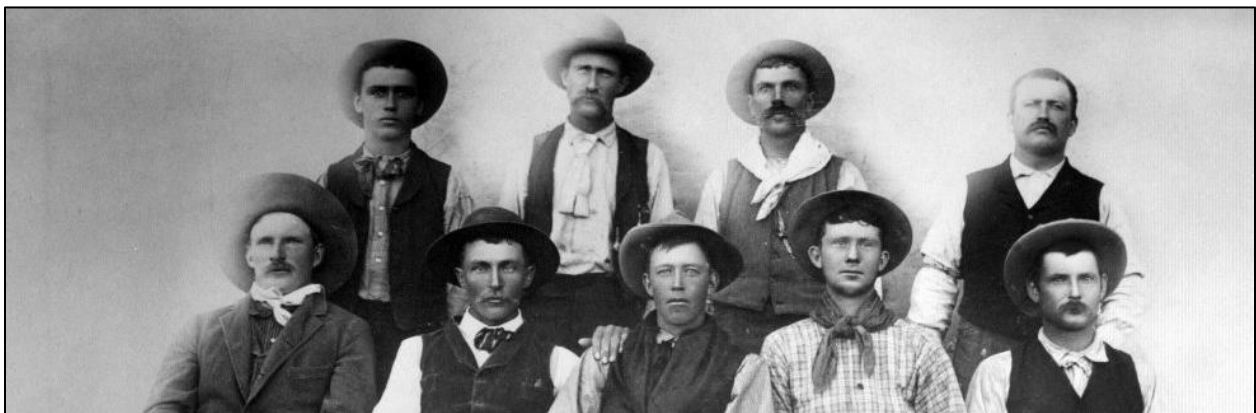


Old Range Days

Edited by Trail End State Historic Site Superintendent Cynde Georgen; from *Trail End Notes*, November 2001

In his correspondence, John B. Kendrick was both prolific and eloquent, as shown in these excerpts from letters written to cowboys who rode the range with him in his younger days. He was generous with his memories, bringing up small events in the lives of these cowboys who, when reading the newspapers, saw the name of their old saddle chum and dreamed about their youth. The last letter, though not to a cowboy, tells a great deal about the state of the West during the "old range days."

Because Kendrick dictated most of his letters and had them typed, we have access to copies of both incoming and outgoing mail. Some of these letters are in the archival collection at Trail End; others are on file at the American Heritage Center in Laramie.



Unidentified Cowboys, undated (Kendrick Collection, TESHs)

To G. E. Lemmon of South Dakota, 26 November 1927 - Your letter ... reminded me of some of the inaccuracies included in the statements quoted in the press in reference to my old range days. ... it is almost as difficult for one to restrain or even influence the things said by our friends, as by our enemies. ... It is always a great privilege to meet and visit with my old friends of the range. Here in Washington it is not unlike a smell and even a glimpse of the purple sage over which we have ridden so many countless thousands of miles.

To Walter E. Bedell of Massachusetts, 22 February 1928 - I have received your letter ... and was glad to have this reminder of one of my old time associates and friends. I not only remember you but I remember, as I believe, nearly every one of the young men who worked under me as foreman on the 77 Ranch during the Spring of 1886. A few of the names have escaped me but I would know the men themselves without the least doubt. ... I do recall the fact that before the season had passed I could take a limited group of you young and almost entirely inexperienced

men and corral or pen a herd of cattle to a better advantage than I could with a bunch of old "bone-headed" cowboys who knew too much to listen to any form of direction from a foreman.

To Thomas M. Stell of Texas, 24 May 1929 - I have received your letter ... in reference to the old days, both on the Northwest range and on the old Texas trail. I was very much interested in your statements as to your experiences. ... According to your statement you preceded me to Wyoming by about one year's time. It was my privilege to make the trip over the Texas trail in the spring and summer of 1879. We started originally from near Round Rock, Texas, traveled with our outfit of horses and mess wagon through Cuero and on down to Victoria, near which place we received and branded our herd. On the return trip we drove North by way of and actually through the edge of the town of Fort Worth, heading directly North toward Dodge City, Kansas and Ogallala, Nebraska, at which point we crossed the divide on the North Platte River ... I am sorry you did not find it in line with your plans to remain in Wyoming, owing to the fact that the State has benefited, as I believe, by the service as citizens of hundreds of the old trail drivers who have made it their permanent home. ... No doubt you would understand that the whole country you knew as open plains during the past few years has been fenced. ... This would have seemed like a dream to one who rode the range in that section practically a half century ago.

To Tom Bell of Florida, 16 January 1932 - I wonder if you remember the times when you were camped in a little dugout at the mouth of the Young Woman, riding line on the cattle belonging to the Hecht Bros., and how I would frequently spend the night with you while going horseback to Hat Creek and back for the mail? I recall as if it were yesterday how we slept in one end of the dugout and, if not mistaken, had the horses on the other side of a canvas partition in the same dugout. I remember the conversations that occurred between us as to what the House of Representatives would call "the state of the union." I recall distinctly our line of gossip and particularly what we were each planning to do, and then I am brought up with a shock to think of the tidal wave of water that has gone under the bridge since that faraway time. It all reminds me of a quotation, "It is said that in youth we have visions and in old age dreams, and the vision and the dream may give us an ideal of perfection." If not mistaken I was at that time between twenty-two and twenty-three years of age and you were about four or perhaps five years younger than I. It seems impossible to believe and certainly it is a more or less disagreeable reminder to think that if I live until the sixth of next September I shall be seventy-five years old.

To Helen Robinson of Kansas, 25 February 1932 - I have received your letter advising me that I have been selected by you as one of four Senators about whom you are writing a brief history for your school library, and assure you that I am complimented by your interest. ... I was born in Texas and became involved in the epochal movement of trailing cattle from the coast country to the northwestern ranges, in the neighborhood of the Black Hills. I made this trip twice, the

first time in the summer of 1879, starting at Matagorda Bay and ending at the head of the Running Water in Wyoming. The second drive was made five years later in 1884. In both instances I crossed your State of Kansas and the first time we traveled five hundred miles across your State and what is now Oklahoma, without seeing a habitation of men. I mention this to indicate what the growth and development of the West has been during a period of fifty-two years.



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