

Trading for the OW

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

In 1888, John B. Kendrick was hired as superintendent of the Converse Cattle Company. Formed in 1880 by H. S. Manville and James S. Peck, the CCC had taken a big hit during the winter of 1886-87 and needed someone to revitalize it. In 1896, several of the company's stockholders decided it was time to sell out. Kendrick saw this as his opportunity to finally attain a lifelong goal: a ranch of his own.

During the long process, John sent letters to his wife detailing his appointment as receiver and later his proposed purchase of the Converse Cattle Company. These letters are part of the Manville Kendrick Collection, housed at Trail End.



OW Ranch, undated (Hoff Collection, TESHHS)

25 February 1896, St. Louis MO - Dear Sweetheart: Reached here this morning and start west within an hour. The Lance Creek Co. [CCC] have concluded to wind up their affairs and as a preparatory step have had me appointed as receiver. This necessitates a trip to Cheyenne and then to C. C. [Central City, Nebraska] then I go home ...

26 February 1896, St. Joseph MO - Dearest Old Lady: When I left Sheridan I explained in a letter to you that Mr. Hord had called me to St. Louis on important business, that I did not know what this meant but supposed it was in reference to Lance Creek Company affairs. ... On reaching St. Louis I learned from Mr. Hord that some of the [company's] bond holders had sent in their bonds for collection through banks. Luckily they were not due until the 29th of this month; otherwise the holders could have attached property and collected full face value when they are not worth, on an equitable distribution, more than 40 cents at the utmost. In order to give all an equal proportion it was deemed best to ask for a receiver and when Mr. Hord reached New

York the papers were made out asking the court to appoint Will Sturgis of Cheyenne. Mr. Hord talked them into having me appointed in place of Sturgis. So here I am.

While I do not as yet know what it will pay me and it may be that I shall wish I were out of it never-the-less Mr. Hord has once again given substantial evidence of his friendship for me. Before agreeing to serve as receiver I inquired as to whether the work would take me away from home any more. We spend little enough time together now and I decided if this arrangement made further encroachment on our home life I would not serve.

28 January 1897, Chicago IL - Dear Sweetheart: The OW Rancho horses and remnant are ours and here is the way it all came about: We reached Milwaukee last night at half past ten and after an endless delay this morning finally rounded up the Board of trustees including Misters Hicks, Manville, Peck, Swallow and McCord. Mr. Hicks called the meeting to order and proceeded to outline the plan of the sale. When it came to fixing prices we were a good ways apart ... As I named the figures that I would pay for the different properties the excitement was tremendous; Swallow and McCord both jumped to their feet and wanted it put on record that they were opposed to a sale on such conditions. I felt almost sure of both Mr. Manville and Mr. Hicks, but needed the third man for a majority. For awhile the outcome was extremely doubtful, but I stood firm and finally won Mr. Peck.

The terms of the transaction are as follows: I am to have all cows with calves, all bulls, all one and two year olds, and anything older deemed unfit for market or rather that won't bring a greater price in the market, that can be gathered during the coming season and all cattle of any kind left untallied at the close of the season's work. For the cattle I am to pay \$17.00 per head, calves thrown in. For 213 head of work and saddle horses I pay \$2,000 and for 3/4 interests in the rancho and all of its equipment \$15,000.00. It is the best trade that I have made since I sold your Papa my only saddle pony to buy me an outfit with nearly 18 years ago. Proportionately that was a better deal than this, but of course there wasn't as much involved ...

8 December 1897, Chicago IL - My Dear Wife: It looks now as if the curtain was down on the last act and the OW belonged to you, to me and to Rosa-Maye. ... After a little skirmishing we got down to business on the final estimate of cattle left on the range. The total amounted to \$3,800 or about that. Swallow and McCord said they were willing to settle for \$4,000.00 and we did settle, but at \$3,900.00. I agreed to raise the money if I could and pay them off by Jan. 5th, but it don't look now as if I could get it without tying myself body and soul to a commission house and as explained to the trustees this I will not do. As a last resort I believe the Co. will carry the loan until next fall ...

25 January 1898, Sheridan WY - My Dear Wife: I intended to leave for the northern part of the country tomorrow but was detained on account of letters in settlement with the Converse people; have had some trouble with them. Received a demand from Mr. Swallow for the amount due the Company as they wished to close up their business. I answered that I would send them my note and otherwise comply with my contract; this they have decided to do from sheer force of necessity.



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