

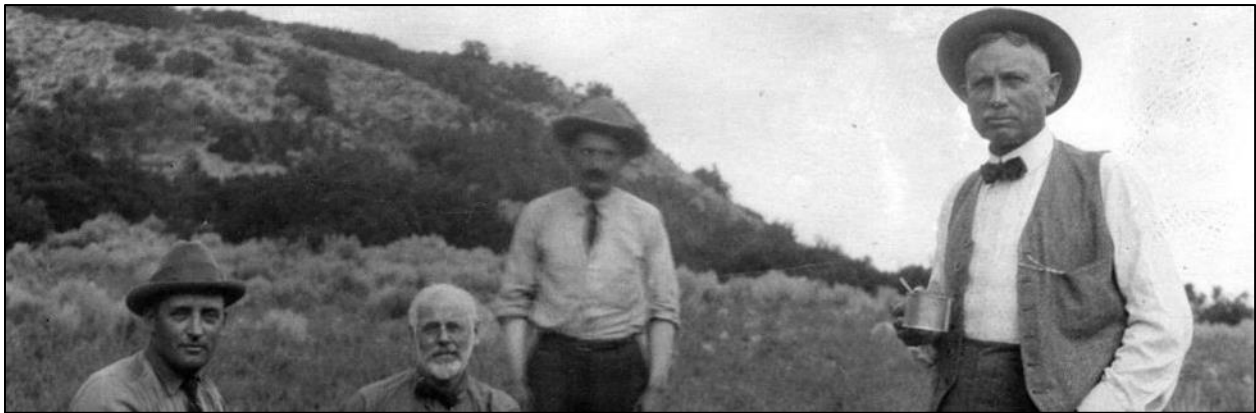
Climbing Cloud Peak, 1911

Compiled by Trail End State Historic Site Superintendent Cynde Georgen

In June 1911, a large group of adventurers left Big Horn, Wyoming, for a pack trip to the base of Cloud Peak, from whence they planned to climb the 13,800 foot mountain. They took along several dozen horses and enough provisions for two weeks - almost! One of the guides was John B. Kendrick; his wife and two children also went along.

Fourteen year old Elsie Spear, daughter of the trip's host (Willis Spear) and one of Rosa-Maye Kendrick's best friends, kept a journal and wrote an account of the epic journey which was printed in the Sheridan High School student newspaper. Another account, published in *The Sheridan Daily Enterprise* just a few days after the trip was over, provides additional details.

As you read, think about the times: in 1911 there were no down jackets, polyfiber gloves, cold weather mummy bags, freeze-dried meals, or GPS markers. These people did it "old school."



John B. Kendrick (right) and friends on camping trip, undated (Kendrick Collection, AHC)

A TRIP TO CLOUD'S PEAK (Elsie Spear, *The Ocksheperida*, September 1911)

Wednesday, June 28, 1911

We all arose at 4 a.m. and started to pack our horses and wagon. After breakfast we finished packing and made sure everything was ready. The party left the Spear Big Horn ranch about 8:30 a.m. There were twenty-nine of us and fifty-seven head of horses. After a steady climb up the foot hills and first mountain grade we were glad to camp for our noon lunch about a mile above Teepee Lodge. About four o'clock we reached Art Schneider's cabin and unpacked our outfit and set up our tents. In the evening some of us, who cared to, played games in the timber.

Thursday, June 29th

Immediately after breakfast part of us started for some lakes above Dome Lake. One of the lakes was Schlemm Lake, where there was good fishing. We rode past Sawmill Lake, under a flume and had a "shower bath." In several places we had to chop our way through the fallen timber. There were some terrible swamps and altogether none of us cared to go over the trail again. It is called the "Paint Rock Lake Trail," but has long since been abandoned. We had to leave our horses and walk for one-half mile to a lake below Schlemm Lake. The men all fished while we girls slept for a while and then cooked dinner. Coming back we stopped at a snowbank and devoured snow. As some wanted to go by Dome Lake we turned off and went by that trail. Altogether we caught about eighty fish. They lasted us for dinner, supper that evening and breakfast Friday morning.

Friday, June 30th

Some of the party went to Dome Lake fishing while others stayed in camp. It rained most all afternoon. That evening four more arrived to join our party, making thirty-three in all.

Saturday, July 1st

While we were packing there was considerable bucking among the horses who objected to the process of being packed. We stopped at Bowman's camp for awhile and then moved on to a park where we stopped for dinner. Our next camp was at Lake Geneva. Three of us went ahead and pulled logs out of the way so the wagon could pass. One bridge was washed out and there was one hill where we had to add saddle horses to the teams hitched to the wagon. We left our wagon at the foot of the lake and packed everything on the horses. The trail, for horses, is on the east side of the lake and is very rough and steep. We made our camp at the south end of the lake in the park.

