wrangler.

Mary and Ira's daughter, Dorothy, had a dance hall built and opened a dance school for girls. She gave dancing lessons to area girls, but she also had girls from various parts of the United States. They would have the recitals in Laramie.

In 1945 they sold the ranch to James and Yvonne Robbins. Dale Robbins, son of James and Yvonne and his wife Sandra have lived at the Bean Place since 1959. They raised three children here: Craig, Clark and Cherie. The children attended a one room school here in the yard.

Dale's Grandfather Walter Robbins homesteaded on Mule Creek shortly after 1900. James Robbins homesteaded in the mid 30s.

The Town of Marshall

From the early 1920s to just after World War II, Marshall was a community center much like Garrett. It was a rural ranch post office with an adjoining general store. Unlike Garrett, and somewhat ironic, is the fact that the Marshall family never lived at the site of Marshall, nor was the Marshall post office ever located on the Marshall ranch. The story of how it came to be known as Marshall, then, is somewhat cloudy.

The Marshall post office was first established on the Thomas R. Bennett ranch in 1902, with 'Old Tom' Bennett designated as postmaster. A few miles west of the Bennetts was the ranch of Ira Bean, who had married Mary Marshall from Cold Springs. Soon after Ira and Mary

were married, Mary's brothers and sisters-in-law left Cold Springs and settled on Sheep Creek, a few miles below the Bennetts and Beans. When a post office was established at the Bennetts, it was, for one reason or another, named after the Marshall family.

The Marshalls were some of the finest carpenters in the country, and the large barn, built in the 1920s at the Ira Bean place, is a testament to their skills. It is an impressive work of master craftsmanship. Dale and Saundra Robbins, who now reside on the old Ira Bean homestead, have helped maintain the barn over the years by covering the aged wooden shingles with a metal roof and adding siding to the walls. For 10 years, during the 1980s, the Robbins hosted an annual community barbeque and dance on the first Saturday in July. The dance, attended by upwards of 200 people, was held in the spacious barn loft. Today, the 70 year old barn looks as if it could have been built only a few years ago.

In 1917, the Marshall post office moved from the Bennett ranch to the Leo Nickerson homestead, located a few miles up Sheep Creek, where Marshall is pinpointed on present-day maps. In 1924, Leo built a long log addition to the post office cabin, in which he set up a store and school, thus establishing a community center for the Sheep Creek area. The large Nickerson barn, a few hundred feet from the post office-storeschool building, served as the local dance hall.

In the late 1920s, a dance was being held in the barn during an electric storm when a bolt of lightning joined the dance: "I don't know how that lightning works but it got on the dance floor somehow. All I remember is a ball of fire dancing along the floor, women screaming, and people scattering like a heard of quail," recalls Dick Burnett of Little Medicine, who was a boy of about eight or nine at the time.

Around 1930, Max Waring and his wife, the former Lorraine Lindsey, bought and operated the Marshall (Nickerson place) post office and store. Before she married Max, Lorraine was selected to man the look-out tower on Medicine Bow Peak in the Snowy Range. She was the first woman to ever hold the position of Fire Guard Lookout in Wyoming, and the second such woman in the nation.

One of the more popular social events held at Marshall was the biannual "Wild West Rodeo" put on by Jim Robbins. Started in the late 1920s during Prohibition, the Wild West Rodeo became known far and wide as the place to be on the Fourth of July and Labor Day. It was attended by just about every one in northern Albany County.

The 4th of July was the greatest event in the lives of the children. The girls had new dresses and the boys had new suits, a community picnic, amateur rodeo, horse racing, foot racing and various contests were the events of the day. A picnic dinner was served where every one partook of as much as he could hold. A dance that night where all danced until morning, then rode horseback, or drove home planning on how they would celebrate "next year."

The Christmas School Program held at the Marshall store was another highlight social function of the year. The many families from the surrounding area would hitch up their teams to sleds, bundle up in blankets and cowhide robes, and ride to the Marshall store for an evening of fun and entertainment; children would recite poems and stories they had written and put on a Christmas play for the community. Imagine for a moment the magical wonderment of a young child on his or her way to the Marshall Christmas program, riding in an open sleigh on a cold, starry night, the horses' breath rising in the air as the family sang "Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells, Jingle all the way", arriving at Marshall and walking into the store to greet neighborhood friends and there was Santa Claus! "I can remember the first time I ever saw Santa was in that building talk about being terrified, now it scared me plumb to death."

Today, Marshall is a ghost of what it once was. The post office was discontinued in 1944; the store closed in 1947. No one has lived at Marshall permanently since 1950, when the Warings sold the property to the present owner, Jim Robbins. There is no physical evidence left of the log building that once housed the post office, store, and school. The barn, although still standing, had its roof cave in under the heavy snows of 1992-1993. The Waring house, which became known as the Marshall Clubhouse after the Warings moved out, remains intact and is still used occasionally for social functions, public meetings, general elections, and as a hunting camp during the fall months.

The Sheep Creek community surrounding Marshall is also a ghost of what it once was. The 30 or so families who lived in the Marshall area during the 1930s have dwindled down to only a few, and abandoned homesteads and ranches line Sheep Creek and its tributaries.

One of the more noteworthy of these is the homestead of a black cowboy, George A. Jordan, who lived alone in northern Albany County from the 1890s to the 1940s. Although black cowboys were not uncommon in Albany County at the turn of the century (Broncho Sam Stewart, Thornton Biggs and Segal George were some of the better known black cowboys who worked in the region), only one homesteaded in the study area. George A. Jordan was born in 1866 (whereabouts unknown), came to Wyoming in the 1880s on a trail drive, and settled on what is now known as Jordan Creek.

Jordan lived as a bachelor on his homestead for 50 years, raising potatoes and turnips, breaking horses, and helping out neighboring ranchers. For instance, George helped Felix Atkinson build the large barn on Felix's Sheep Creek Ranch in 1912. When George's health finally began to fail, he was moved over to the old Center place on Cow Creek by the Dunlaps, who saw to it that George was taken care of in his later years. George moved to Rock River in the 1940s and died in Laramie in 1949 at the age of 83. His grave is located in Greenhill Cemetery.

Thanks for participating in the Ranch Tour. We hope you had an enjoyable day!

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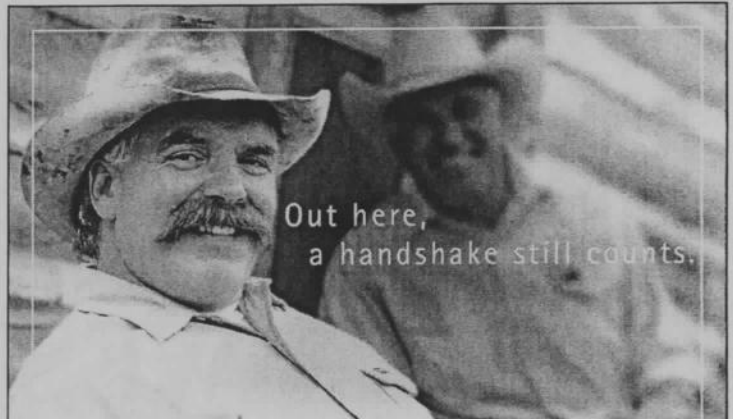
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