

Love Letters from Hanging Woman

Edited by Trail End State Historic Site Superintendent Cynde Georgen; from *Trail End Notes*, June 2000

In January 1891, John Kendrick and Eula Wulfjen were married. In mid-March, following a lengthy honeymoon, he returned to the OW Ranch along Hanging Woman Creek in southeast Montana and she went to her parents' home in Greeley, Colorado. The two hadn't had a lover's spat; indeed, they seemed very much in love. The problem was that prior to his marriage, John had been unable to complete repairs which he felt were needed in order to make the ranch a fit home for his new bride. It took weeks for all the repairs to be finished, time the newlyweds spent writing letters back and forth.

These brief excerpts from John's letters to Eula during this time apart demonstrate both a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor and a deep longing for the type of home the cowboy had waited for his entire life. The original letters are in the Manville Kendrick Collection, housed at the Trail End State Historic Site.



John B. Kendrick at the OW Ranch, undated (Hoff Collection, TESHS)

12 March 1891, Manville WY - Dear Little Wife: It seems ... that I never knew how much I did love you until now and would like nothing better than a pounding from you. Would even submit to the hard names that you are wont to call me and hardly believe I should resent a kicking. ... Well you are a sweet little wife after all and I was never truly lonely until since I left you.

15 March 1891, 999 Ranch - Little Sweetheart: In the little while that we were together you became such an inseparable part of myself that it is indeed lonely without you. But I suppose this like many other disagreeable lessons has to be learned.

17 March 1891, Powder River - Dear Little Wife: The long days spent alone on the road have given me ample time for reflection and memory has carried me many times over the scenes and incidents of our wedding journey. My mind however will be pretty well occupied with the

enormous lot of work in hand and this if not so pleasant will at least prove a more profitable pastime.

21 March 1891, OW & 77 Ranch - Dear Little Wife: Do you miss your ol' man: not one half so much as I miss "the girl I left behind me." Everything lacks interest. The scenes along the road. The different views of the snow peaks of the Big Horns, things that I used to enjoy so much. But no doubt I shall get over it.

29 March 1891, Sheridan WY - My Dear Little Wife: Of course I cannot send mail from the Ranche often nor will it always be convenient for you to send letters to me but we must adopt the rule of remembering each other especially often in this way when we cannot have the greater pleasure of each other's company and above all if our journey together be far down the stream of life let us write nothing but love letters.

7 April 1891, Sheridan WY - My Dear Little Sweetheart: Yes the boys treat me just about as usual and but for thinking of you all the while I could hardly realize that I am or was married. In fact there is little difference. I work harder, sit up later writing letters, but I have to sweep out my office and make up my bed every day besides sewing on the buttons and the ripped places in my coat.

10 April 1891, OW & 77 Ranch - Dearest Little Wife: It astonishes me sometimes to think how many times my interests in life have been multiplied and how even the trivial things have a broader grander meaning for me and it is all for the love I bear for you My Little Sweetheart.

16 April 1891, Sheridan WY - Dear Little Wife: Although I have worked almost day & night through rain and sunshine since my return, preparations for your coming progress very slowly. ... If I thought you would be contented and happy with me here I would go down to Greeley and carry you up myself rather than leave you there, house or no house.

22 April 1891, Miles City MT - Dearest Little Sweetheart: I was up a little while ago at the Ball given in honor of the cattlemen. There was a number of handsome ladies in lovely costumes, but there was none to compare "with the fairest of the fair," my own little true love. What would I not give for just one look into your blue eyes to night. And so you think that I am not anxious to see you. Well perhaps not but there is something very wrong for my heart has ached and ached and longed, and where life seemed lonely before I was married it is desolate now.

30 April 1891, Sheridan WY - Dearest Wife: The thought of being with you again in such a short time fairly makes my heart thump. ... I trust in the happiness of your new life all of the most Sacred promises of our marriage will be fulfilled and that you will find it impossible to exist for any great length of time in any atmosphere that does not surround your old man ... I will meet you when the flowers bloom in the spring.

3 May 1891, OW Ranche - My Dear Wife: You would not complain of my working so hard sweetheart if you knew the numberless demands made upon me. It seems sometimes as if I heard nothing else but money, money all the while. If I find true companionship in my little wife my cup of happiness will be filled and I can make all of the money we will need ... As ever, Your Lonesome Ole Man.

11 May 1891, Sheridan WY - Dear Wife: You can never know how many false notions you have driven from my mind in your proposal to come out and do your own cooking, not that I want you to do it, but I did want so much for you to share the spirit of a true little wife and helpmate and the one thing needed to fill my cup of happiness you have supplied. ... You will like the Ranche, but you are a silly little goose to talk of hanging on to or seeing very much of me when I have 25,000 cattle to look after that are as beautifully scattered as our herd. Come prepared to be disappointed in this way dear and you will then be prepared for the worst and of course you know that I live when with you and exist only the balance of the time.



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