Sunday July 2nd

The men built a raft, while some went fishing and others laid around and read or cleaned their clothes. Some of us went out to hunt some animal which we had heard around the camp and found it to be a coney. That night we had a big camp fire and while we were singing we heard someone yelling from the other end of the lake. Three of the boys went down and found it was another guest to join our party. This made thirty-four people.

Monday, July 3rd

We packed the most necessary things and left the others there as we expected to be back in four or five days; among the things we left were all of our clean clothes. Leaving our camp late in the morning we went south. There was a terrible steep hill going out of Lake Geneva and every pack slipped, some even sliding onto the ground. We passed Crystal Lake, about a half-mile above Lake Geneva. Farther on was the divide and the only way we could see to go over it was through a granite pass. A stream, which had to be crossed, ran down the middle of this and the pass was nothing but large boulders. The boys rolled rocks down in some places so the horses could get over safely. There was a mine there which had been relocated June 28, 1911.

At the end of the pass was a large, high snow bank. In this steps had to be chopped and the horses were led up and over it to the top of the divide. When everyone was safely over we moved a little way to water and then stopped for dinner. It took us three and one half hours to go three miles. There were very few trails to follow so we had to make our own and guess which way to go. Our intentions were to go to Paint Rock Lakes but we went too far east. That evening camped on a high point which we called "Camp Mistakes." From there we could see the Basin country and the Shoshone range or Wind River mountains. That night all the tents had private camp fires, making seven in all.

Tuesday, July 4th

Everything was packed by 8 a.m., but there was no trail to go on towards Cloud's Peak. All of the morning two of the men hunted for a way and only after lunch did they find one. We had to chop through a good many places, and early in the evening arrived at a little park on Medicine Lodge Creek. We found we were only about a mile below Lake Solitude. It was here that we ate the last of our butter and sugar. Of course, as it was "the Fourth," we wanted to do something unusual, so we had a torch dance and parade. Then we had a war dance around the camp fire, with someone beating time with their spurs. Afterwards we all sat around the camp fire, in a circle, and leaning against our saddles, sang all the patriotic songs we could think of, and several other songs, too.

Wednesday, July 5th

Part of us went up to see Lake Solitude while the others packed and started with the horses. One of the horses spilled the cold pancakes and bacon which we had saved for lunch, so most of us had a pancake and a piece of bacon to eat. We were exceedingly low on grub, so we made the most of everything we had. The place where this happened was called "Pancake Flat." About 1 p.m. we came in sight of the lake, which

the party called "Box Lake," on account of its apparently straight sides (but which we afterward learned was Lily Lake). We unpacked our outfit and had dinner, then sent two of the boys, with pack horses, after supplies.

Hyattville was the nearest place, thirty miles away. Lily Lake had no outlet or inlet and was evidently fed by springs. The mosquitos and big flies were exceedingly numerous and as the leaches were thick in the lake we had to bring our water from a spring nearby. The altitude of the lake was 9,547 feet.

Thursday, July 6

Ten of us went up the canyon towards Cloud's Peak. Four of the men were going to climb what we believed was the peak, so we would be sure and go to the right place. We rode up on a ridge where we could look down on Lake Solitude, then six of us went back to camp. In the afternoon three of our horses disappeared and we only found one. About 9 p.m. the four men came back. They had gone to the top of the peak in three hours thirty-five minutes and had come down in two hours thirty minutes. The shortest record before was between four and five hours. What the people in Sheridan suppose is Cloud's Peak, and what they can see, is really only the needles – northwest of the peak. They are impossible to climb and are quite a distance away.

Friday, July 7

We moved camp to the foot of Cloud's Peak, five miles from Lily Lake. Some of us rode down the canyon as far as we could above Lake Solitude. We had dinner at 3:30 p.m. and shortly after heard four pistol shots. It was the two boys returning and it was certainly a welcome sight to us. We had a feast that evening and afterwards a big rousing camp fire. This was quite a distance above timberline but the boys had hauled logs so we had plenty of fuel.

Saturday, July 8

Arising at 4 a.m., we had breakfast, then started to climb at 6 o'clock. Everybody had one sandwich for lunch. It was bright and sunny when we started, with just a few clouds chasing each other around in the sky. There were twenty-eight of us, two of the men who went up two days before, went with us so we would be sure and go the right way. It was nothing but large boulders all the way up, with here and there a snow bank. Before we got to the top of the peak the clouds came down over us and then it snowed. The wind came up each side of the peak, and whistled among the rocks until it sounded like a torrent rushing down a canyon. It was bitterly cold and some did not have gloves

or sweaters along. It took some of us six hours to go up and six hours to come down. Others went up in two hours fifteen minutes, three hours, and four hours ten minutes. Two of the boys went up in an hour and fifty-five minutes, and so beat all former records. They ran all the way, though, and had on tennis shoes and hob-nail boots.

We looked at the records, on top, in a bottle, and according to them only about sixty people had made the climb in the last twenty years. Some people said that others had started with them but had given up and gone back to their camp. The first record was 1891. We could find only two records from Sheridan, but supposed that if there were more, someone must have let them blow away. The first lady went up in 1901 with her husband. They were from Chicago. A record which amused us said a young lady had started up with the party and that "she had done her darndest and that was as much as an angel could do." According to the records most people did not think much of the weather, or the climb either. Two men had been up twice and one other man three times. One man stated he had climbed from the east side, but we couldn't see how anyone could climb there, because that side slopes in and is a sheer drop to the canyon below.

The way the peak can be distinguished is a pass on the east side, we believe it is called "Tensleep Pass," as the Tensleep Lakes are just below the peak. We carried canes up and made a fire with these which helped to keep us warm. By 7 o'clock we were all in camp, having hot soup and lemonade. That night eight decided to go back up the peak the next day as the view had been spoiled by the storm and the clouds.

Sunday, July 9

We all laid around camp all day except those who went back up the peak and three or four of us who rode around in the afternoon. Most everyone was stiff, as it was about seven and a half miles up there and back, and all rocks. It was cold and windy, but a clear day. The party got back late in the afternoon. Thirty of our party climbed the peak; six, twice; and two, three times in four days. We built a little stone monument at the foot and left a can there with directions for climbing the peak.

Monday, July 10

We packed everything and left the foot of Cloud's Peak; went back past Lily Lake and "Pancake Flat," then over on Paint Rock Creek. Two boys were sent to Lake Geneva after the things which we left there. We rode ten miles before we stopped for dinner on Paint Rock Creek; after which some of the men stopped to fish and the rest of us went on a

short distance where we stopped and pitched camp. The fishermen came in before supper with fifty nice trout.

Tuesday, July 11

We left Paint Rock Creek and followed a trail until we struck a road (the first we had seen for ten days). But instead of following this we turned back and went off on a trail. Several buffalo heads were found scattered along the trail. We traveled on this for a while and then struck the road again. This time we stayed on it until we came to one of the Paint Rock Lakes. There was a camp here from Basin City and the fishing was good, so we stopped and made camp. We had a "three cup" dinner, consisting of Mulligan stew, tomatoes and tea. The men fished all afternoon and caught one hundred fifty fish. Some of us went riding and saw Medicine Lodge Lake and another beautiful lake. That night we had a large camp fire. The "Basin Bunch" joined us, and we sang all evening. It was here that the last of our sugar, salt and flour was eaten.

Wednesday, July 12

For breakfast each person had one little piece of fish and some scorched oatmeal pancakes. Then everything was packed and prepared for starting. We moved on over a low divide to a hollow where, about sixteen years ago, several horses had died. Some of the party had been through here before and knew the place. We stopped here (on Shell creek) for dinner, which consisted of corn and gravy mixed. Then we moved on again until we got to the divide and then started a hunt for trails. Those who were not hunting sat there for two hours and nearly froze, until they built a fire and warmed themselves.

It was the intention to go as far as Dome Lake that night, so we moved on over the divide. There we could see Schlemm, Crescent and Heart lakes, and then three other lakes above Dome Lake. We were traveling in the timber and often found ourselves in places where we had to turn around and go back. Then it grew so dark that we could not find the trail and about 11 o'clock at night we stopped. It had rained on us all evening. We tied our saddle horses to the trees and hobbled the others. When we came to see about our beds, we found that two were gone, and three horses. So we hunted up all the saddle blankets in the crowd for one person to sleep in, and the other one without a bed crawled in with someone else. There was no water near the camp, and only two little clearings to put our beds down around the two big camp fires. We laid down with all our clothes on and slept until 4 o'clock.

Thursday, July 13

At 5 o'clock we started on to Dome Lake; came out on the Schlemm Lake trail, and so knew our way perfectly. We were certainly glad we had been over the trail before and cleared it out. About three hours later we arrived at Dome Lake and secured food for breakfast. At 9 we had a big feast, the first thing we had had to eat since noon the day before. Some of the party went to Bowman's camp to dinner, while others were without any. Some of us went by Tepee Lodge and most all of the party met at the foot of the big grade. Several went on to Sheridan in the evening while the rest stopped at the Spear ranch for supper that night.

THE SHERIDAN DAILY ENTERPRISE, 15 JULY 1911

SPEAR CAMPING PARTY SCALED CLOUD PEAK; Outfitted at Big Horn June 28 and Returned to Sheridan Yesterday; Most Enjoyable Time Reported -- Thirty men and women of the Spear camping party scaled Cloud peak recently while on a trip to the many points of interest in the Big Horn mountains. One woman with three children were left at the camp at the base of the lofty mountain while the others were engaged in the difficult and perilous feat.

The Spear party outfitted at Big Horn on June 28. Fifty-eight horses were used by the party for riding and pack animals. A supply wagon was taken out of Big Horn drawn by four horses but was left at Lake Geneva, and the trip resumed from there with nothing but horses.

Six cameras were taken along on the trip and many exposures were made on the journey. One magazine writer accompanied the party and took notes which he intends to work into a rattling good story, which will be illustrated by many pictures. Sheridan's "cowboy artist" [Bill Gollings] accompanied the party and he will furnish sketches of many scenes which could not be "snapshotted" at the time.

From Big Horn the party proceeded to Arthur Snyder's cabin in the mountains. Mr. Snyder is a forest ranger and entertained the party to the best of his ability. From Snyder's cabin the party proceeded to Slim lake, requiring a day's trip, and from there another day was consumed in going to Dome Lake.

A day was spent en route to lake Geneva, where they came out on the head of Medicine Lodge creek. Here they discovered numerous signs of camps along the way until they had reached lake Solitude. From this lake they traveled to Lily lake, a most beautiful

natural pond literally covered with flowers for which it was named. From Lily lake the party proceeded to the foot of Cloud peak, where camp was made July 8 and 9. This location was at the south base of the peak, slightly above the tree line, but no trouble was experienced in getting fuel for cooking purposes.

The entire party, with the exception of M. Leamon, who stayed behind with three small children, made the ascent to the top of the peak. During the ascent they encountered a terrific snow storm, and those who were thinly clad suffered severely.

The minimum time made by several of the boys was one hour and fifty-five minutes, while the maximum time was five hours and a half. The day was foggy and the view was spoiled.

The next day, July 9, several of the party made the ascent. The day was clear and a view for 200 miles was obtained. Devil's Tower in Crook county and the Black Hills in South Dakota were plainly visible.

The top of the peak contains about an acre of ground. On the very pinnacle [sic], however, a flat rock reposed, as if it had been laid there by human agency. It was about twenty feet square and flat on top, supported by several pinnacles of rock underneath. Underneath the boulder a bottle was found, containing the names of previous visitors. Many souvenirs, such as cartridges, pennies, etc, had been placed in the bottle. The oldest record in the bottle was dated 1891, which was taken as evidence that that year was the first time the peak had ever been climbed by white people. The party chose the easiest route, on the south side, in making the ascent, the north side being more precipitous and dangerous. The entire party left their names upon the top of the peak before the descent was made.

From Cloud peak they went across the range and continued to Shell creek on the other side of the Big Horns. Thence the direction was reversed and the homeward journey taken up, the party returning via Dome Lake.

During the entire sixteen days the party was only forced to make one dry camp and then they knew their whereabouts. The darkness came on and with such a big party they decided to go into camp instead of proceeding in the wilderness after nightfall. The party was being led at that time by John B. Kendrick and W. E. Gollings, and in fact these two gentlemen were the pathfinders on most of the trip.

At one time the supplies were almost exhausted, and to provide against such an exigency, Phillip Spear was dispatched to Hyattville, thirty-five miles distant, with two

pack horses, to lay in a new lot of provisions. Young Spear was given money also to buy a calf, which was later butchered by the male members of the party, and thoroughly enjoyed by the hungry campers. This was the only fresh meat the party had on the trip.

Every night during the trip a big camp fire was built. The twilight hours were whiled away by singing songs and telling stories. No game was seen during the trip, but in several places fresh tracks of deer, antelope and bear were discovered. One member of the party said they made too much noise, which scared the animals away before they were seen. At one camping place a few fishing poles were produced and in less time than it takes to tell it, 150 good size trout had been landed. These were cleaned and every one was consumed by the party in one meal.

The personnel of the party was as follows: Mr. and Mrs. Willis Spear, Elsie, Junior and Phillip Spear, Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Kendrick, Manville and Rosa Mae Kendrick, Mr. and Mrs. William Johnson, Phyllis and Annabelle Johnson, Miss Nellie Skinner, Edith K. O. Clark, Doris Numford, Ona Toland, Hazel Helvey, Rubie Stevenson, Mrs. Priscilla Leamon, Major and Mrs. Eddy and child of the Cheyenne reservation, Mr. Meintz, Charles Helvey, Stella Benton of Big Horn, Frank Rerick, nephew of Mrs. Spear; Phillip Milds, Porter Doake, Ralph Thomas, Earl King, W. E. Gollings and Peyton Kensel.



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